NEW ORLEANS MUSIC CENSUS

Photo Courtesy of City of New Orleans

SUMMARY REPORT
August 2024

SOUND MUSIC CITIES

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Executive Summary

The 2024 New Orleans (NOLA) Music Census was a community-led study to gather real insights on the complete New Orleans music ecosystem. The music census launched on May 10, 2024 and ran through June 29, 2024 and collected 1,504 responses from people working in music in any capacity who are 18 years or older and living in New Orleans metropolitan area.

The New Orleans music ecosystem is predominantly composed of individuals in the Music Creator sector (63%), with 26% Industry, and 11% Venue/Presenter respondents. This composition shows a strong presence of Creatives while Industry respondents are higher than average across other cities in the cohort.

New Orleans Creative respondents are highly experienced, with 89% having over 10 years in their field. Their top career concerns include increasing costs of living and stagnant pay rates. Many use their homes for music-related activities like equipment storage and home studios. Income is diverse, coming mainly from local live performances and teaching. Annually, Creative respondents spend an average of $12,625 on career-related expenses, contributing $12 million to the local economy, with 54% of that spent locally.

The Venue/Presenter respondent landscape is diverse, with live music venues making up 33% and festivals 14%, there is a healthy mix of unconventional venues such as house/DIY/private spaces, community spaces, brew pubs, pop-up locations, and even retail locations.Venue capacity in New Orleans ranges widely, with 26% accommodating large audiences of 3001 or more people and 65% having outdoor capabilities. Most venues (50%) are locally owned for-profit entities, while 28% are nonprofit. On average, venues host 163 live events annually, totaling 17,728 per year, highlighting New Orleans' vibrant music scene. Venue/Presenters face significant regulatory challenges, with the most notable issues being confusion inefficiency, extensive admin time, and cost of permits. Music Industry occupations are diverse, with the largest groups working as agents and business services (19%), event/venue workers (17%), and production support (14%).

Music significantly contributes to the income of New Orleans music professionals, generating a total of $26 million across all respondents, with 25% of their annual income coming from music. 55% work outside the music industry, with 73% of them relying on these jobs as their primary income. Respondents report that the average individual gross pay per local performance is $536, and $624 for touring. Venue respondents host an average of 163 live events per year, with 49% of headliner slots and 40% of supporting act slots featuring local talent at all events.

In terms of NOLA music ecosystem development, respondents show a strong preference for a way to connect with music industry services, with 62% seeking connections to agencies, record labels, and similar entities, and 51% desiring links to other creative industries. Venue and presenters prioritize audience development tools (72%) and forming coalitions like a local NIVA chapter (67%). Key professional development interests include event promotion, marketing, new revenue streams, and publishing strategies.

In terms of livability, 38% struggle with rent or mortgage payments and 86% cite low or uncertain pay as a major issue. Respondents find that the New Orleans music ecosystem offers mostly positive experiences. The NOLA music ecosystem's greatest strengths are that it is non-homophobic (76%), diverse (70%), and inclusive (69%). The NOLA music ecosystem challenges are elitism (56%) and sexism (53%), highlighting areas for potential improvement.

This report and the online dashboard at **NOLAmusiccensusorg** offer more in-depth data, insights, and opportunities to understand, support, and grow the NOLA's festive music ecosystem and all the benefits it offers culturally and economically.

Introduction

The 2024 New Orleans (NOLA) Music Census was a community-led study to gather real insights on the complete New Orleans music ecosystem. By capturing data on both the living and working conditions of contributors to the local music industry, the Census provides data-driven insights to assist community leaders and policymakers in identifying and addressing challenges and opportunities facing the city's rich culture.

The NOLA Music Census launched on May 10, 2024 and ran through June 29, 2024, collecting 1,504 responses from people working in music in any capacity who are 18 years or older and living in New Orleans metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which includes the following parishes: Jefferson, Orleans (city of New Orleans), Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist. It was offered in English and Spanish. The census was administered by Sound Music Cities, a leading Austin-based provider of music ecosystem studies and music census work, in conjunction with the City of New Orleans. NOLA joined a multi-city cohort program administered by Sound Music Cities which met monthly to discuss best practices on improving music industries on a city level, allowing NOLA to gain insight from other cities conducting similar research.

This summary report has been prepared by Sound Music Cities and includes an overview of the Music Ecosystem Health Assessment based on 10 key indicator areas. The report includes key findings and recommendations. Alongside this report, Sound Music Cities has provided access to an online dashboard where you can find more data at **NOLAmusiccensusorg**.

1,504 responses
May10-June 29, 2024

11% venue/presenter
26% industry
63% music creatives

Photos Courtesy of City of New Orleans

INTRODUCTION TO A MUSIC CENSUS

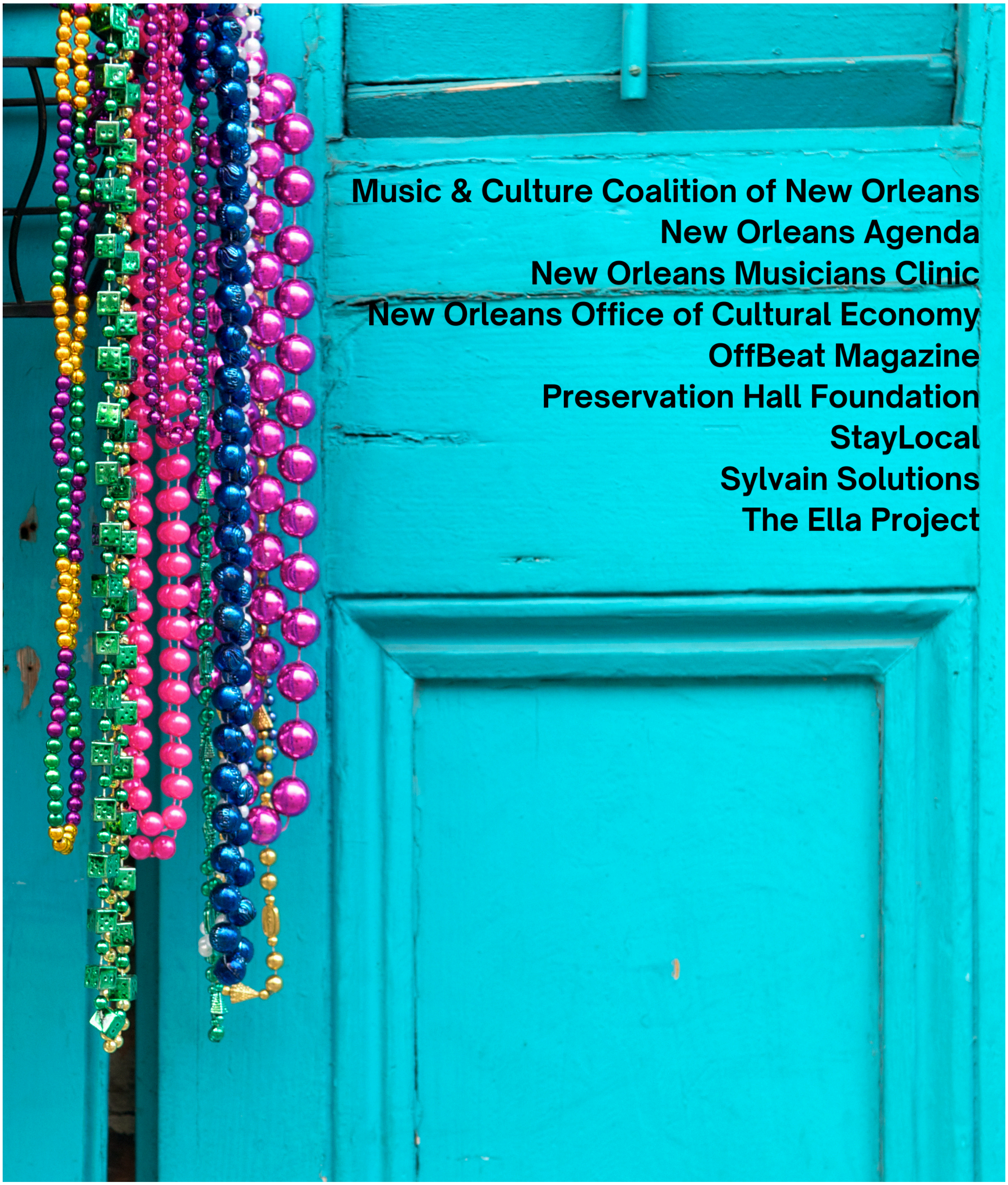
Any strategy to support and grow a music ecosystem begins with a basic understanding of its population. Professional music communities are not easily discoverable using traditional methods (such as through labor statistics or economic data). A music census collects key data points to better understand music people and their economic activity within a specific geography. It provides a baseline for policymakers and the larger community to understand and take action.

The value of a music census goes well beyond the data itself. Such initiatives ignite a range of activities that are conducive to more strategic and sustainable support for local music scenes over the long term, beginning with validating this economically marginalized group, sharing new learning, activating civic and community resources, and ultimately empowering music people to take ownership of change initiatives.

A Community Effort

The 2024 study was led by the City of New Orleans, Mayor's Office of Nighttime Economy. This study took a grassroots approach that engaged local partners who hold the relationships with music people. Community Partners served as the primary means of outreach to music people and these organizations were instrumental in shaping the Census itself.

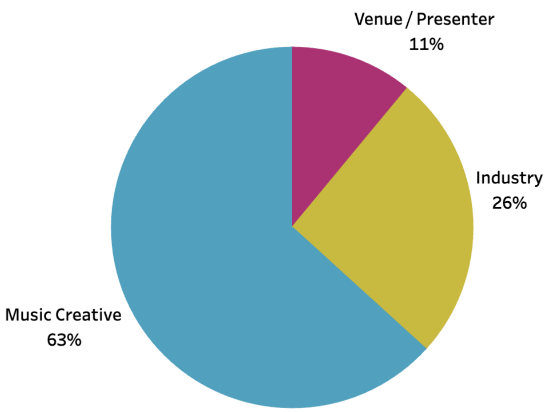
Thank you to our amazing Community Partners!

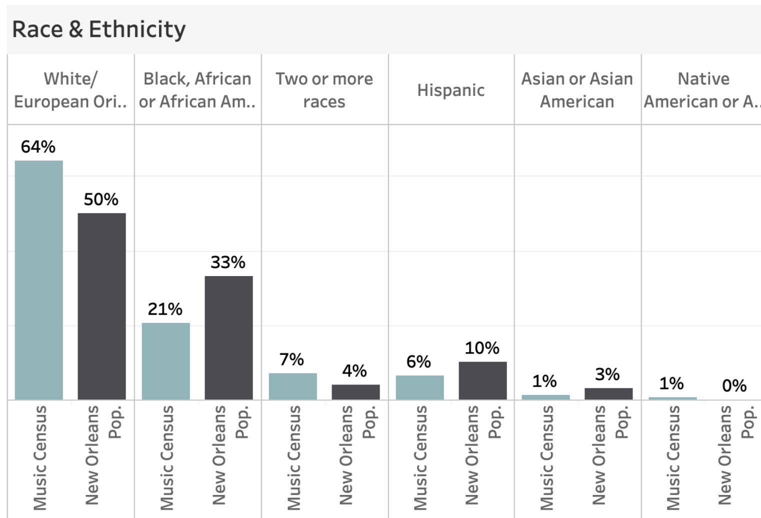


Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

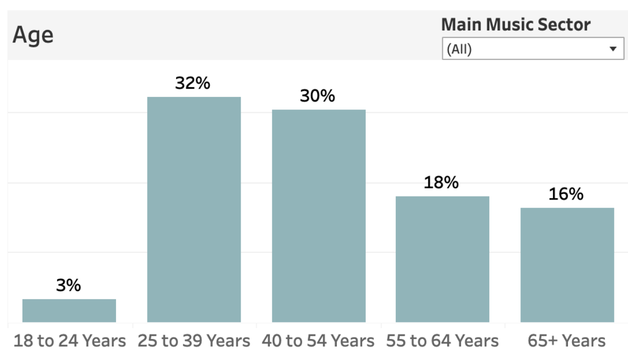
Ecosystem Composition

The New Orleans music ecosystem is predominantly composed of individuals in the Music Creator sector (63%), with 26% Industry, and 11% Venue/Presenter respondents. This composition shows a strong presence of Creatives while Industry respondents are higher than average across other cities in the cohort.

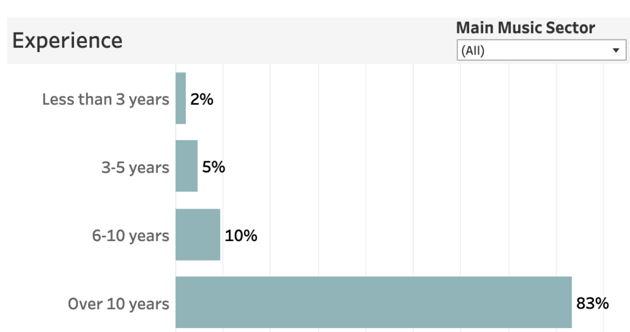




- **Race & Ethnicity** - The racial and ethnic composition of the respondents compared to the New Orleans metropolitan statistical area (MSA) population reveals significant disparities. White/European origin individuals make up 64% of the respondents but only 50% of the city's population. Conversely, Black/African American individuals represent 21% of the respondents but 33% of the population. Other groups, such as Hispanic (6% respondents, 10% population), Asian (1% respondents, 3% population), and Native American/Alaska Native (1% respondents, 0% population), are also represented.
- **Age** - The age distribution of respondents shows that the largest groups are those aged 25 to 39 years (32%) and 40 to 54 years (30%). Individuals aged 55 to 64 years make up 18% of the respondents, while those aged 65 and older account for 16%. The youngest group, aged 18 to 24 years, constitutes only 3% of the respondents.

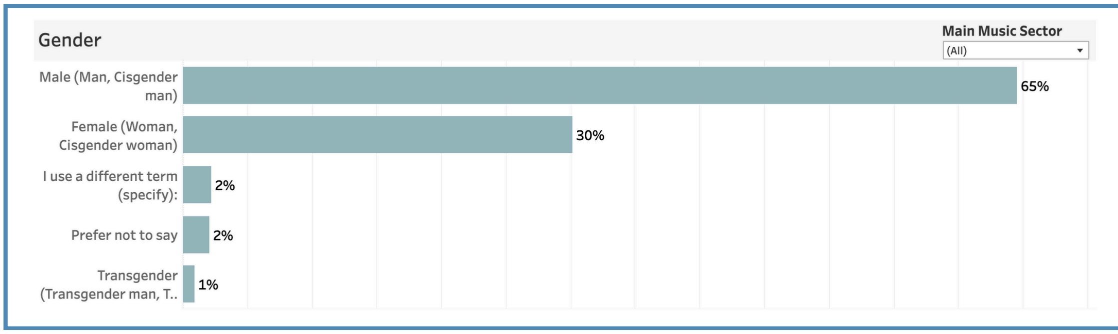


- **Experience** – A significant majority of the respondents (83%) have over 10 years of experience in the music sector. Those with 6 to 10 years of experience account for 10%, while those with 3 to 5 years and less than 3 years of experience make up 5% and 2% respectively.

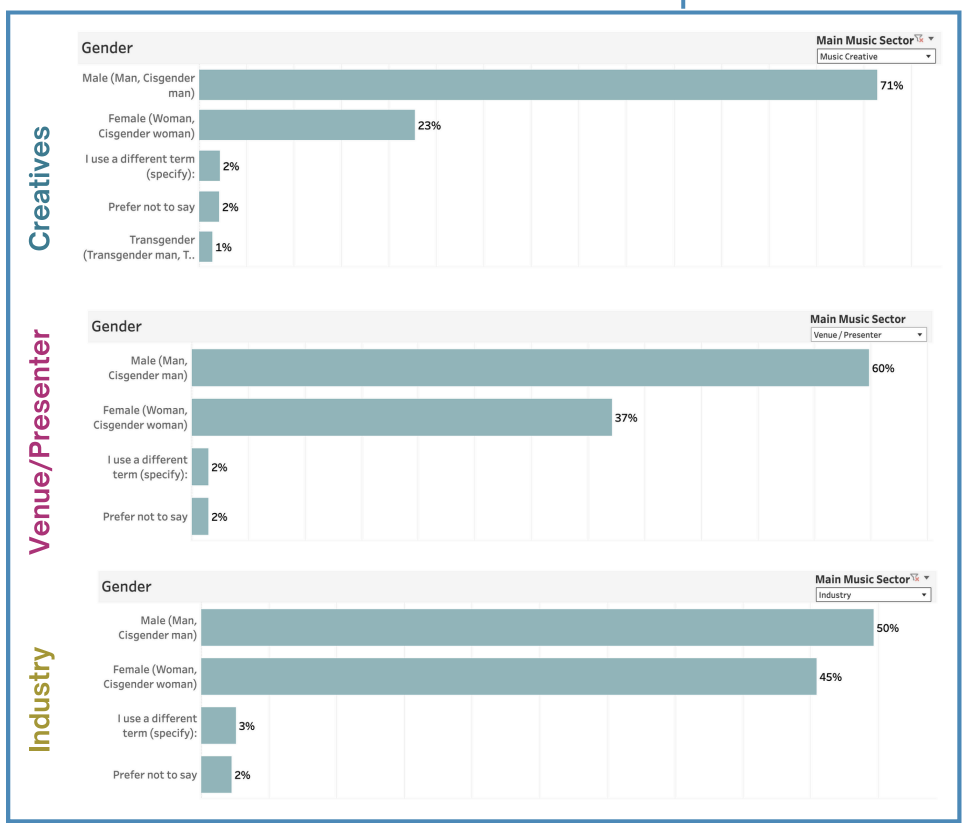


Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

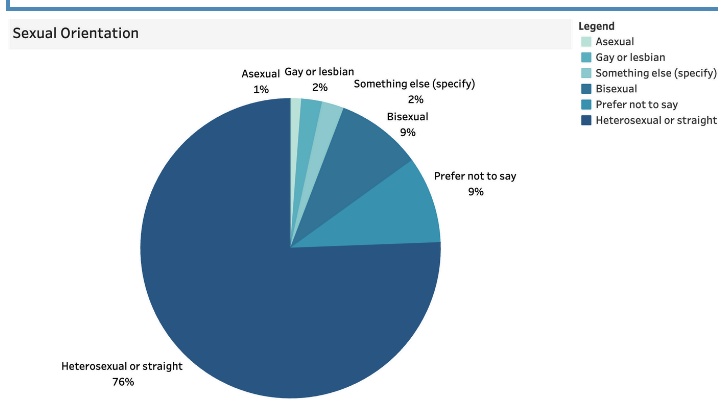
Ecosystem Composition (continued 2/3)



- **Gender** - The gender distribution of respondents shows a predominance of males, with 65% identifying as male (cisgender man) and 30% as female (cisgender woman). Other gender identities are less represented, with 2% using a different term, 2% preferring not to say, and 1% identifying as transgender. Gender composition varies greatly across Creatives, Venue/Presenter, and Industry where it finds a closer balance with 50% male and 45% female.



- **Sexual Orientation** - The NOLA music ecosystem displays a range of sexual orientations among its respondents. The majority, 76%, identify as heterosexual or straight. Bisexual individuals make up 9% of the respondents. Those who identify as gay or lesbian represent 2%, Asexual 1%, and 2% identify as something else not specified. Meanwhile, 9% of respondents prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation.



> Local flavor & its deeply rooted history of embracing music as a fundamental cultural practice.

> NOLA is itself an own ecosystem community fueled by the ever-increasing tourism economy.

> The cultural ecosystem here is unlike anywhere else, fostering a wide range of musical genres and styles.

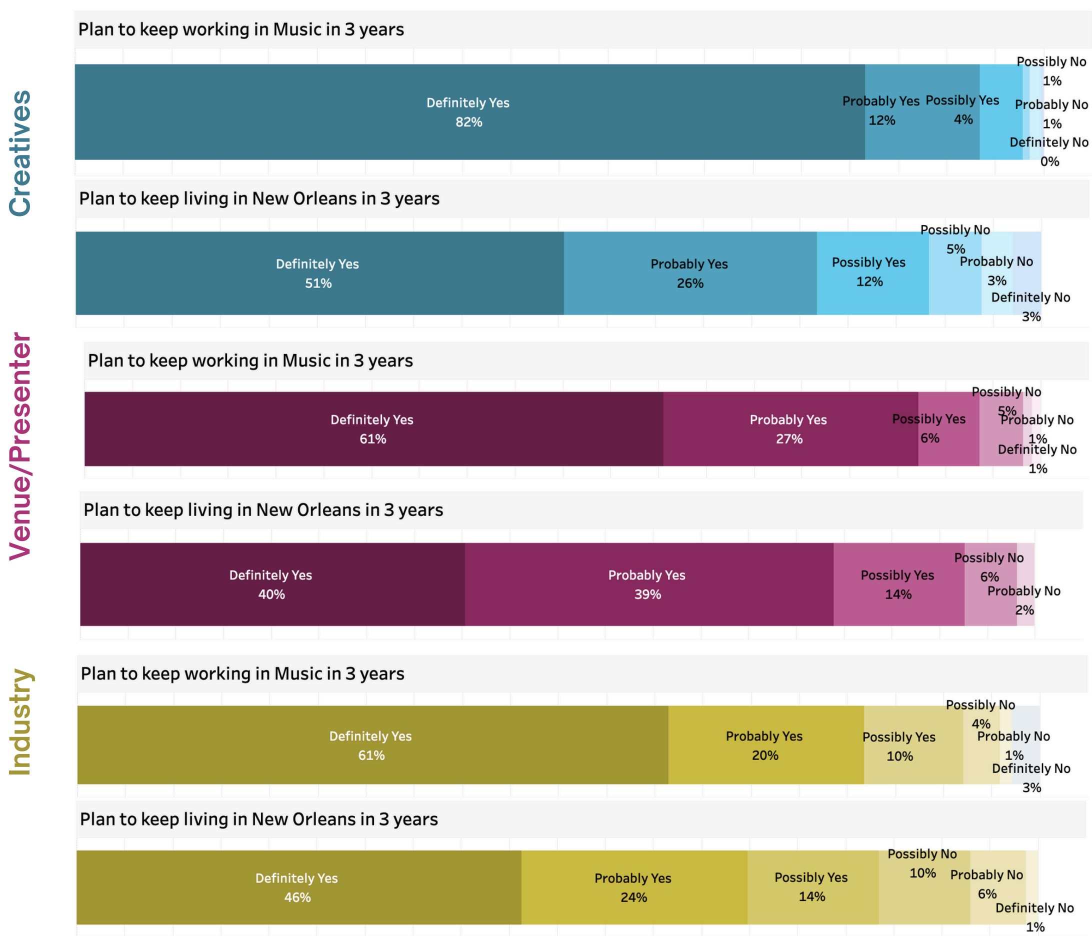
Ecosystem Composition (continued 3/3)

Plans to Stay in Music and New Orleans

- **Creatives** - The majority of Creative respondents in New Orleans, 82%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 16% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in New Orleans is slightly lower, with 51% definitely planning to remain in the city and 38% either probably or possibly staying. A notable 11% are uncertain or considering leaving New Orleans.

- **Venue/Presenter** - The majority of Venue/Presenter respondents in New Orleans, 61%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 33% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in New Orleans is slightly lower, with 40% definitely planning to remain in the city and 53% either probably or possibly staying. A notable 7% are uncertain or considering leaving New Orleans.

- **Industry** - The majority of Industry respondents in New Orleans, 61%, definitely plan to continue working in the music industry over the next three years, with an additional 30% either probably or possibly continuing. However, their commitment to staying in New Orleans is slightly lower, with 46% definitely planning to remain in the city and 38% either probably or possibly staying. A notable 14% are uncertain or considering leaving New Orleans.



> “We have a unique and rich musical history that continues to influence the present-day scene.”

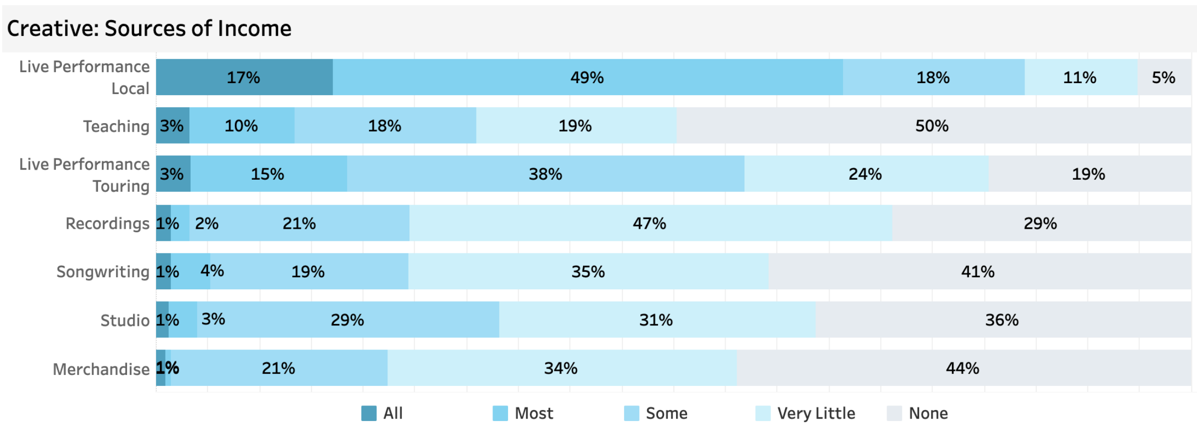
> “New Orleans has a tremendous amount of talent per capita.”

> “Most musicians who care and are talented enough to prosper don't trust taking this survey for fear it will be used against us to make things worse.”

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

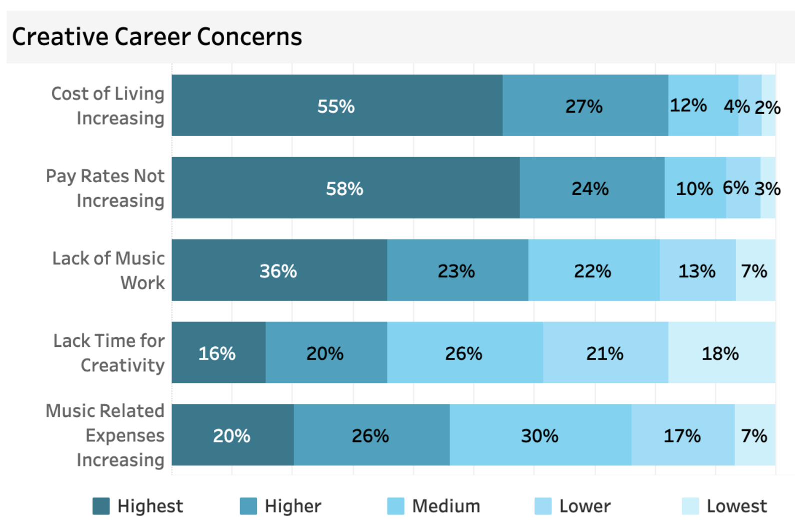
Creative Profile

New Orleans Creative respondents are highly experienced, with 89% having over 10 years in their field. Their top career concerns include increasing costs of living and stagnant pay rates. Many use their homes for music-related activities like equipment storage and home studios. Income is diverse, coming mainly from local live performances and teaching. Annually, Creatives spend an average of $12,625 on career-related expenses, contributing $12 million to the local economy, with 54% of that spent locally.



- **Sources of Income** - Income for Creative respondents in New Orleans comes from multiple sources, with local live performances being the most significant (17% all, 49% most). Teaching is also a key income source (3% all, 50% most). Other income sources include touring live performances (3% all, 38% most), recordings (1% all, 47% some), songwriting (1% all, 41% some), studio work (1% all, 36% some), and merchandise sales (1% all, 44% some).

- **Career Concerns** - The top career concerns for Creative respondents in New Orleans include increasing cost of living (55% highest concern) and stagnant pay rates (58% highest concern). Other significant concerns are the lack of music work (36% highest concern), lack of time for creativity (16% highest concern) and increasing music-related expenses (20% highest concern).



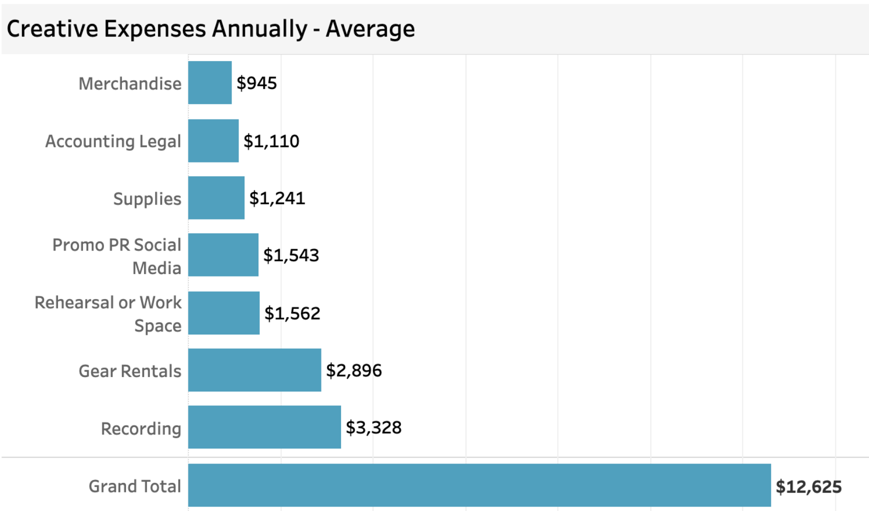
> The level of musicality is already quite strong.

> We carry on a musical tradition to the next generation which is why the music culture is so organic in NOLA.

> There are many very talented musicians of all ages and playing different types of music.

Creative Profile (continued)

- **Spend** - On average, creatives in New Orleans incur annual expenses totaling $12,625. Major expense categories include recording costs ($3,328), gear rentals ($2,896), rehearsal or workspace ($1,562), promotional PR/social media ($1,543), supplies ($1,241), accounting/legal services ($1,110), and merchandise ($945). Creatives respondents collectively spend $12 million annually, with 54% of this expenditure occurring locally. This substantial local spending underscores the economic impact of the creative community on the city's economy.

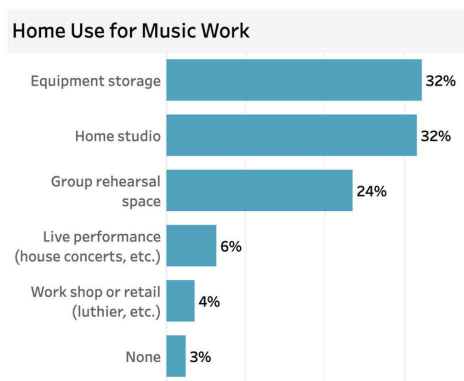


$12,635
Average Creative Spend

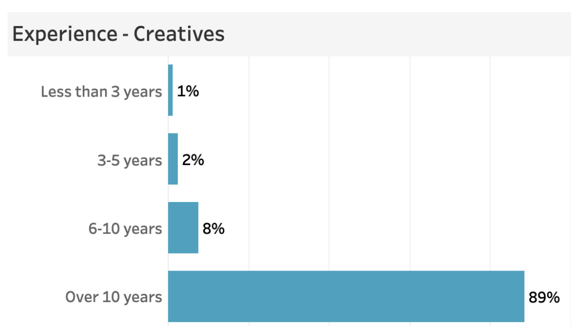
$12M
Total Creative Respondents Spend Annually

54%
Spent Locally

- **Home Use for Music Work** - Creatives in New Orleans utilize their homes for various music-related activities, with 32% using their space for equipment storage and another 32% for a home studio. Additionally, 24% use their home for group rehearsal space, 6% for live performances like house concerts, and 4% for workshops or retail activities. Only 3% do not use their home for any music work.



- **Experience** - Among the Creative respondents in New Orleans, 89% have over 10 years of experience in their field. Those with 6 to 10 years of experience account for 8%, while those with 3 to 5 years and less than 3 years of experience make up only 2% and 1%, respectively.



> "I adore our history and culture and am proud to be part of it as a local born culture bearer."

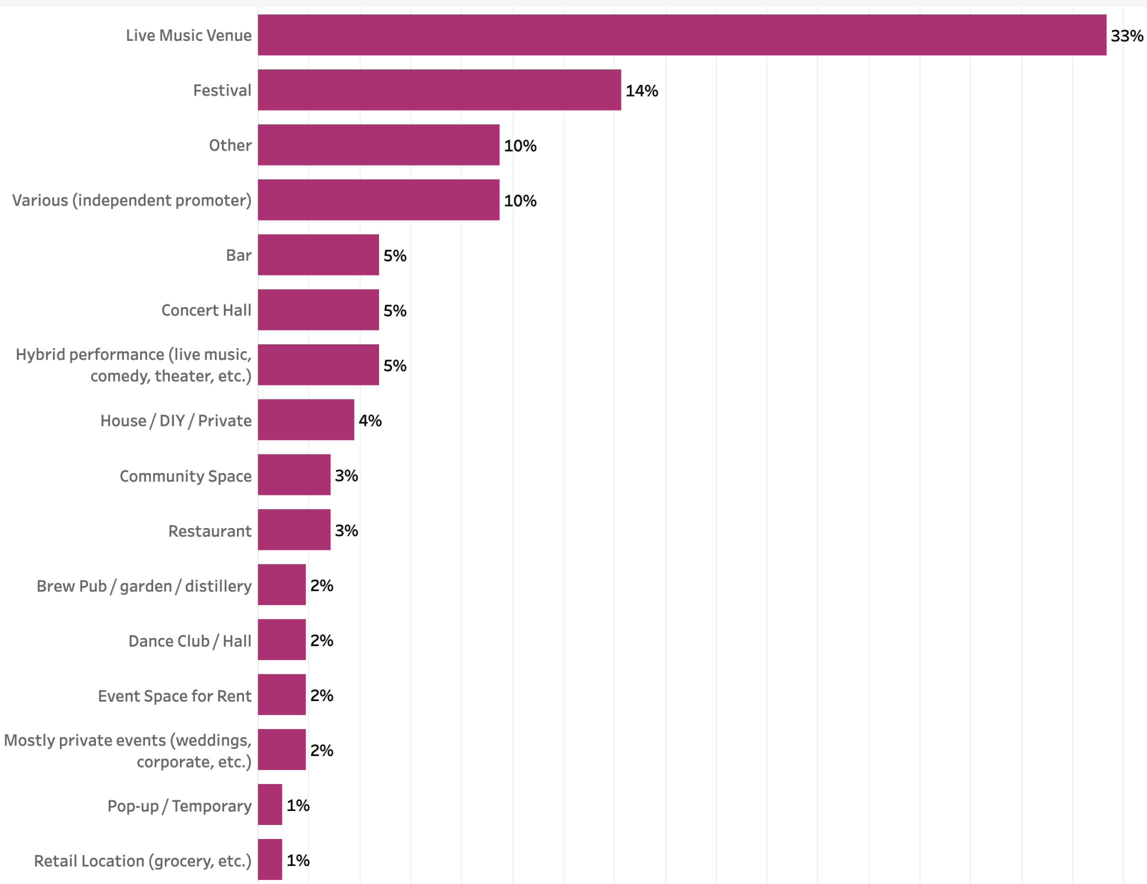
> "The musicians here form a wonderful community, and it is an honor to participate in the preservation and continuance of our culture."

> "Original groups that play their own music are not the focus of our market anymore."

Venue/Presenter Profile

The Venue/Presenter respondent landscape is diverse, with live music venues making up 33% and festivals 14%, there is a healthy mix of unconventional venues such as house/DIY/private spaces, community spaces, brew pubs, pop-up locations, and even retail locations.Venue capacity in New Orleans ranges widely, with 26% accommodating 3001 or more people and 65% having outdoor capabilities. Most venues (50%) are locally owned for-profit entities, while 28% are nonprofit. On average, venues host 163 live events annually, totaling 17,728 per year, highlighting New Orleans' vibrant music scene.

Venue/Presenter Type



- **Venue/Presenter Type** - Live music venues make up 33% of the total respondents. Festivals represent 14%, while 10% fall into the categories of other or various independent promoters. Bars, concert halls, and hybrid performance spaces each account for 5%, and house/DIY/private venues are 4%. Other types include community spaces and restaurants at 3% each, and smaller percentages for brew pubs, dance clubs, event spaces, private event venues, pop-up/temporary venues, and retail locations.

> There are some venues run by people who genuinely care about the musicians and patrons.

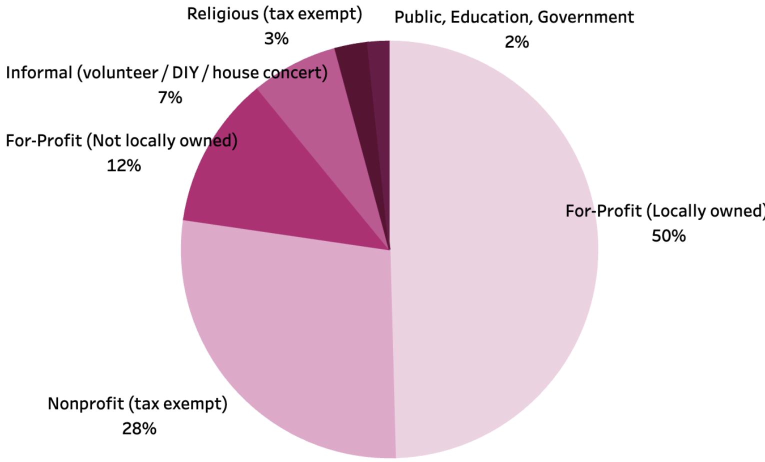
> There are many live music venues. The pay scale has changed in recent years.

> There's a lack of professional sound equipment and engineers in many venues.

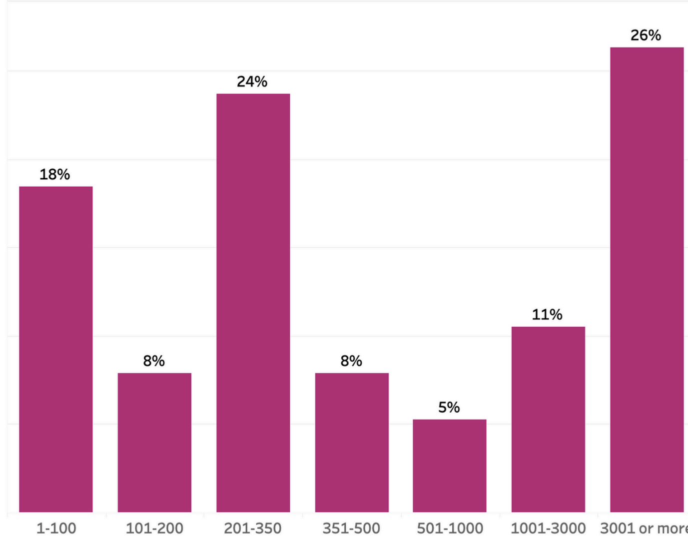
Venue/Presenter Profile (continued)

- **Venue Ownership/Tax Structure** - The majority of venues and presenters (50%) are locally owned for-profit entities. Nonprofit, tax-exempt venues account for 28%, while 12% are for-profit but not locally owned. Informal venues, such as volunteer-run, DIY spaces, and house concerts, make up 7% of the ownership structure. Additionally, religious venues are 3%, and public, education, and government venues constitute 2%.
- **Venue Capacity & Outdoor Capabilities** - Venue capacity among respondents spans a broad range, with 26% accommodating 3001 or more people, 24% holding 201-350 people, and 18% hosting 1-100 people. Additionally, 65% of venues have outdoor capabilities, allowing for versatile event hosting.
- **Venue Live Events Each Year** - On average, respondents host 163 live events annually, leading to a total of 17,728 live events per year across all venues. This high volume of live events underscores the vibrant and active nature of the city's music scene.

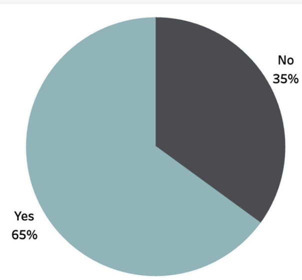
Venue/Presenter Ownership (Tax) Structure



Venue Capacity - Owner



Outdoor Capabilities



Venues average
163
live events/year

17,728
total live events/year

> The venues that serve the public and musicians the best are those with a local point person.

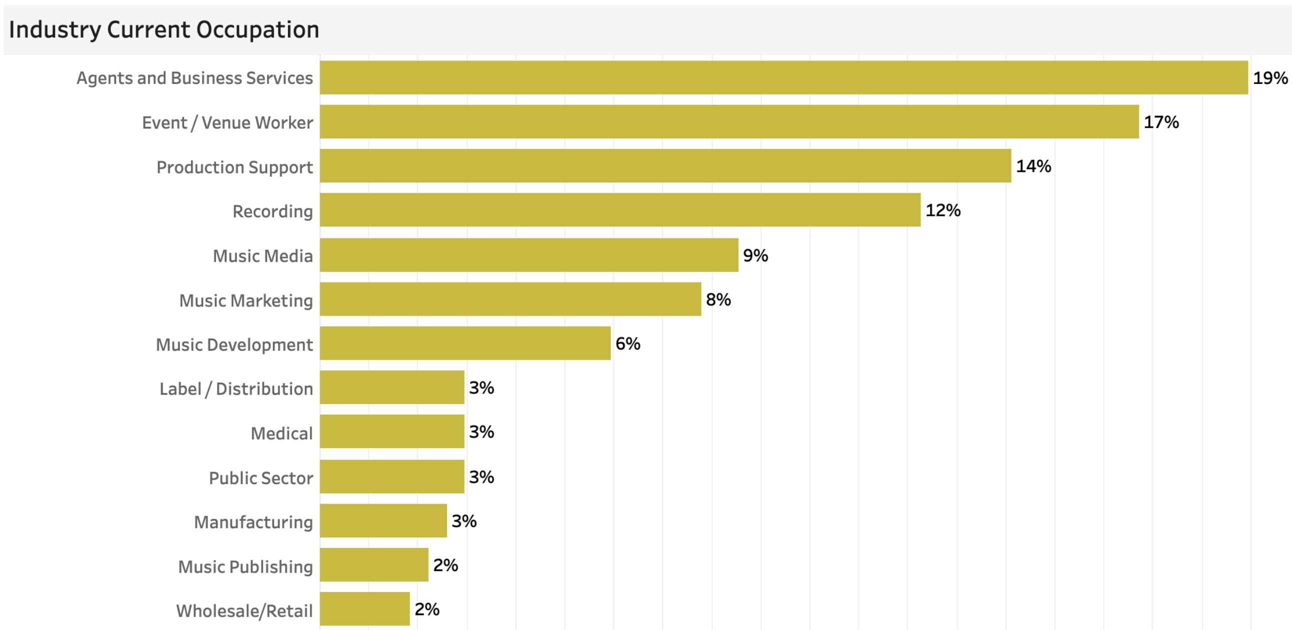
> Venues hiring musicians and don't have a PA system or a person in charge of operating it.

> There is a right size venue for any band with or without a fanbase.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

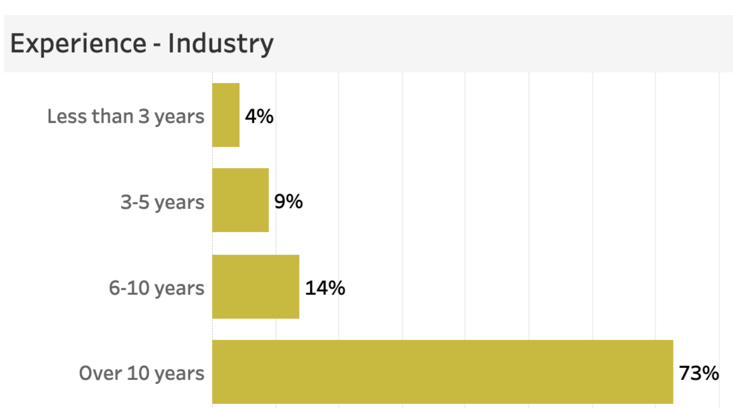
Industry Profile

Industry respondents are highly experienced, with 73% having over 10 years in the field, indicating a seasoned workforce. Industry occupations are diverse, with the largest groups working as agents and business services (19%), event/venue workers (17%), and production support (14%). In terms of Creative respondents accessing local Industry services, 51% seek studios, 47% tap into legal/accounting, while equipment and merchandise needs are handled through a mix of local services and doing it themselves. The Industry shows a strong local client focus, with 24% serving entirely local clients, though some also serve national and international clients.



- **Industry Occupation** - The current occupations of respondents in the New Orleans music industry are diverse, with the largest group working in agents and business services (19%), followed by event/venue workers (17%) and production support (14%). Other significant roles include recording (12%), music media (9%), and music marketing (8%).

- **Experience** - Respondents in the New Orleans music industry are highly experienced, with 73% having over 10 years in the field. Those with 6 to 10 years of experience account for 14%, while those with 3 to 5 years and less than 3 years make up 9% and 4%, respectively. This indicates a very seasoned workforce within the music industry.



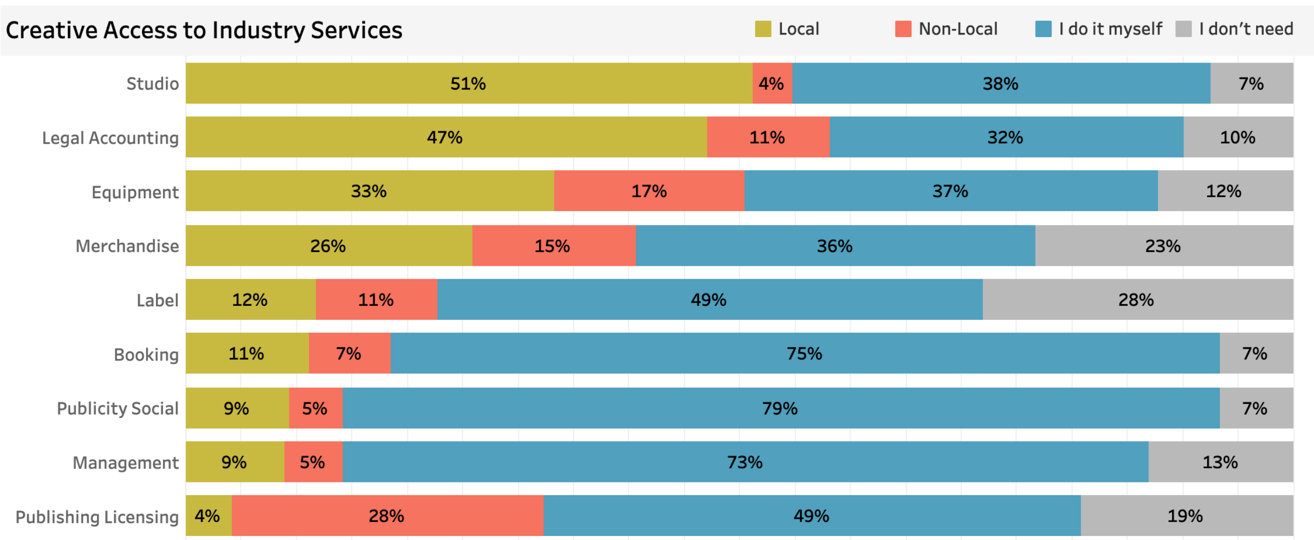
> "Lack of infrastructure in publishing and management is frustrating."

> "Gatekeepers work to keep 'outsiders' from getting in, not providing new opportunities to young people."

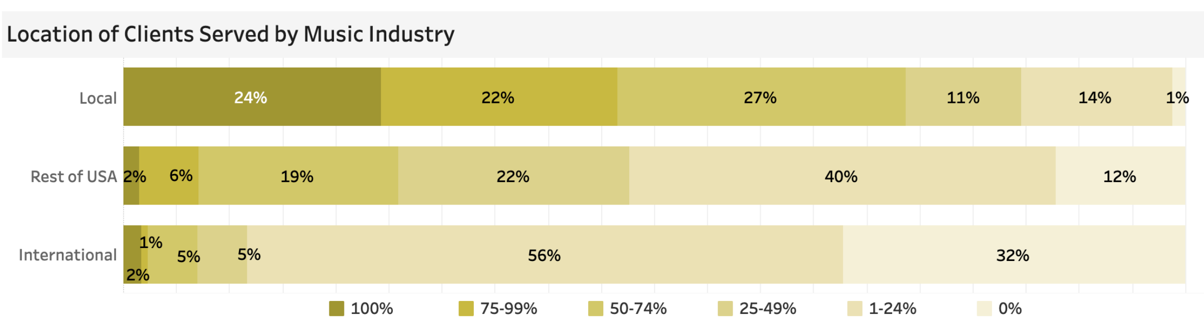
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Industry Profile (continued)

- **Creative Access to Industry** - Creative respondents in New Orleans primarily access industry services locally, with 51% using local studios and 47% local legal/accounting services. For other needs like equipment (33%) and merchandise (26%), many do it themselves. Non-local services are used less frequently, except for label and publishing/licensing services, where creatives heavily rely on non-local providers (11% and 28%, respectively).



- **Location of Clients** - New Orleans Industry is serving primarily local clients. Across the majority (>50%) of the Industry client base, 73% are local, 27% are national, and 8% are international. This highlights a mix of strong local focus and significant national engagement.



> The lack of a real music business ecosystem here is frustrating and it loses money for New Orleans and New Orleans musicians.

> Lack of qualified employees… I'm forced to hire outside of the region.

> The infrastructure for booking and promoting new artists is severely lacking.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity

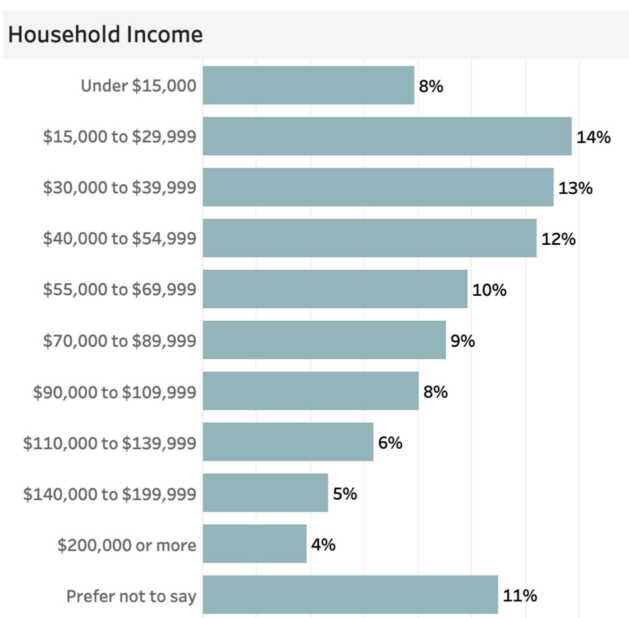
Music significantly contributes to the income of New Orleans music professionals, generating a total of $26 million across all respondents, with 25% of their annual income coming from music. The majority are freelancers and sole proprietors (62%), primarily earning money independently (68%). Many also work in bands (40%), registered businesses (33%), or as music educators (18%). Despite this, 55% work outside the music industry, with 73% of them relying on these jobs as their primary income. Among respondents, 51% are IP rights-holders, with 50% using BMI for royalty collection. Performance frequency varies, with 25% performing 10 or more local shows per month and 44% not touring. The average individual gross pay per local performance is $536, and $624 for touring. Venues host an average of 163 live events per year, with 49% of headliner slots and 40% of supporting act slots featuring local talent at all events.

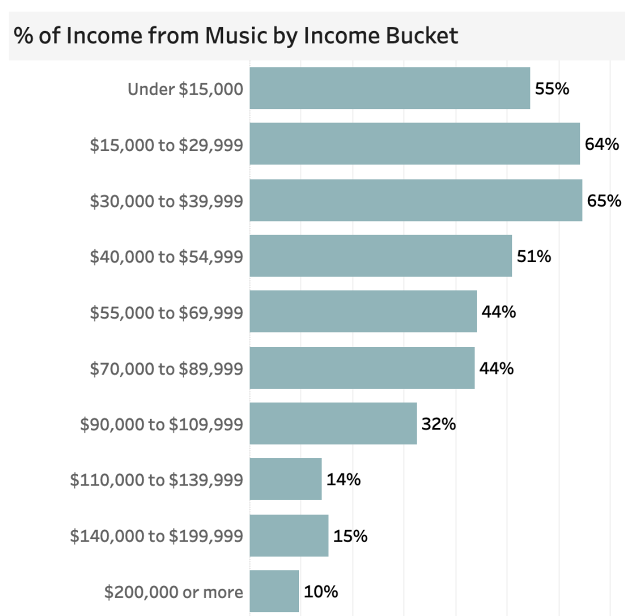
Music generates a total of **$26M** in income annually across all respondents

25% of respondent annual income comes from music

Average household income for respondents is **$92K**

Average annual income from music is **$23K**/respondent





“In order to survive in this underfunded environment, I need to spend most of my work time out of town.”

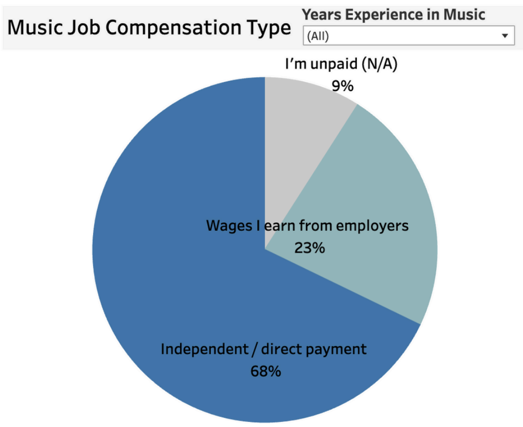
“Musicians are often expected to work for tips, which is not sustainable.”

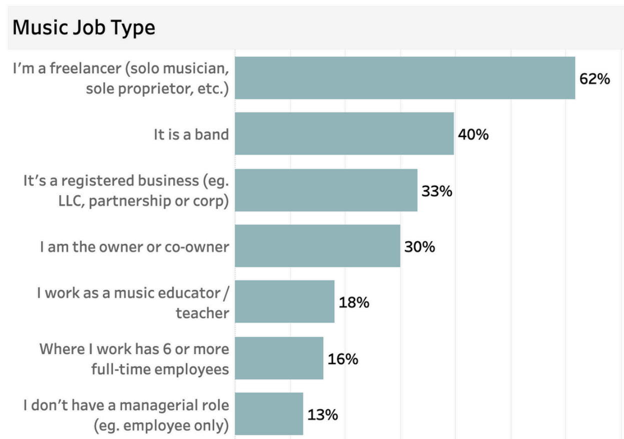
“The cost of living (insurance & taxes) are cost-prohibitive for nothing in return.”

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

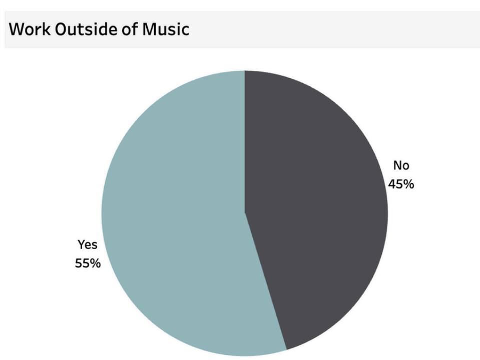
Economic Activity (continued 2/4)

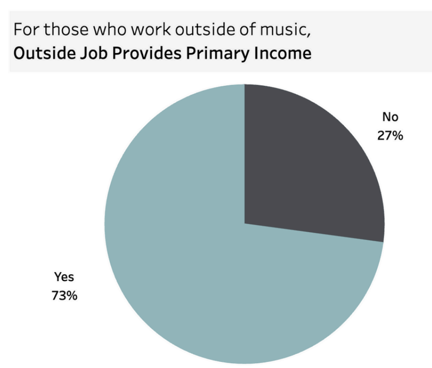
- **Music Job Type/Compensation** - The majority of respondents in New Orleans are freelancers and sole proprietors, making up 62% of the music job types. Most earn money independently (68%) through roles such as independent musicians. Additionally, 40% of respondents are part of bands, while 33% work within registered businesses like LLCs or corporations, and 30% are owners or co-owners. Music educators account for 18%, and 16% work in larger organizations with six or more employees. A smaller portion, 13%, hold non-managerial roles, and 9% are unpaid.

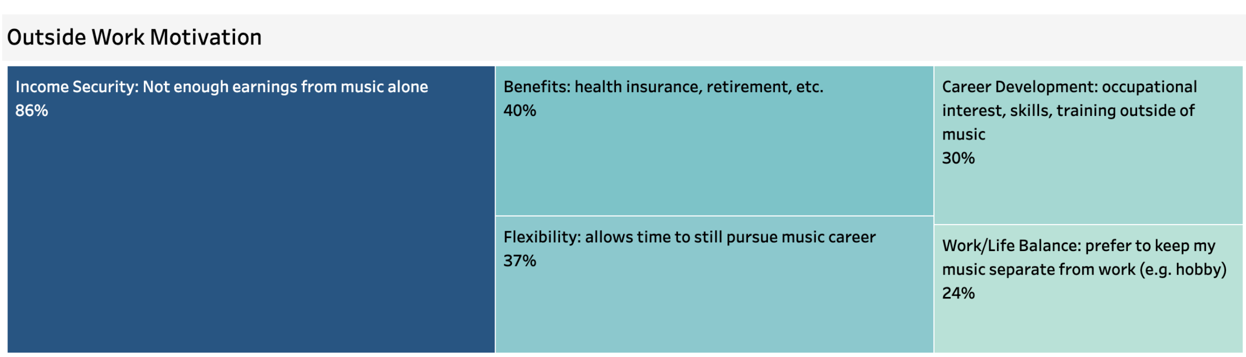




- **Work Outside Music** - A significant portion of music respondents, 55%, reported they work outside music to supplement their income, while 45% do not work outside of music. Of those who work outside the music industry, 73% rely on their outside job as their primary income, whereas 27% do not depend on their outside job as their main source of income. This highlights the economic challenges faced by music professionals in New Orleans, where a majority need to seek additional employment to achieve financial stability.





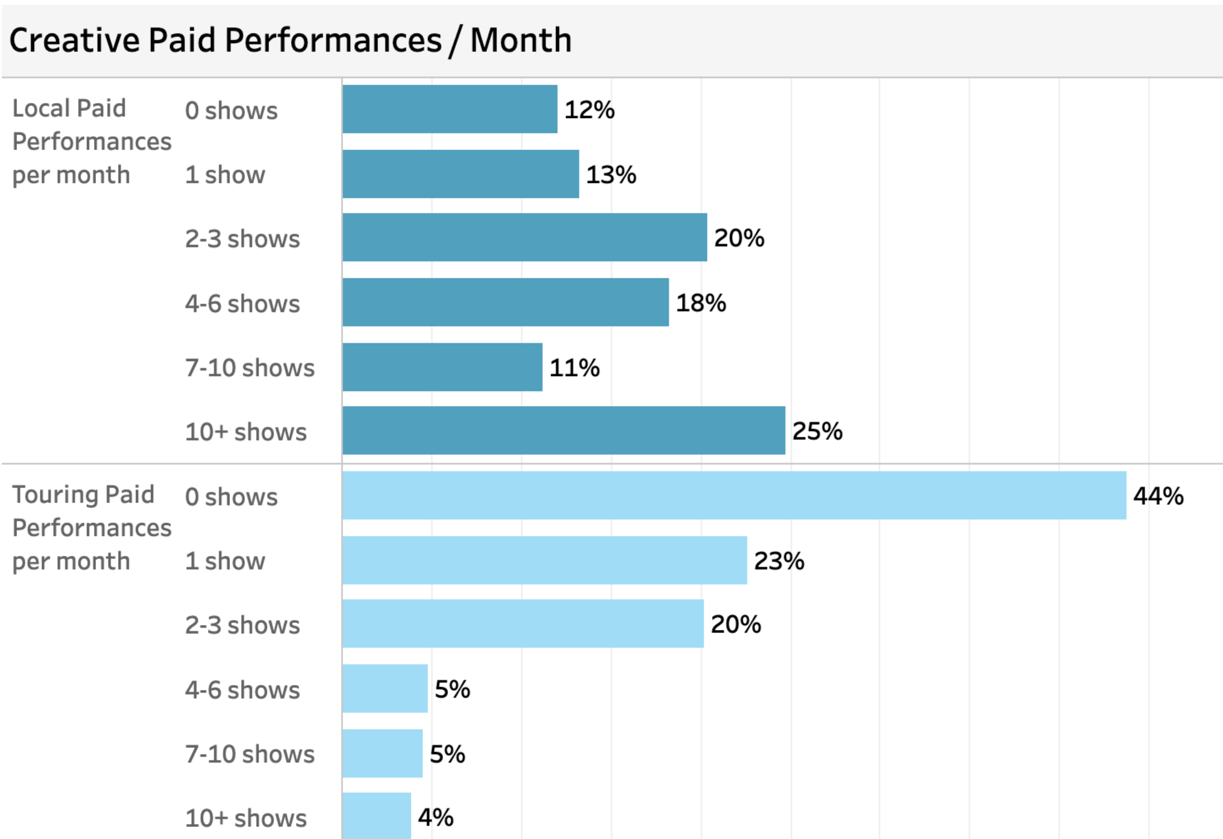


Economic Activity (continued 3/4)

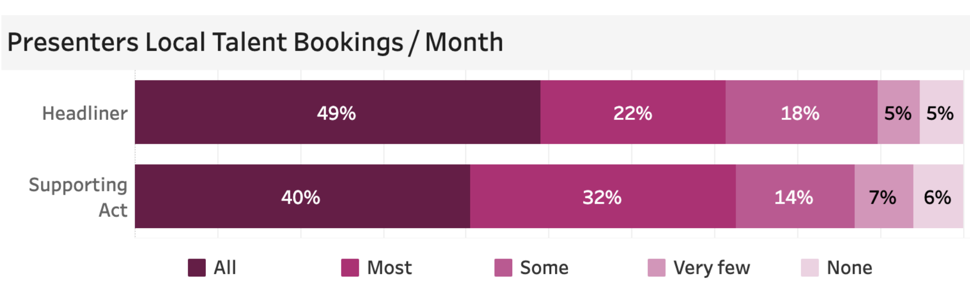
- **Creative Performance Frequency & Pay** - Among music respondents, 25% reported performing 10 or more local paid shows per month, while 20% perform 2-3 shows, 18% perform 4-6 shows, 13% perform 1 show, and 12% perform no local shows. For touring performances, 44% do not perform any paid shows per month, 23% perform 1 show, 20% perform 2-3 shows, and smaller percentages perform 4-6 shows (5%), 7-10 shows (5%), and 10 or more shows (4%). The average pay per local performance is $536, whereas the average pay per touring performance is $624.

$536
average pay/local gig

$624
average pay/touring gig



- **Venue Live Events and Local Talent Bookings** - Venues in New Orleans host an average of 163 live events per year, totaling 17,728 events across all Venue/Presenter respondents. Regarding local talent bookings per month, 49% of headliner slots feature local talent at all events, 22% at most events, 18% at some events, and 10% at very few or no events. For supporting acts, 40% of bookings are for local talent at all events, 32% at most events, 14% at some events, and 13% at very few or no events.



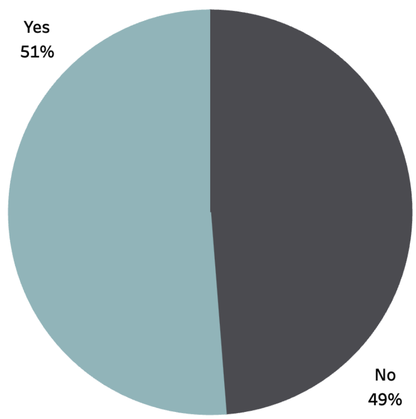
Venues average
163
live events/year

17,728
total live events/year

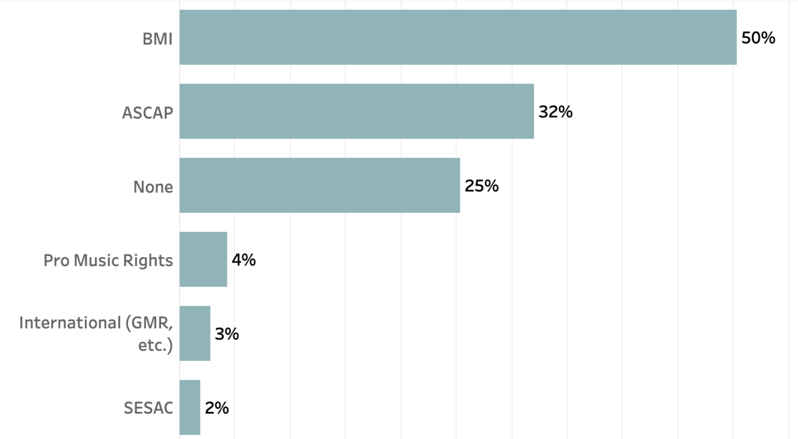
Economic Activity (continued 4/4)

- **Publishing/Licensing** - Among music respondents, 51% are IP rights-holders, while 49% are not. Regarding royalty collection, 50% use BMI, 32% use ASCAP, and 25% do not use any collection methods. Other methods include Pro Music Rights (4%), international organizations (3%), and SESAC (2%). In terms of licensing, 52% do not engage in licensing, 21% have a provider handle it for them, 17% work with a publisher or rights administrator, and another 17% rely on their record label or a sync representative.

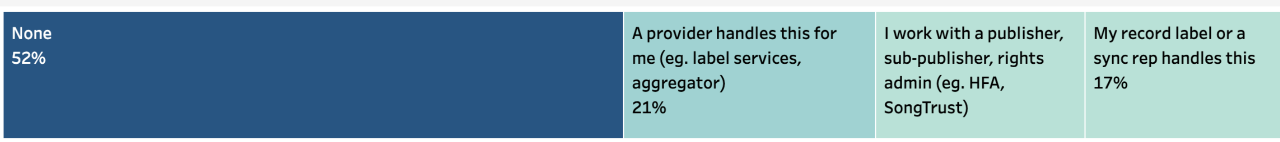
IP Rightsholder



Royalty Collection Methods



Licensing



> It's tough to make a living as a musician in New Orleans. The pay is often low, and gigs can be inconsistent. Financial stability is a big concern

> Most musicians who care and are talented enough to prosper don't trust taking this survey for fear it will be used against us to make things worse.

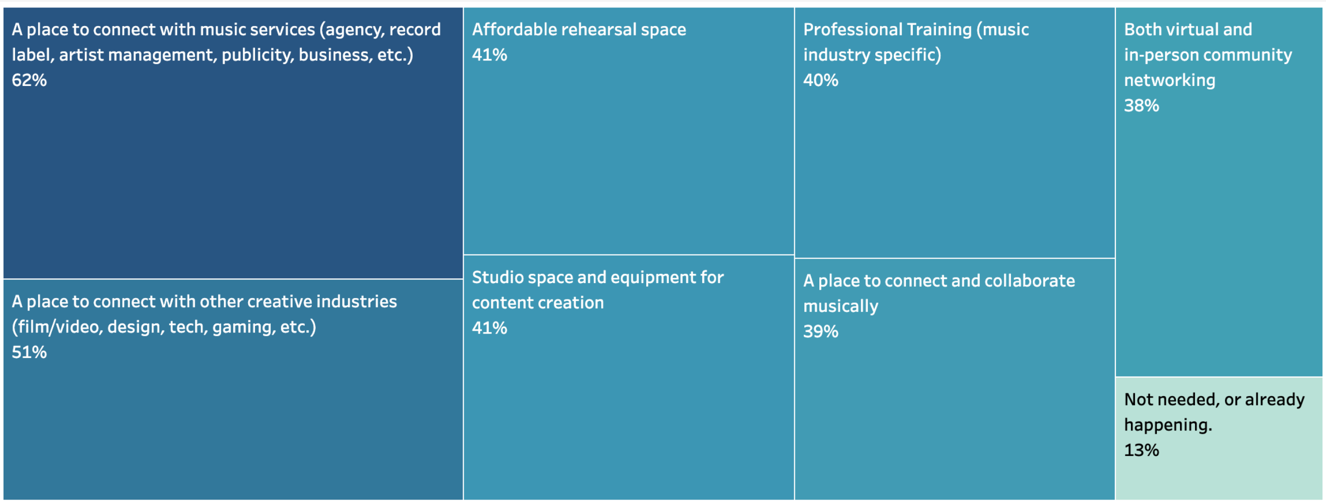
> I myself, after 20 plus years of working in this city, have found myself commuting to Nashville for the last 3 years to support my efforts to try and grow my career.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Ecosystem Development

In terms of NOLA music ecosystem development, respondents show a strong preference for connecting with music industry services, with 62% seeking connections to agencies, record labels, and similar entities, and 51% desiring links to other creative industries. Venue and presenters prioritize audience development tools (72%) and forming coalitions like a local NIVA chapter (67%). Financial assistance for music work has been received by 43% of respondents, with pandemic relief (71%) and private/non-profit grants (55%) being the most common types. Most respondents rent their commercial workspace, with 67% renting temporary live performance spaces and 65% renting permanent venues, and a significant need exists for rehearsal (56%) and studio spaces (57%).

Local Music Resource Preference



- **Local Music Resource Preference** - Respondents show a strong preference for connecting with music industry services, with 62% indicating a need for a place to connect with agencies, record labels, artist management, publicity, and business services. Following this, 51% of respondents expressed a desire for a place to connect with other creative industries such as film, video, design, tech, and gaming. Affordable rehearsal space, studio space and equipment for content creation, and professional training specific to the music industry are each sought by around 41% of respondents. Additionally, 39% want a place to connect and collaborate musically, and 38% favor both virtual and in-person community networking. A smaller portion, 13%, feel that these resources are either not needed or already happening.

> “We need to support the entire ecosystem, including venues, musicians, and related businesses.”

> “Encouraging innovation and creativity within the music scene can lead to long-term growth.”

> “If the city cares about retaining artists, there needs to be support for the whole ecosystem.”

> “More mentorship for young musicians.”

> “Lack of resources, training, and industry networking.”

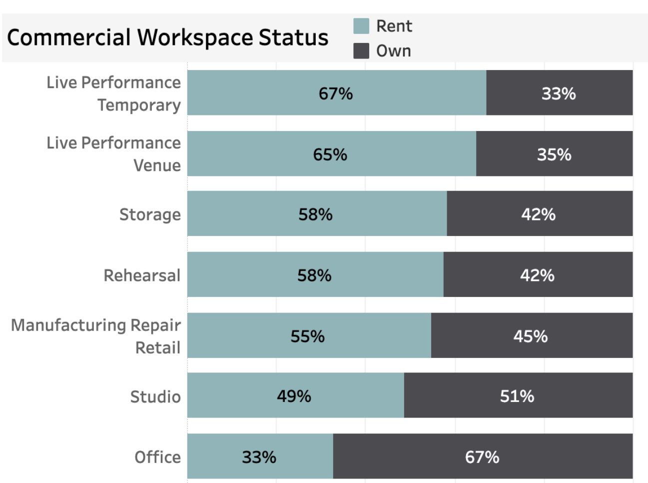
> “Better training and professional development programs for musicians.”

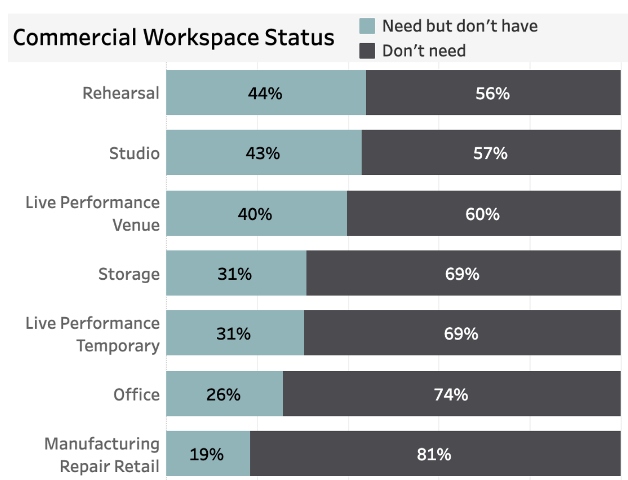
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Ecosystem Development (continued 2/3)

- **Venue/Presenter Business Resources** - Venue and Presenters expressed a strong preference for business resources, with 72% prioritizing audience development tools such as local media, gig calendars, and publicity. A venue/presenter coalition (e.g., a local NIVA chapter) is preferred by 67% of respondents. Formal access to local planning or advocacy, such as board seats, is important to 61%, while 60% desire a best practices guide for presenting live music locally. Other significant preferences include tax-status blind public arts funding (58%), a current directory of local production providers (57%), industry-specific workforce development (57%), and a social media group for local presenters (53%).

- **Commercial Workspace Status** - A majority of respondents rent their commercial workspace, with 67% renting temporary live performance spaces and 65% renting permanent venues. Storage and rehearsal spaces are each rented by 58%, while 42% own them. Additionally, 55% rent manufacturing, repair, and retail spaces, compared to 45% ownership. Studio spaces are split with 49% renting and 51% owning, while office spaces are primarily owned (67%). In terms of needs, 56% need rehearsal space, 57% need studio space, and 60% need live performance venues. Storage and temporary live performance spaces are each needed by 69%, while office space is needed by 26%, and manufacturing, repair, and retail space by 19%.

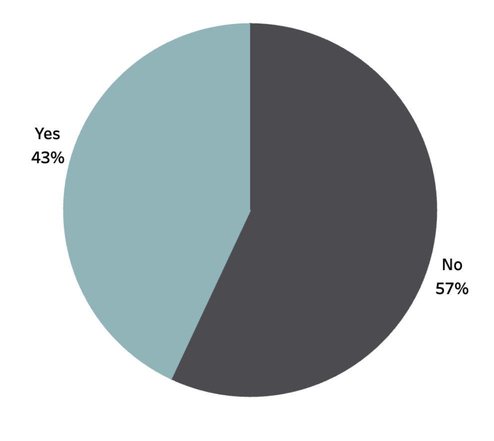




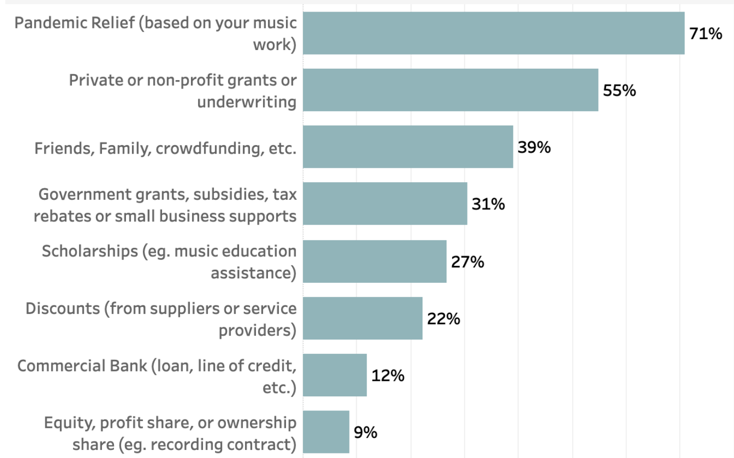
Ecosystem Development (continued 3/3)

- **Financial Support** - Of the respondents, 43% have a history of receiving financial assistance for their music work, while 57% have not. Among the types of financial assistance received, pandemic relief based on music work is the most common at 71%. This is followed by private or non-profit grants or underwriting at 55%, and assistance from friends, family, or crowdfunding at 39%. Government grants, subsidies, and tax rebates account for 31%, while scholarships for music education constitute 27%. Other forms of financial assistance include discounts from suppliers or service providers (22%), commercial bank loans or lines of credit (12%), and equity, profit share, or ownership shares like recording contracts (9%).

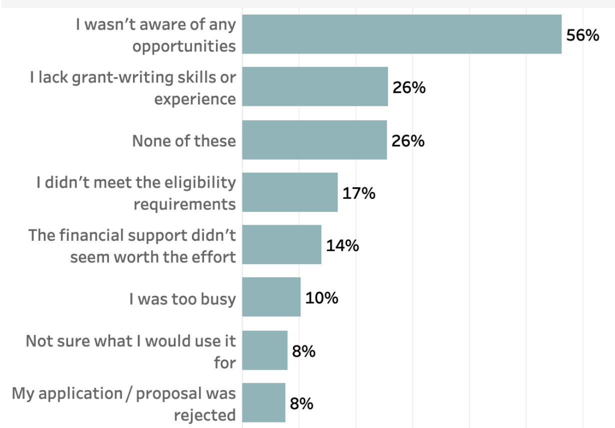
History of Financial Assistance for Music Work



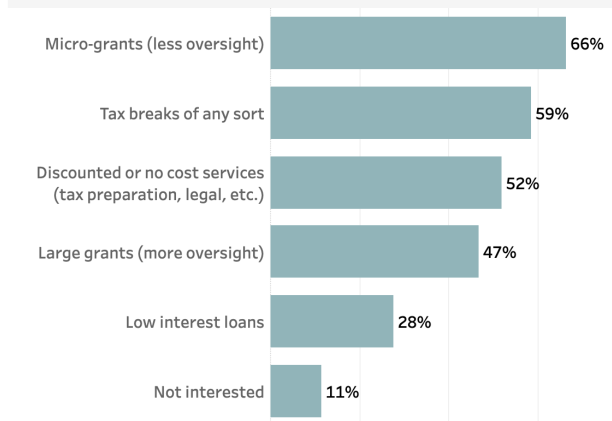
Type of Financial Assistance for Music Work



Financial Assistance Barrier



Financial Assistance Preference



> "More funding and resources should be directed towards grassroots music initiatives."

> "Too many gatekeepers disguised as community advocates."

> "Lack of infrastructure... I'm forced to partner with companies outside of the region."

> "Improving infrastructure will benefit both musicians and the local economy."

> "We need better pipelines to cultivate not just the biggest stars, but the working musicians playing the music we are famous for."

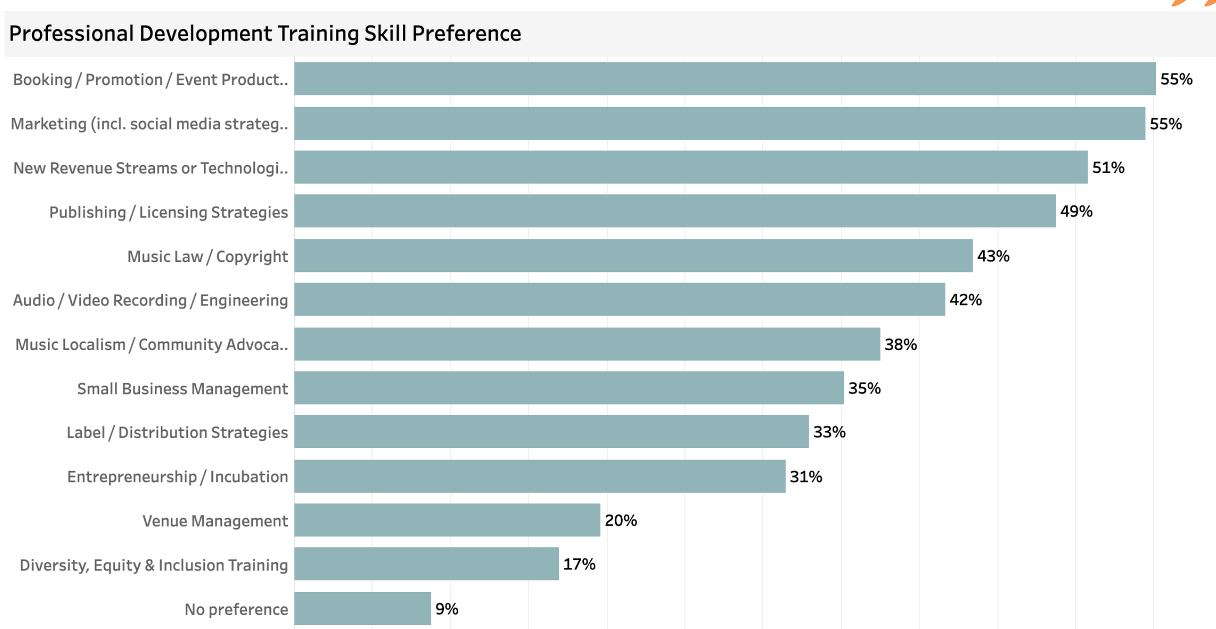
> "Growth would be fostered with city funded music networking events/jams."

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

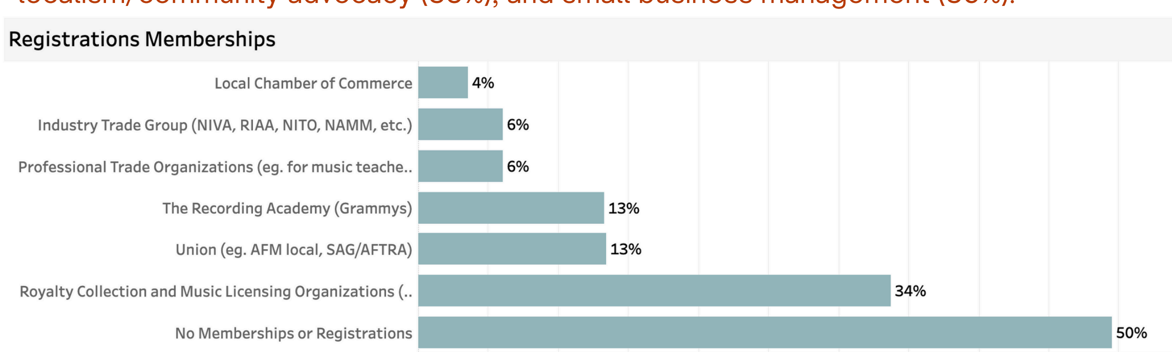
Workforce Development

A significant majority of NOLA respondents, 83%, have over 10 years of experience in the music industry. Key professional development interests include event promotion, marketing, new revenue streams, and publishing strategies. Half of the respondents are not members of any industry organizations, though 34% belong to royalty collection and music licensing groups, and 13% are members of The Recording Academy (Grammys) and unions.

> We need more educational programs and workshops to help musicians improve their skills and navigate the industry effectively.



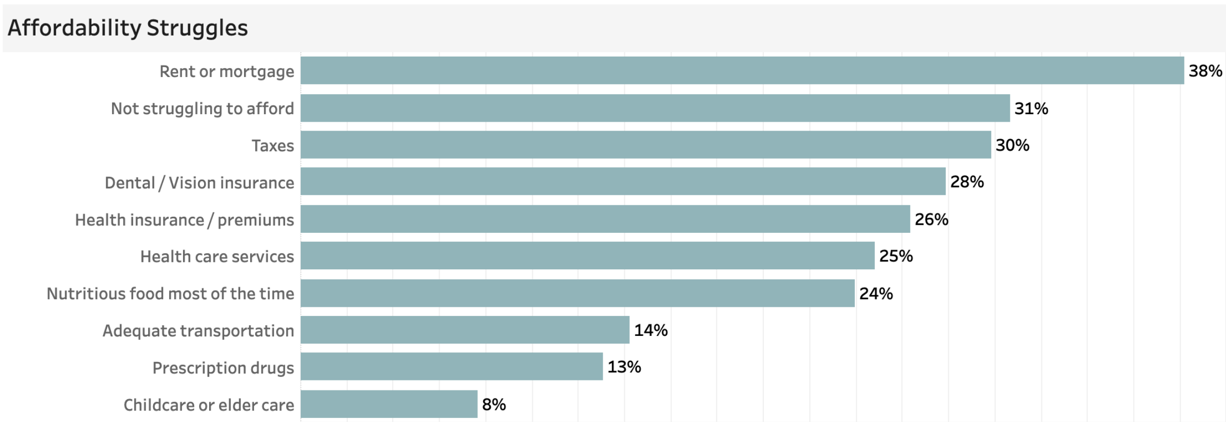
- **Professional Development** - Top preferences for professional development training include booking, promotion, and event production, and marketing (both at 55%), followed by new revenue streams or technologies (51%), publishing and licensing strategies (49%), and music law/copyright (43%). Other significant areas of interest are audio/video recording/engineering (42%), music localism/community advocacy (38%), and small business management (35%).



- **Professional Industry Associations** - A significant portion of respondents, 63%, have no memberships or registrations in music-related organizations. Of those who do, 20% are members of royalty collection and music licensing organizations, 13% belong to professional trade organizations (e.g., for music teachers), and 5% are part of industry trade groups or local chambers of commerce. Only 2% are members of unions (e.g., AFM local, SAG/AFTRA) or The Recording Academy (Grammys).

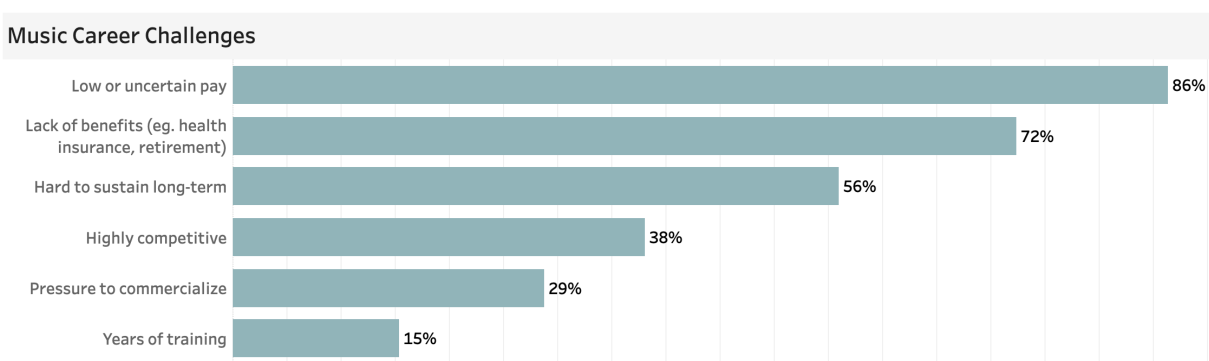
Livability

Respondents face significant challenges in their music careers, with 38% struggling with rent or mortgage payments and 86% citing low or uncertain pay as a major issue. Rising costs of living and stagnant pay rates are top concerns, affecting 55% and 58% of respondents, respectively. Venue/Presenters also face high insurance and talent costs, with 27% and 22% rating these as significant challenges. 31% of respondents report that they are not struggling to afford their basic needs, although that means that 69% are struggling with affordability.



- **Affordability** - 38% of respondents struggle with rent or mortgage payments, while 31% do not face affordability issues. Taxes are a challenge for 30%, followed by dental/vision insurance (28%), health insurance premiums (26%), and healthcare services (25%). Other significant struggles include affording nutritious food (24%), adequate transportation (14%), prescription drugs (13%), and childcare or elder care (8%).

- **Music Career Challenges** - Low or uncertain pay is the most significant challenge, affecting 86% of respondents. Lack of benefits, such as health insurance and retirement, is a problem for 72%, and 56% find it hard to sustain their career long-term. The highly competitive nature of the industry impacts 38%, while 29% feel pressure to commercialize. Years of training is a challenge for 15%.



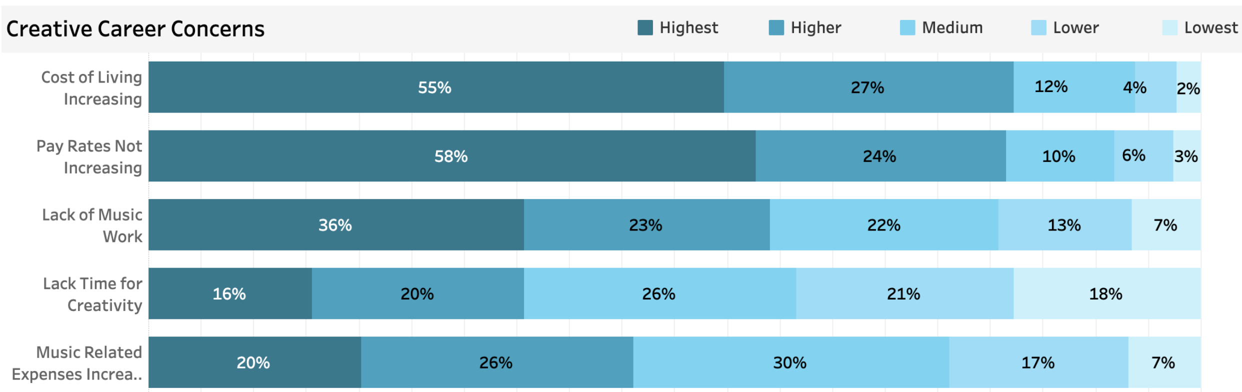
> "More affordable rehearsal spaces are needed for musicians."

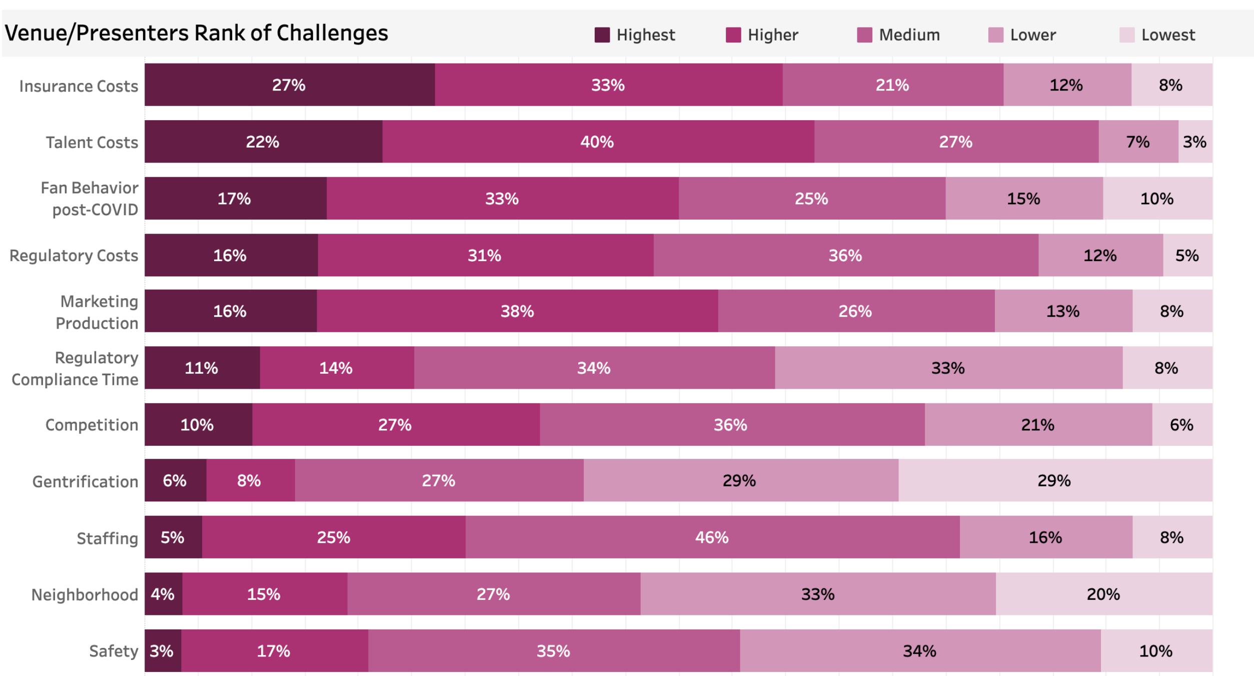
> "There needs to be more consideration given to musicians in terms of parking."

Livability (continued)

- **Creative Career Concerns** - The increasing cost of living is a top concern for 55% of respondents, with 27% rating it as a higher concern. Pay rates not increasing is an issue for 58%, while 36% are worried about the lack of music work. Time for creativity is a concern for 16%, and 20% are worried about increasing music-related expenses.

- **Venue/Presenters Rank of Challenges** - Insurance costs are a major challenge for 27% of Venue/Presenter respondents, followed by talent costs (22%) and fan behavior post-COVID (17%). Regulatory costs and marketing production are each significant for 16%. Other notable challenges include regulatory compliance time (11%), competition (10%), and gentrification (6%). Staffing and neighborhood issues are less prominent concerns.





> Better public transportation options would benefit the music community

> Our community needs support, but we need to start over and get rid of the gatekeepers.

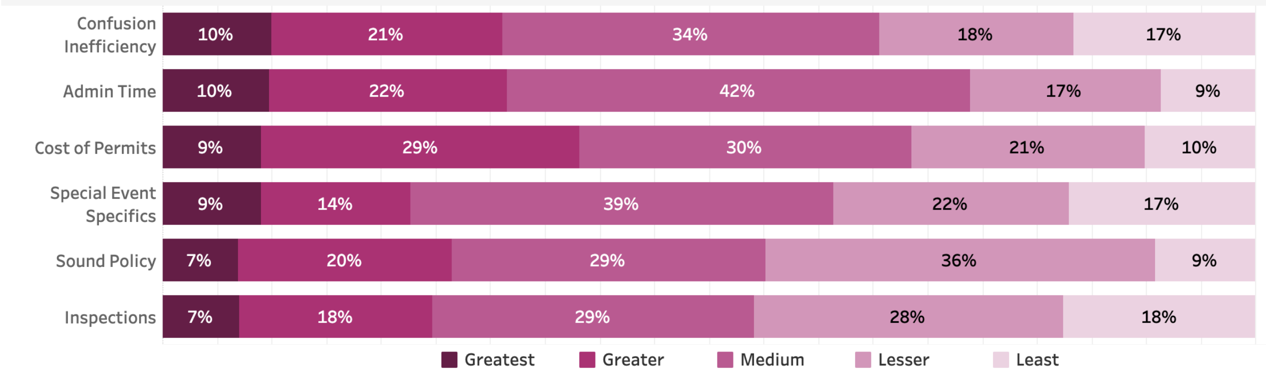
> Lack of music stores in the area makes it difficult for some musicians to get essential gear.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Music-Friendly Policies

Venue/Presenters face significant regulatory challenges, with confusion inefficiency, extensive admin time, and cost of permits being the most notable issues. They frequently encounter regulatory processes such as insurance for live music, security and public safety requirements, and music performance licenses. Financial assistance preferences include micro-grants, tax breaks, and discounted services, while preferred regulatory tools feature tax incentives, a regulatory webpage, and government advocates. Weather interruptions and city programs like musicians loading zones are mentioned but are less critical compared to the major regulatory and financial challenges faced by Venue/Presenters. Respondents feel that their access to sustainability resources like recycling and energy usage programs is inadequate.

Presenters Rank of Regulatory Challenges

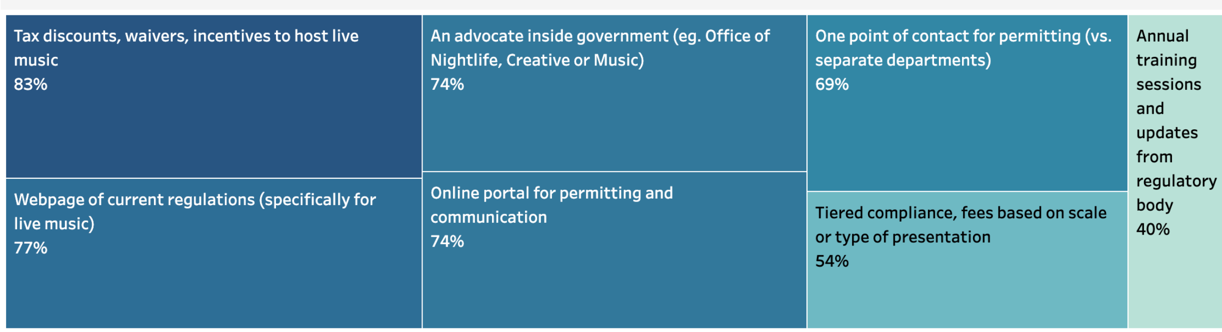


- **Regulatory Challenges** - Venue/Presenters face significant regulatory challenges, with confusion and inefficiency (34%) and admin time (42%) being the most notable. The cost of permits (30%) and special event specifics (39%) also present considerable difficulties. Other challenges include sound policy (29%) and inspections (29%).

> "We need a music advisory council that is comprised of real music people that truly represents the music community as a whole."

> "The city needs to make it easier and less expensive to open a business and maintain that business i.e. renewing permits, permitting costs, utility rates, providing grants, etc."

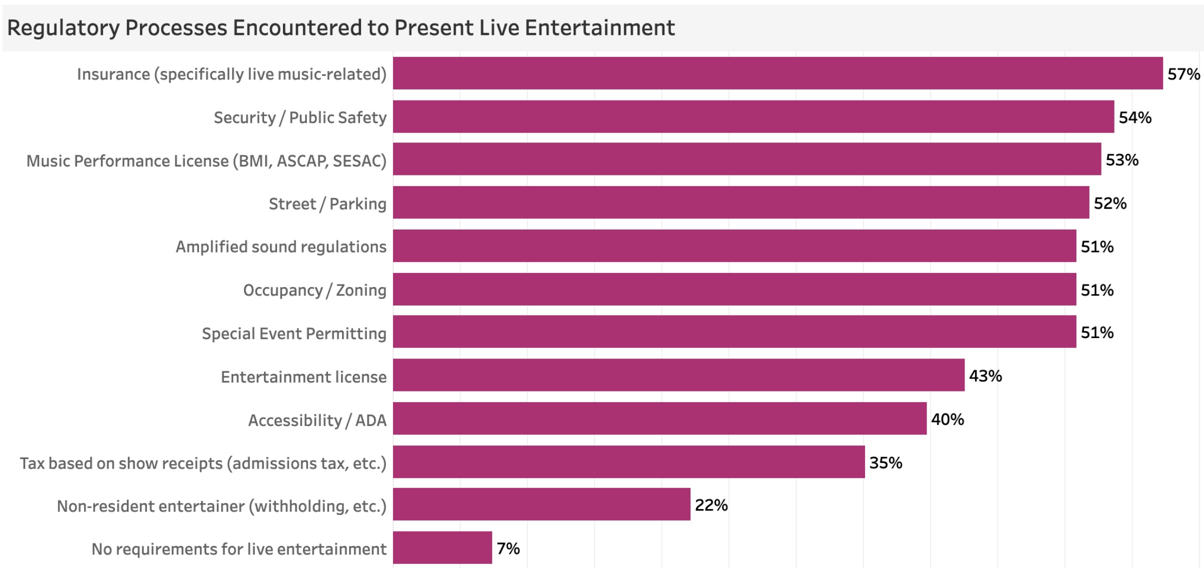
Presenters Regulatory Tools Preference



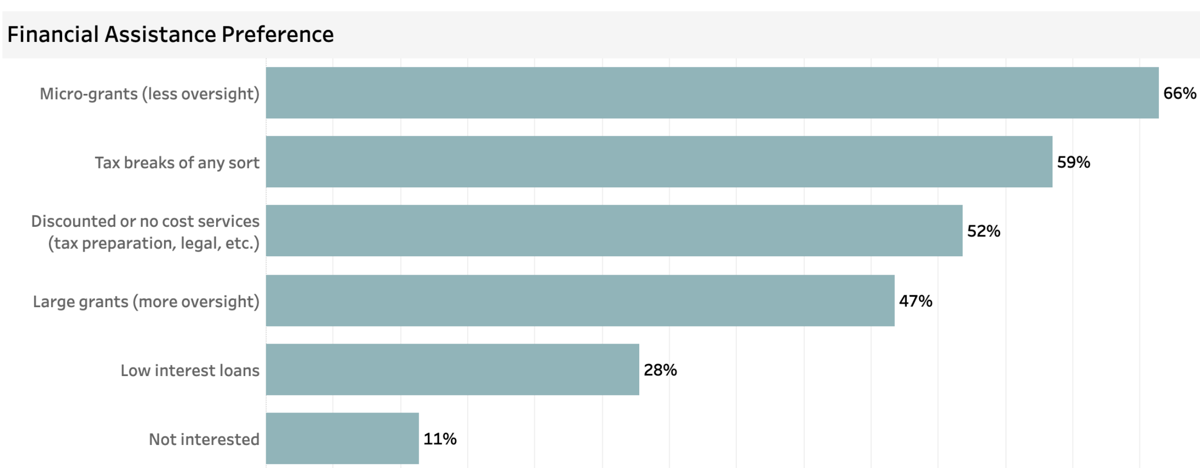
- **Venue/Presenter Tool Preference** - Preferred regulatory tools for respondents include tax discounts, waivers, and incentives to host live music (83%). Other significant preferences are a webpage of current regulations specifically for live music (77%), an advocate inside government (74%), an online portal for permitting and communication (74%), and a single point of contact for permitting (69%).

Music-Friendly Policies (continued 2/3)

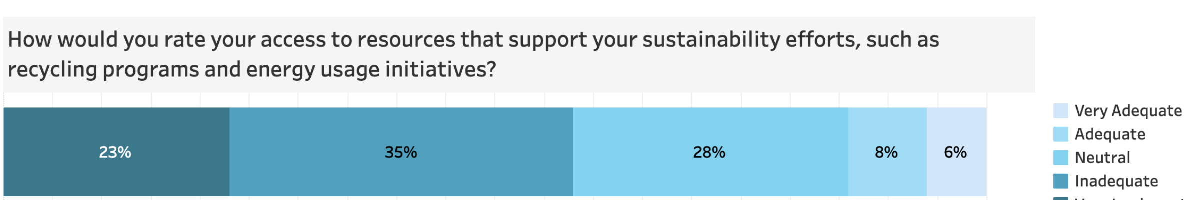
- **Regulatory Fluency** - Insurance specific to live music is a regulatory process encountered by 57% of Venue/Presenters, followed by security and public safety requirements (54%) and music performance licenses (53%). Additional regulations include street and parking permits (52%), amplified sound regulations (51%), occupancy and zoning requirements (51%), and special event permitting (51%).



- **Financial Assistance Preferences** - The preferred forms of financial assistance among respondents include micro-grants with less oversight (66%), tax breaks (59%), and discounted or no-cost services (52%). Large grants with more oversight are preferred by 47%, while 28% favor low-interest loans. Only 11% of respondents are not interested in financial assistance.



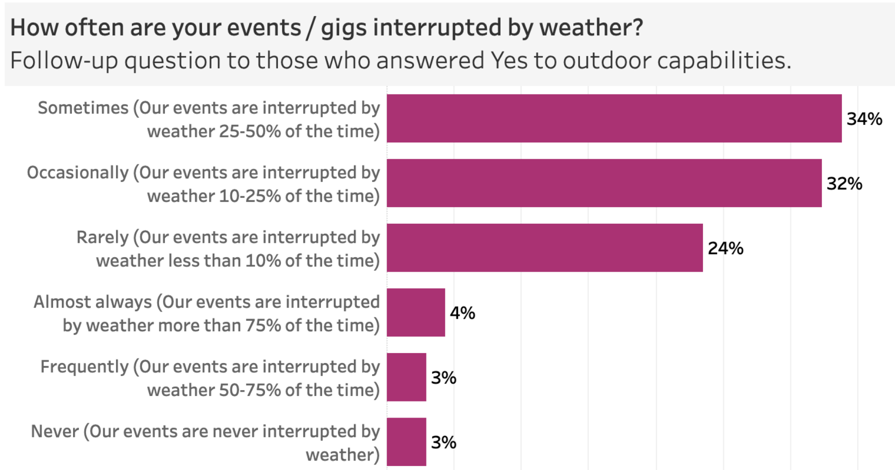
- **Access to Sustainability Resources** - Respondents feel that their access to sustainability resources like recycling and energy usage programs are very inadequate 23%, inadequate 35%, and 28% are neutral. Only 14% find their access adequate to very adequate.



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

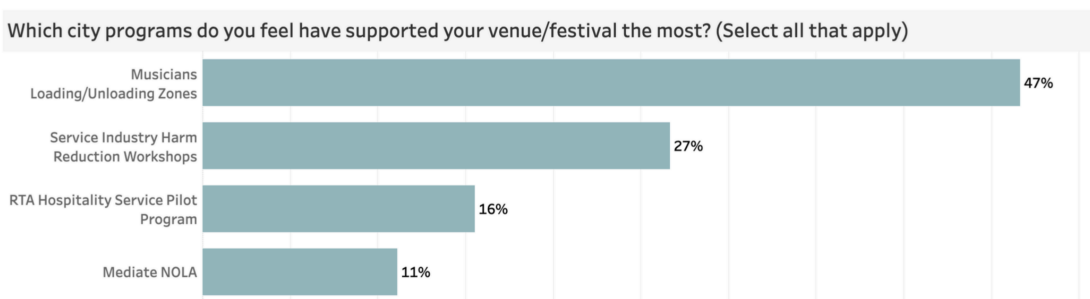
Music-Friendly Policies (continued 3/3)

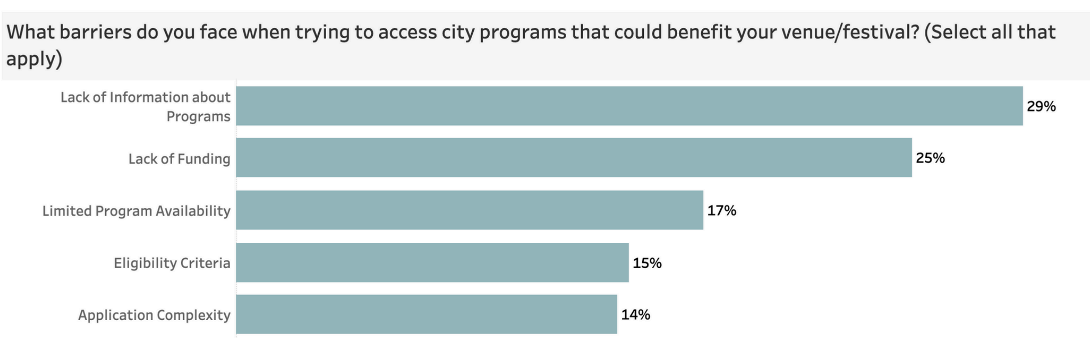
- **Weather Interruption of Events** - Weather impacts events to varying degrees, with 34% of respondents reporting interruptions 25-50% of the time and 32% occasionally experiencing interruptions 10-25% of the time. Events are rarely interrupted less than 10% of the time for 24% of respondents, while 4% report almost always being interrupted by weather.



- **City Programs Supporting Venues/Festivals** - Current city programs that support the local music ecosystem include musicians loading/unloading zones, which benefit 47% of respondents. Service industry harm reduction workshops support 27%, while the proposed RTA hospitality service pilot program would assist 16%. Mediate NOLA benefits 11% of respondents.

- **Barriers to Accessing City Programs** - Barriers to accessing city programs include a lack of information about the programs (29%) and lack of funding (25%). Limited program availability affects 17% of respondents, while 15% face eligibility criteria challenges. Application complexity is a barrier for 14% of respondents.





> Mandating closed-door policies, decibel limits, etc. would go a long way to making music more enjoyable.

> Permitting for outdoor events, second lines, and jazz funerals can be difficult and expensive to navigate.

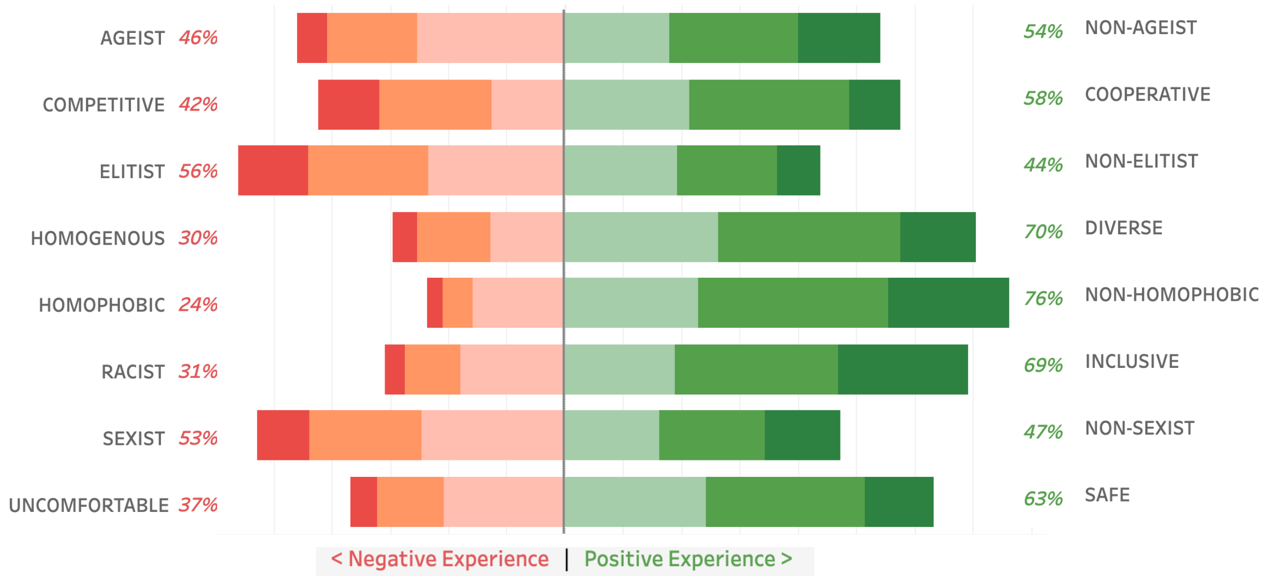
> Government and other agencies are often trying to create something new, rather than working with the infrastructure that is already here.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Culture & Belonging

Respondents find that the New Orleans music ecosystem offers mostly positive experiences. The NOLA music ecosystem's greatest strengths are that it is non-homophobic (76%), diverse (70%), and inclusive (69%). The NOLA music ecosystem challenges are elitism (56%), sexism (53%), highlighting areas for potential improvement.

Do you find your local music scene...



Subgroup Insights

Please see the online dashboard at NOLAmusiccensusorg for full data on each indicator by subgroup. Some overarching themes to the subgroups are:

- **Negative experiences** - Respondents who experience the most negative (red) side of the New Orleans ecosystem are people who identify as Black, African or African American as well as those who identify as Bisexual. To a lesser extent, people who are 18-24 years old and those who identify as Two or More Races also experience the negative side of New Orleans.

> "The community is very welcoming and willing to help each other most of the time."

> "It often feels like certain groups are excluded from opportunities, whether it's because of race, gender, or even the type of music they play."

> "There is a noticeable lack of representation for women and people of color in the music scene. It's discouraging."

> "There's a sense of elitism among certain circles, making it difficult for emerging artists to get noticed."

> "The music community feels fragmented, with little effort to bring in diverse or underrepresented artists."

> "There needs to be better collaboration in the community. Too many of our music organizations are more focused on empire building and gate keeping opportunities."

> "We have some good organizations trying to help, but we have too many gatekeepers disguised as community advocates."

> "There is certainly a 'boys' club and folks that are gatekeepers of better opportunities-especially at certain clubs..."

Key Insights

Economic Contributions: Music significantly contributes to the income of New Orleans music professionals, generating a total of $26 million annually across all respondents. Creative annual expenses yields a collective spend of $12 million annually of which 54% stays local. However, many professionals face financial challenges, with 55% working outside music and 74% of these relying on their outside job as their primary source of income in spite of relatively high pay for performance of $536/local performance and $624/touring performance.

Music Ecosystem Composition: The New Orleans music ecosystem is predominantly composed of individuals in the Music Creative sector (63%), with healthy representations in both Industry (26%) and Venue/Presenter roles (11%). The demographic composition of respondents is predominantly White/European Origin (64%), with underrepresentation of Black, African, or African American (21%) and a higher percentage of Two or more races (7%), Hispanic (6%) Asian or Asian American (1%) populations compared to the New Orleans general population.

Experience Levels: A significant majority (83%) of the music ecosystem participants have over 10 years of experience, indicating a mature workforce. This suggests stability but also highlights a need to attract and nurture new talent to sustain growth and innovation, especially the 18–24 year old segment of the community.

Professional Development: There is a strong demand for professional development, particularly in areas like booking/promotion/event production, marketing and new revenue streams and technologies.

Regulatory Landscape: Venue/Presenters face significant regulatory challenges, with confusion inefficiency, administrative time, and the cost of permits being the most prominent issues. Sound policy, special event specifics, and inspections are also challenges for many Venue/Presenters.

Performance Opportunities: Venues in New Orleans host an average of 163 live events per year, totaling 17,728 events across all Venue/Presenter respondents. Among New Orleans Creatives, performance frequency varies significantly; 13% perform 1 show, while 25% of musicians perform 10 or more local paid shows monthly, while 44% do not perform any paid touring shows.

Power Dynamics and Access: Community members comment on barriers to access and participation with a significant number of comments on gatekeeping. In terms of financial assistance, 56% are unaware of grant opportunities and 66% would prefer microgrants.

Sector Connections: Respondents express a strong desire to connect with music industry services as well as other creative industry sectors (film/video, design tech and gaming, etc.).

Commercial Music Space Needs: 67% of respondents rent temporary live performance spaces, and 65% rent permanent venues. For storage and rehearsal spaces, 58% rent these spaces, while 42% own them. Additionally, 44% of respondents need rehearsal space, and 43% need studio space.

Livability and Career Concerns: Musicians in New Orleans face significant economic challenges, primarily driven by the increasing cost of living and stagnant pay rates. Over half of the respondents identified these issues as their top career concerns. Many musicians struggle with rent or mortgage payments and lack essential benefits such as retirement and insurance.

Opportunities

Reestablish the Music & Entertainment Commission: As an advisory body to the Mayor and City Council on music development issues. This commission should serve as an open and transparent forum to address challenges and promote opportunities within the entire music ecosystem, fostering better connectivity between the music sectors and the broader creative and cultural community. It should be supported by staff from both the Cultural Economy Office and the Office of Nighttime Economy. While New Orleans has a rich musical heritage, the music community faces challenges such as gatekeeping, limited access to opportunities, and a lack of cohesive representation.

Musician Loading Zones: Re-work Musician Loading Zone permit to make it more accessible for music venues to apply for. Research best practices among cities that provide this, as some do not require permits or placards by requiring Active Loading instead, using less city resources to manage the program.

Music Hubs, Virtual and Physical Spaces: A series of smaller hubs utilizing existing spaces, such as venues and other cultural and creative spaces. These hubs would provide a nexus for music services, collaboration among musicians, and connections with other creative sectors. These could also offer essential resources like affordable rehearsal areas, professional training, and studio space/equipment for content creation. Additionally, these hubs would serve as venues for both virtual and in-person networking, supporting the community's desire for a versatile and accessible musical environment.

Professional Development: Work with multiple community partners to offer workshops, seminars in music business education to build business acumen and skills among all sectors of the music industry, especially booking/promotion/event production, marketing and new revenue streams and technologies.

Mentorship Program: With 83% of respondents with 10+ years' experience, mentorship initiatives could plug in the experience across the ecosystem in a meaningful way.

Music Export Initiative: Establish a music export initiative that creates opportunities for more New Orleans musicians to showcase their music outside of the city. This would provide artists a needed engine and platform to grow their careers.

Photos Courtesy of City of New Orleans

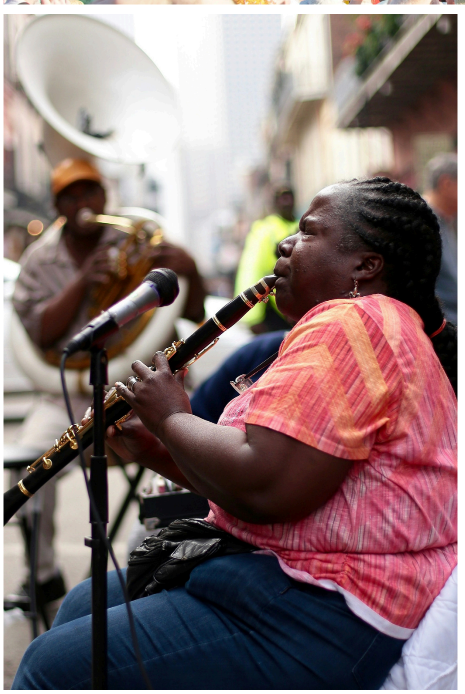
Opportunities (continued)

Diversify Revenue Streams: This includes developing a revenue-focused curriculum to educate artists to tap into a spectrum of hundreds of potential revenue streams, including digital content creation, merchandise sales, and more to build a more resilient and sustainable model, whether full or part time musician.

Address Regulatory Barriers: Venue/Presenter's rank of Regulatory Challenges shows significant issues across all touch points with regulatory agencies. Develop a one-stop-shop landing page that clearly lists requirements in non-legalese language for all types of music related permits. Create a best practice guide for presenting live music locally that includes a regulatory framework guide.

Audience Development: Create a program in collaboration between the City and local universities to support local music journalism to increase awareness and engagement with music, arts and cultural activities, support new journalism models.

Genre Development: The New Orleans music ecosystem has expressed a strong desire for increased inclusivity and support for a wider range of musical genres. A genre development initiative should prioritize equity in all forms, focus on the overall music marketplace, and promote diversity within the music workforce. This would involve outreach activities such as networking events, town halls, showcases, and partnerships with genre-building community groups and culturally inclusive events.



Photos Courtesy of City of New Orleans