

# Key Findings & Understandings

*What 168 playwrights tell us about building—and staying in—a career in the Pacific Northwest*

**47.6%**

have considered leaving the PNW for their writing careers

**70.2%**

say the region lacks sufficient resources for aspiring playwrights

**77.4%**

want stronger connections to producers and artistic decision-makers

**The central finding:** The Pacific Northwest has a substantial and experienced community of playwrights, but many question whether the region offers enough production, institutional access, visibility, and career infrastructure to sustain them.

## 1. Artist retention is an urgent concern

**80 of 168 respondents (47.6%)** have considered moving away from the Pacific Northwest for their careers as writers.

- If personal obligations were removed, 33.9% say they would be very likely to move.
- Another 25.0% would consider moving.
- Only 41.1% say they would be unlikely to move.

**Why it matters.** The survey does not show that professional conditions are the sole reason writers consider leaving. But the mobility data sits alongside strong concerns about production, recognition, resources, and institutional access. Together, the findings suggest meaningful career-related retention pressure.

## 2. The biggest barriers are systemic

When respondents ranked nine challenges, two issues tied for the top position:

| Top-three challenge                                                         | Respondents |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Local companies are not interested in producing regional writers            | 53.6%       |
| Perception bias that the ‘good’ playwrights are all from NYC/London/Toronto | 53.6%       |
| Limited grants, residencies, and development opportunities                  | 45.8%       |
| Lack of national attention to theatre in the region                         | 42.3%       |
| Difficulty getting an agent                                                 | 38.1%       |

**64.3%** put at least one of the two leading concerns—perception bias or lack of local production interest—in their top three.

**The implication:** respondents see the central obstacles as the systems surrounding their work: who produces it, who sees it, where resources are concentrated, and how regional work gains legitimacy and visibility.

## 3. The problem persists after writers are produced more

**The respondent pool is evenly divided:** 84 writers have 0–1 professional productions and 84 have two or more.

- Exactly 53.6% of both groups rank lack of local production interest among their top three challenges.
- Limited grants/development and lack of national attention are also prioritized at nearly identical rates across the two groups.

**This matters because** the challenge is not simply getting a first professional production. Writers who have already achieved multiple productions continue to encounter many of the same barriers. The survey points to both an access problem and a sustainability problem.

## 4. Playwrights are asking for access and opportunity

When asked what a PNW support network could provide, respondents strongly favored professional connections and pathways over standalone training.

| Most-requested support                                                        | Selected by |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Connections with producers, artistic directors, and organizations             | 77.4%       |
| Co-productions and co-development of PNW projects                             | 61.9%       |
| Festivals featuring all-regional work                                         | 58.9%       |
| Central source for PNW playwrights, productions, festivals, and opportunities | 49.4%       |
| Annual awards designed to attract national attention                          | 37.5%       |

**By comparison**, 31.5% selected business-side workshops and 23.8% selected writing classes and workshops.

**The message is not “no training.”** It is that playwrights prioritize access to people, opportunities, production pathways, and visibility. They want stronger bridges between the work they are already creating and the institutions that can advance it.

## 5. Seven in ten say regional resources are insufficient

**118 respondents (70.2%)** say there are not sufficient resources in the region for aspiring playwrights to develop their craft. Only 29.8% believe sufficient resources exist.

The broader survey suggests that respondents understand “resources” expansively: not only classes and workshops, but also funding, relationships, development-to-production pathways, coordinated information, and institutional engagement.

## 6. The findings point toward regional infrastructure

Several of the most popular supports require organizations to work together rather than asking individual playwrights to solve the problem alone:

- Co-productions and co-development require theatres to collaborate.
- Regional festivals and awards create collective visibility.
- Centralized information connects opportunities across institutional and geographic boundaries.
- Connections with artistic leaders bridge writers to the people making programming decisions.

**Taken together**, the survey points toward stronger connective tissue across the Pacific Northwest theatre ecosystem—not simply more isolated programs.

## 7. These findings come from writers across the career spectrum

The concerns cannot easily be characterized as dissatisfaction among inexperienced writers.

- 49.4% have had at least two professional productions.
- 26.2% have had five or more professional productions.
- The remaining half have had zero or one, allowing the survey to capture both entry and career-continuity challenges.

Geographically, respondents include 79 writers in Washington (47.0%), 64 in Oregon (38.1%), 20 in British Columbia (11.9%), and 5 in Idaho (3.0%).

### Overall conclusion

**The Pacific Northwest does not lack skilled playwrights. There is not a lack of talent, but a lack of opportunity. The challenge is creating an ecosystem strong enough to keep them here.**

Nearly half have considered leaving, while respondents simultaneously offer a clear picture of what could make the region more viable: stronger relationships with theatres and decision-makers, more regional production and co-development, better coordination of opportunities, and greater visibility for PNW work.