CEDAR RAPIDS MUSIC CENSUS

Photo Courtesy of VenuWorks, Cedar Rapids Opera, fp Music Academy, Iowa Metal Underground

Preliminary FINAL REPORT
January 2025

SOUND MUSIC CITIES

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Executive Summary

The 2024 Cedar Rapids Music Census was a community-led initiative to gain a better understanding of the strengths, opportunities and needs of the Cedar Rapids music community. The Cedar Rapids Music Census ran from September 6 - October 15, 2024 and collected 463 responses.

The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem is predominantly composed of Music Creatives, who make up 72% of respondents. Industry professionals, representing roles such as managers and producers, account for 20%, while Venues and Presenters comprise the smallest segment at 8%.

Most Creatives (88%) in Cedar Rapids have over 10 years of experience, underscoring a seasoned professional community. Creative respondents take on a wide range of roles including musician/performer of original music (59%) and musician/performer in cover bands (55%). Career concerns include the lack of music work (38%), stagnant pay rates (31%), and the increasing cost of living (30%). Local live performances are the primary income source, relied on significantly by 49% of respondents. Creative respondents in Cedar Rapids spend an average of $5,842 annually on music-related expenses for a collective annual spend of $1.7 million, with 45% of that spending staying local. The Cedar Rapids Music Industry respondents primarily work as event and venue workers (26%), followed by production support (17%), recording (14%), and music marketing roles (13%).

Cedar Rapids Venue/Presenter respondents reflect diverse ownership and operational structures, with 49% being nonprofit (tax-exempt) organizations and 32% locally owned for-profit entities. Venues host an average of 47 live events annually, with mixed levels of local talent representation in bookings.

Top regulatory challenges for Venues and Presenters in Cedar Rapids include special event specifics and sound policies, with confusion inefficiency around interfacing with the City also a concern. Venue and Presenter respondents seek regulatory streamlining: advocating for a single point of contact (71%), tax incentives (64%), and a webpage of current regulations for live music (64%). Expanding live music events and cultural programming (30%) is the music community's top recommendation for energizing downtown, supported by calls for regular programming in public spaces (18%) and greater event diversity (16%).

Music generates a total of $9M in income annually across all respondents, with 22% of respondents' household income coming from music and an average annual music income of $19K. Most respondents are freelancers (47%) or part of a band (43%), with 55% receiving independent/direct payments.Two-thirds (67%) work outside of music, with 86% relying on these jobs as their primary income source Local performances are more frequent, averaging $337 per show compared to $375 for touring.

In terms of developing the music ecosystem, respondents are seeking collaboration spaces (50%) and access to music industry services (47%), followed by a significant interest in networking (42%) and connections to other creative industries (40%). The reliance on rented commercial spaces, including live performance venues (78%), underscores vulnerabilities to market fluctuations. Advocacy efforts for the music community are broadly supported, with 46% preferring a community-based collaborative, reflecting a desire for unified leadership. Venue respondents emphasize the importance of audience development tools (82%) and public performance spaces (48%) as key drivers for growth.

The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem is generally livable and offers many positive experiences but also faces challenges. Challenges include perceptions of elitism (69%), homogeneity (70%), and competitiveness (55%). However, the ecosystem's greatest strengths are its sense of safety (74%), inclusivity (67%), and being largely non-homophobic (66%).

This report and the online dashboard available at **CedarRapidsMusic.com** offer more in-depth data, insights, and opportunities to understand, support, and grow the Cedar Rapids music ecosystem and all the benefits it offers culturally and economically.

Introduction

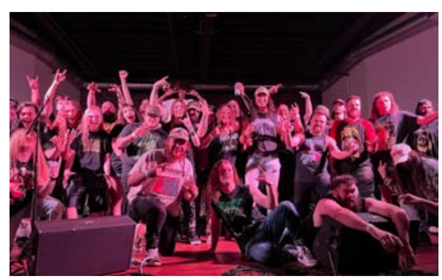
The Cedar Rapids Music Census is a civic-led initiative organized to gain a better understanding of the current strengths, opportunities and needs of the Cedar Rapids music community. A keystone of this initiative is conducting a Music Census that captures key information about our music ecosystem to help city leaders and the community make better informed, data-driven decisions to support and grow our music ecosystem.

463 responses
Sept. 6 - Oct. 15, 2024

8% venue/presenter
20% industry
72% music creatives

The Cedar Rapids Music Census ran from September 6-October 15, 2024 and collected 463 responses. The study was open to all people working in music in any capacity who are 18 years or older and living in the Cedar Rapids metro area which includes: Linn County, Benton County, and Jones County. 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 Cedar Rapids, VenuWorks, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, and Cedar Rapids Tourism. Cedar Rapids is joining the 2025 multi-city cohort program administered by Sound Music Cities which meets monthly to discuss best practices on improving music ecosystems, allowing Cedar Rapids to gain insight from other cities conducting similar research.

This 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 **CedarRapidsMusic.com**.



Photos Courtesy of fp Music Academy, Iowa Metal Underground, VenuWorks

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 a group of Lead Partners. 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 Lead Partners and Community Partners.

LEAD PARTNERS

City of Cedar Rapids
VenuWorks
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Cedar Rapids Tourism

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Abigail Rethwisch
Amy Curtis
Andrew Steffen
Beethoven Club of Cedar Rapids
Blame Papa Band
blueeyeddaze music
Bodhi Industries / ObeyGrey
Brucemore
Cedar Rapids Opera
Community Concert Association
CSPS Hall
Denny Redmond
Dreamthief
Farm Town Kid Music
Faux Doubt
Five Seasons Chamber Music Festival
fp Music Academy
Fun Not Fancy
Iowa Metal Underground
Iowa Music & Arts Association
Janelle Lauer
Jeff Roggendorf
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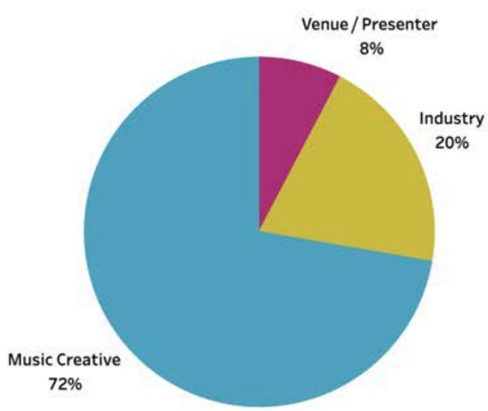
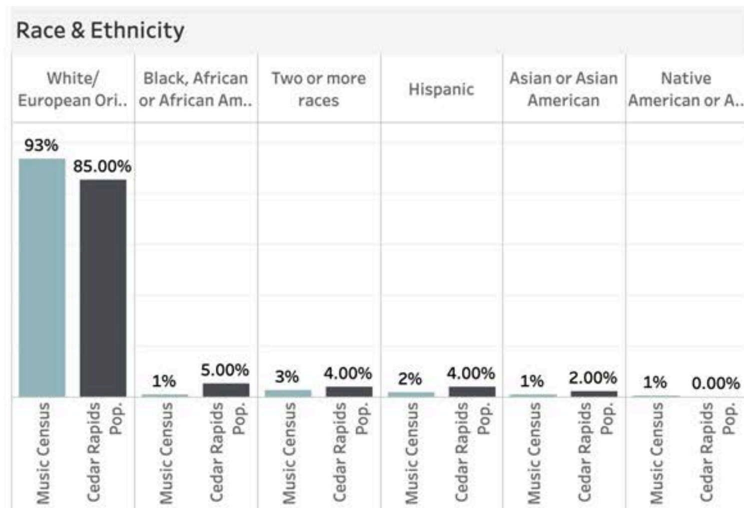
KFMW
Kyle Ware
Large Midgets
Lisa Wissenberg
Lori Lane
Lynn Kloft
Mike Buckman
Milk Chocolate Productions
Molly McDonell
New Horizons Band
Not.So.Flyover.
Nothings Real
On The House
Orchestra Iowa
Rock 108
Royal Boys Productions
Ryan Hoagland
School of Rock, Cedar Rapids
Schultz Strings
Shiara Nivana Photography
The George Jazz Group
The Ideal Theater & Bar
The Market at the Tap
The Olympic South Side Theater
The Poor Poor Rich
The Sound Box Recording Studio
Timothy Kaemmerer-Black
Tom Hofer Music Productions
Toxic Blonde
Up In Smoke BBQ
Vandello
Wired Production Group

Ecosystem Composition

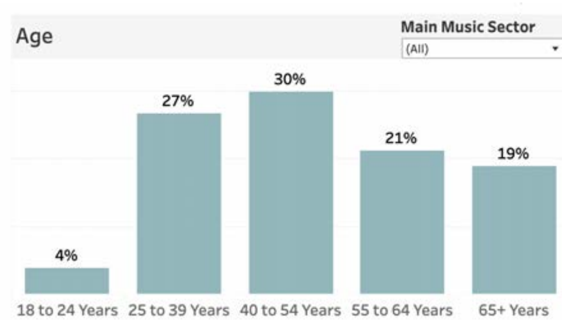
The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem is predominantly composed of Music Creatives, who make up 72% of respondents. Industry professionals, representing roles such as managers and producers, account for 20%, while Venues and Presenters comprise the smallest segment at 8%. This distribution emphasizes a creative-heavy ecosystem with opportunities to strengthen Venue and Industry infrastructure to better support the Creative majority.



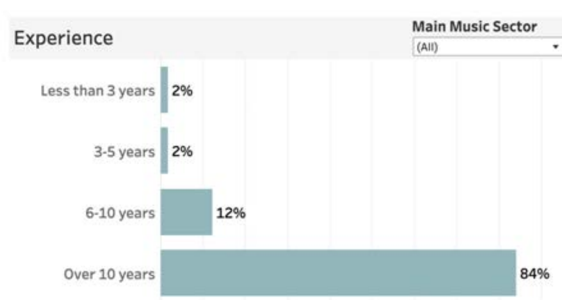


- **Race & Ethnicity** - Respondent data reveals a significant majority of White/European Origin, comprising 93% of the respondents, compared to 85% of the general Cedar Rapids population. This overrepresentation highlights a lack of racial and ethnic diversity among music ecosystem participants. Black or African American respondents make up only 1%, significantly lower than their 5% representation in the general population. Similarly, individuals identifying as Hispanic (2%) and Asian or Asian American (1%) are underrepresented compared to their 4% and 2% population shares, respectively. These findings suggest potential barriers to access or representation for non-White communities within Cedar Rapids' music ecosystem.

- **Age** - The age distribution of respondents showcases a diverse range of participants, with the largest group being those aged 40 to 54 years, accounting for 30%. This is followed by participants aged 25 to 39 years at 27%. The 55 to 64 age group represents 21%, and those 65 years and older make up 19%. Younger respondents aged 18 to 24 years are underrepresented, comprising only 4% of the total.

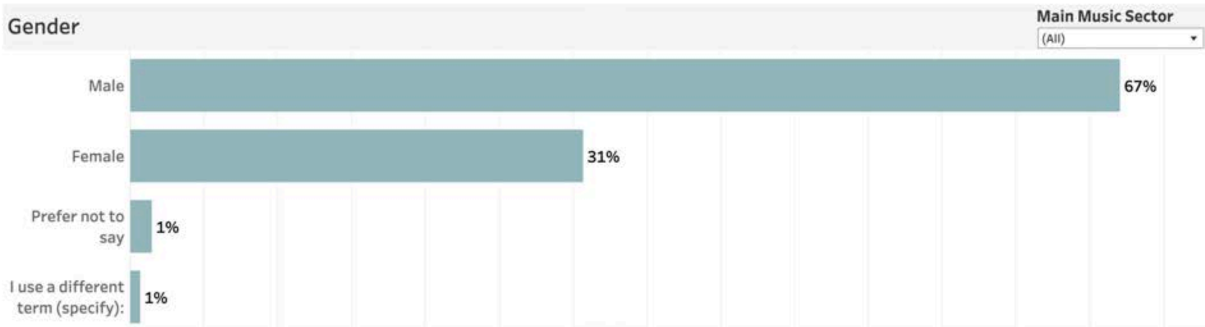


- **Experience** – A significant majority (84%) of respondents report over 10 years of experience in the music ecosystem, reflecting a highly seasoned participant base. Newer participants are limited, with only 2% having 3-5 years of experience and another 2% with less than 3 years. This suggests a need to engage and support emerging talent in the local music scene.

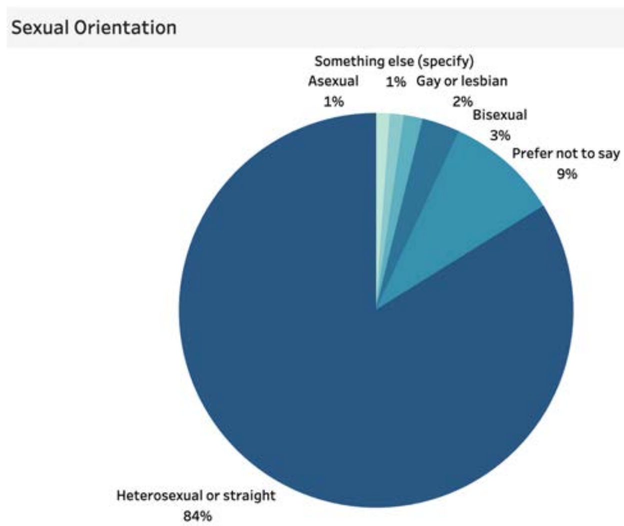


Ecosystem Composition (continued 2/4)

- **Gender** - The gender distribution highlights that 67% of participants in the Cedar Rapids Music Census identify as male, while 31% identify as female. A small percentage (1%) prefer not to disclose their gender, and another 1% use a different term to describe their gender. This distribution reflects a strong male majority across the ecosystem, which is consistent with broader trends in music ecosystems. community.



- **Sexual Orientation** - The majority of respondents in the Cedar Rapids Music Census identify as heterosexual or straight, comprising 84% of the participants. A smaller proportion of respondents identify as bisexual (3%), gay or lesbian (2%), asexual (1%), or use another term to describe their sexual orientation (1%). Notably, 9% of respondents prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation. These findings highlight the need for opportunities to foster inclusivity and engagement with underrepresented groups.



> A true music ecosystem involves everyone—audiences, artists, venues, and policymakers. Right now, there's no clear leadership to bring all those pieces together.

> The music ecosystem here is fragmented. It needs someone to bridge the gaps between all the different parts and bring everyone together.

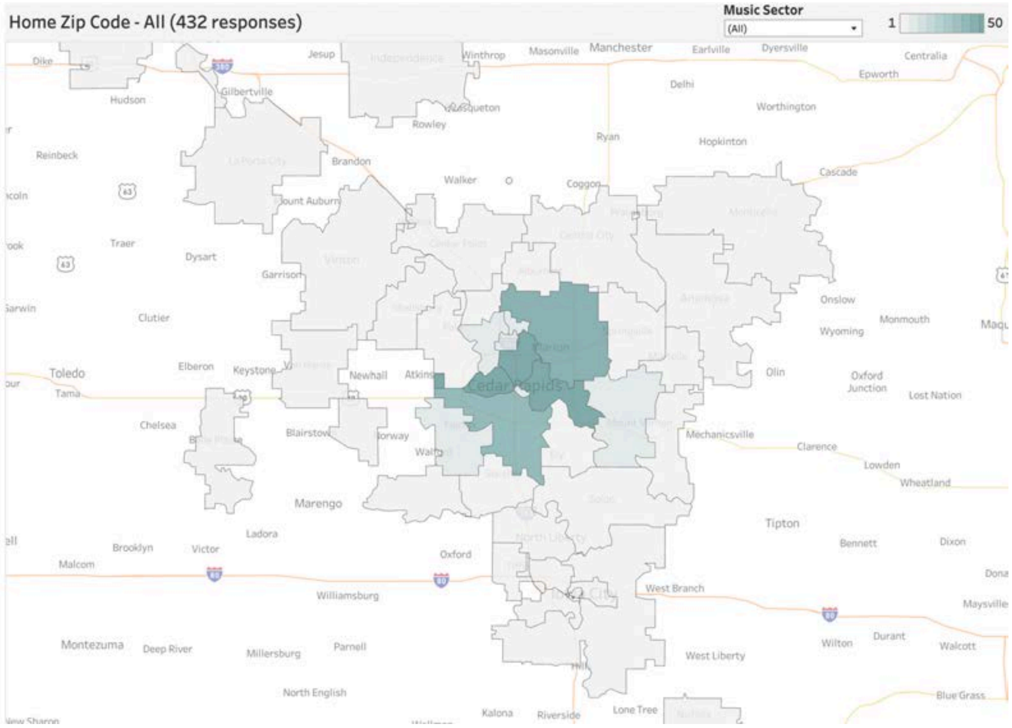
> The ecosystem needs more collaboration between cover bands, original artists, venues, and local organizations. Everyone is working in silos right now.

> The music scene here has so much potential, but it feels like the different parts—venues, artists, and promoters—aren't working together as they should.

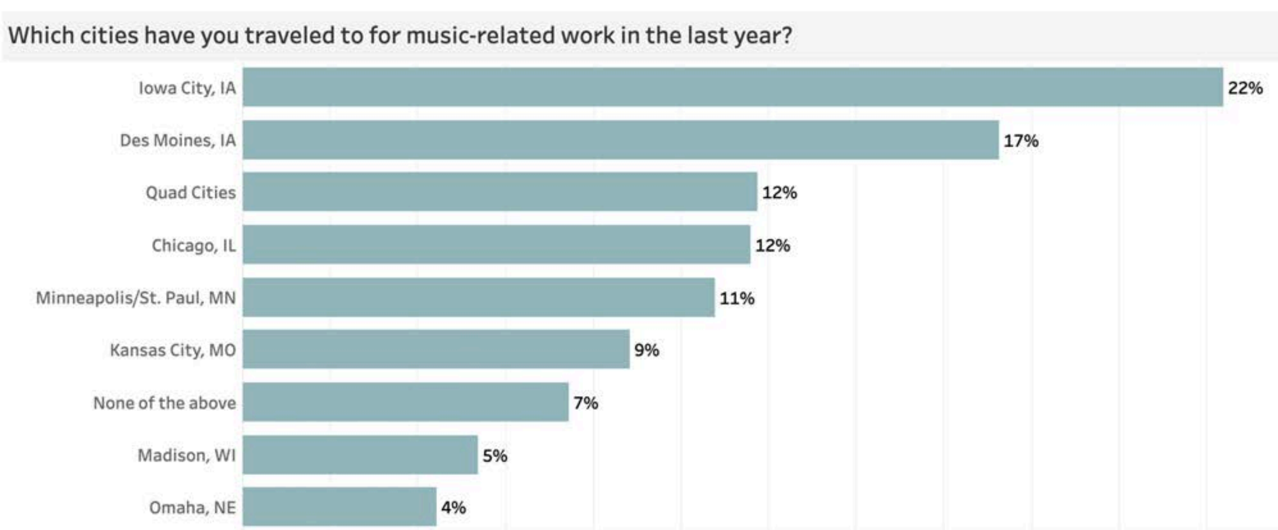
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Ecosystem Composition (continued 3/4)

- **Geography** - The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem is centrally located with most respondents in the following zip codes: 52402, 52403, 52404, 52405, and 52302.



- **Regional Music Work Destinations** - Among Cedar Rapids respondents, the most frequently traveled destination for music-related work in the past year was Iowa City, IA (22%), followed by Des Moines, IA (17%). The Quad Cities and Chicago, IL, were each visited by 12% of respondents, while 11% traveled to Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN. Other notable cities include Kansas City, MO (9%), Madison, WI (5%), and Omaha, NE (4%). Notably, 7% of respondents indicated they did not travel to any of the listed cities for music work, highlighting a mix of regional and local focus for music-related activities.



> “Cedar Rapids has the bones for a strong music ecosystem, but the community needs to recognize and prioritize it as an asset.”

> “The city seems to only support a few parts of the ecosystem, like big events or festivals, instead of fostering year-round local growth.”

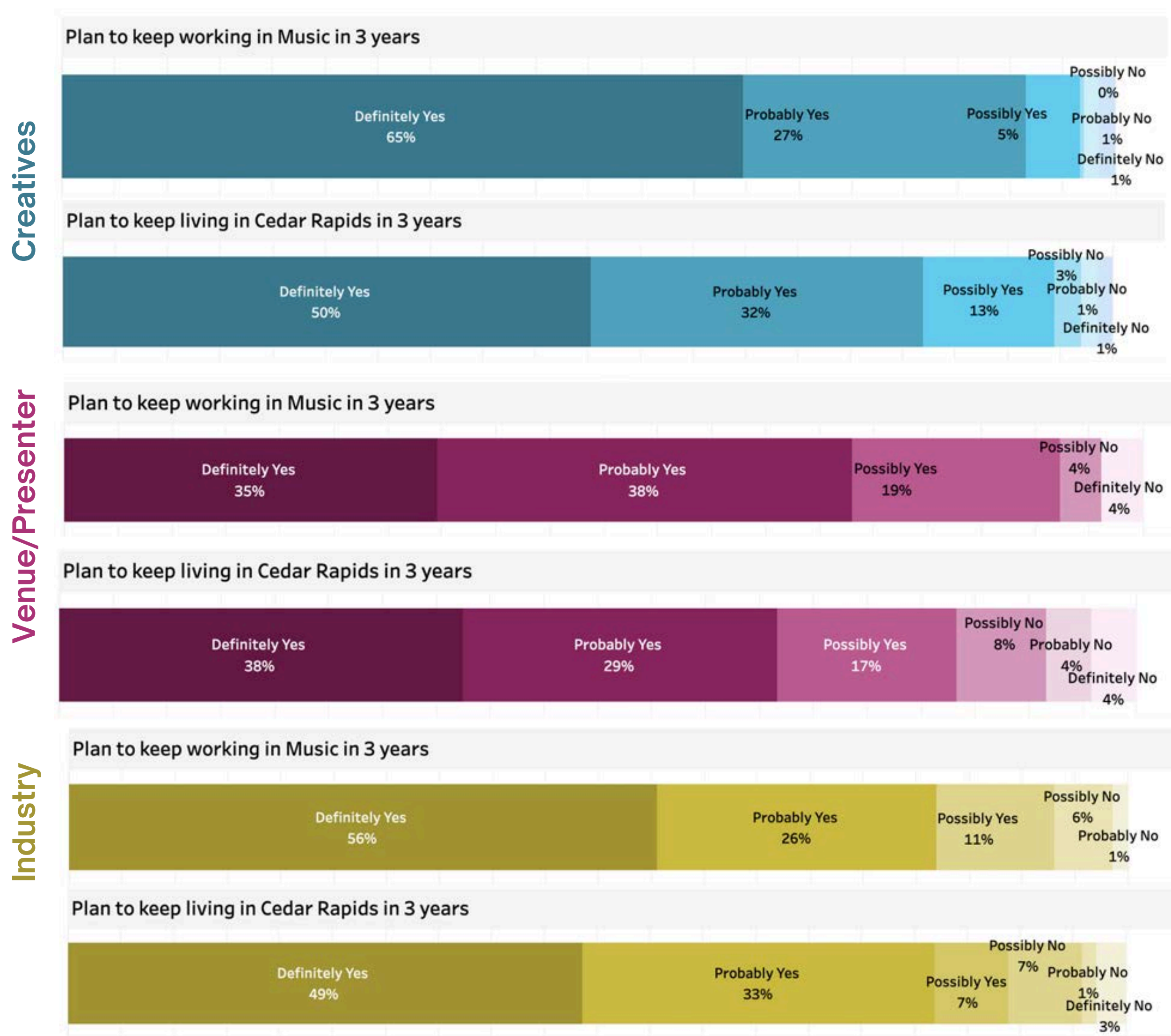
Ecosystem Composition (continued 4/4)

Plans to Stay in Music and in the Cedar Rapids Area:

- **Creatives** - The majority of Creative respondents (92%) are confident about continuing to work in music over the next three years. However, there is slightly less certainty about staying in Cedar Rapids itself, as 82% responded "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes" to remaining over the same period. These findings reflect strong dedication to careers in music, though retaining talent locally may require additional support.

- **Venue/Presenter** - The majority of Venue/Presenter respondents (73%) are confident about continuing to work in music over the next three years. However, plans to remain living in Cedar Rapids show slightly lower certainty, with 67% responding "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes." Notably, 16% are leaning towards not staying. This indicates a need to address potential challenges in retaining venue and presenter professionals in the local area.

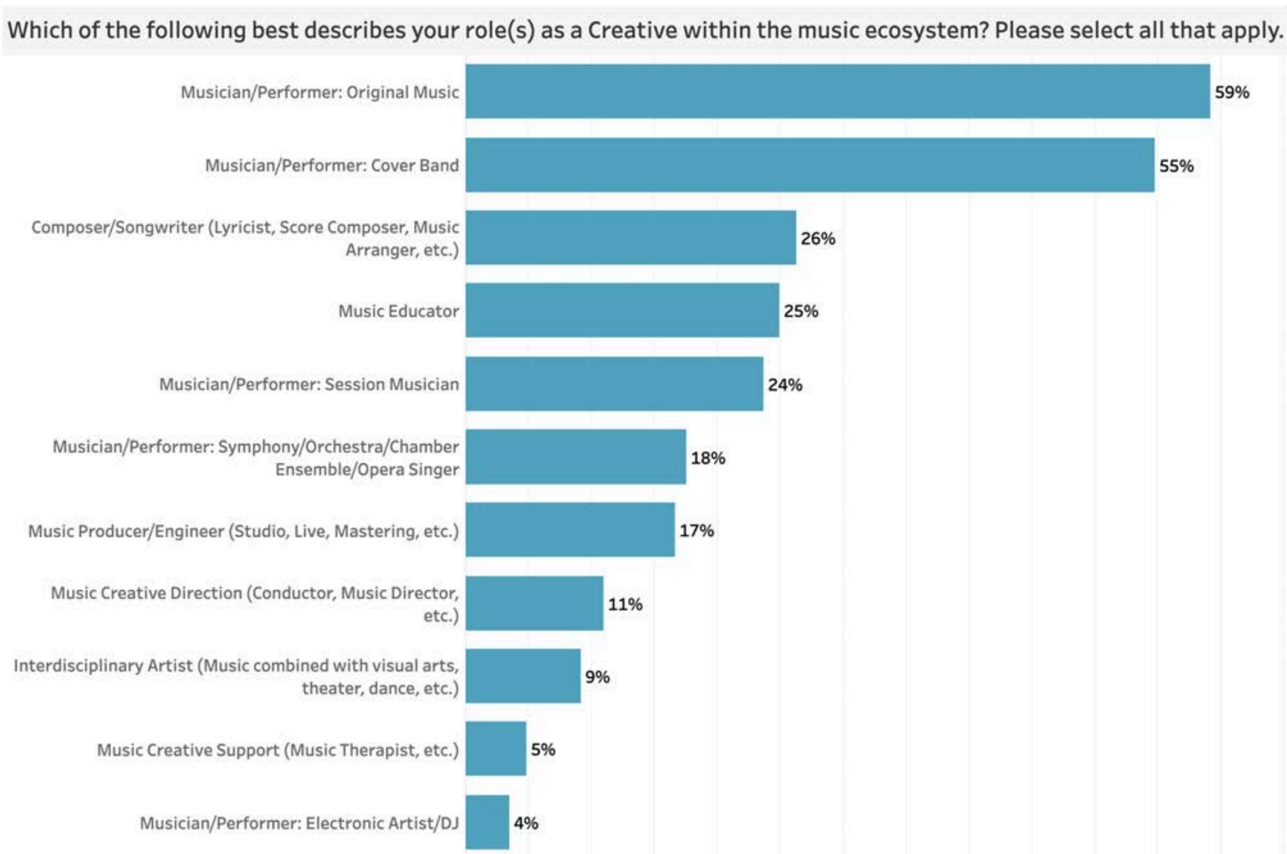
- **Industry** - The majority of Industry respondents (82%) are confident about continuing to work in music and staying in Cedar Rapids over the next three years.



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Creative Profile

Most Creatives (88%) in Cedar Rapids have over 10 years of experience, underscoring a seasoned professional community. Creative respondents in Cedar Rapids take on a wide range of roles with the most common roles being musician/performer of original music (59%) and musician/performer in cover bands (55%). Career concerns include the lack of music work (38%), stagnant pay rates (31%), and the increasing cost of living (30%). Local live performances are the primary income source, relied on significantly by 49% of respondents. Creative respondents in Cedar Rapids spend an average of $5,842 annually on music-related expenses for a collective annual spend of $1.7 million, with 45% of that spending staying local. This local retention highlights the critical economic role of Cedar Rapids Creatives in supporting local Industries.



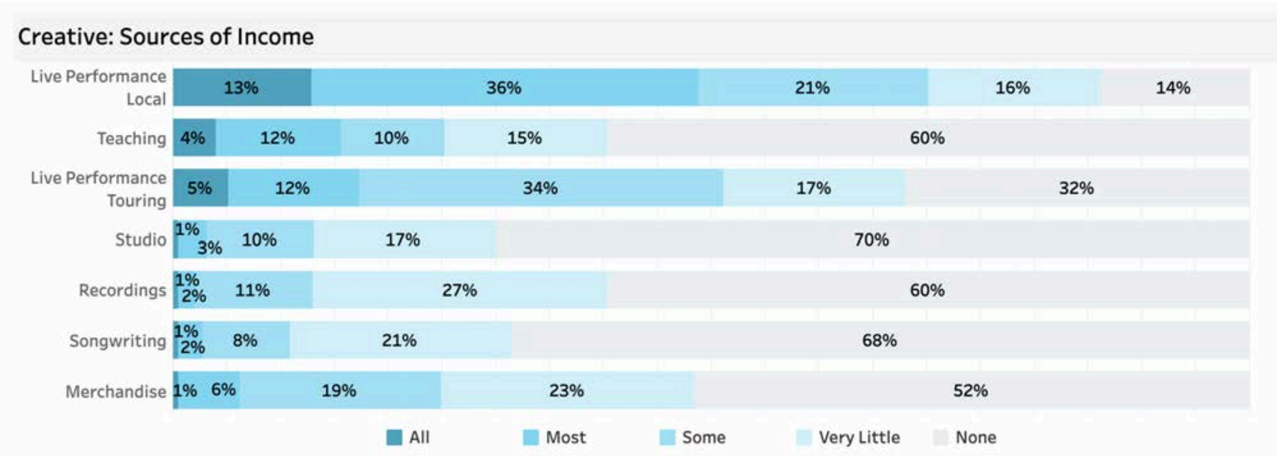
- **Creative Types/Roles** - Creative respondents in Cedar Rapids take on a wide range of roles within the music ecosystem. The most common roles are musician/performer of original music (59%) and musician/performer in cover bands (55%). Other prominent roles include composer/songwriter (26%) and music educator (25%), followed by session musician (24%). Additionally, 18% are involved in symphony, orchestra, chamber ensembles, or opera, while 17% work as music producers or engineers. Less common roles include music creative direction (11%), interdisciplinary artists (9%), music creative support (5%), and electronic artist/DJ (4%). This diversity of roles illustrates the broad contributions of Creatives to the local music ecosystem.

“It’s expensive to pursue a career in music, and there’s not enough financial support available for local musicians.”

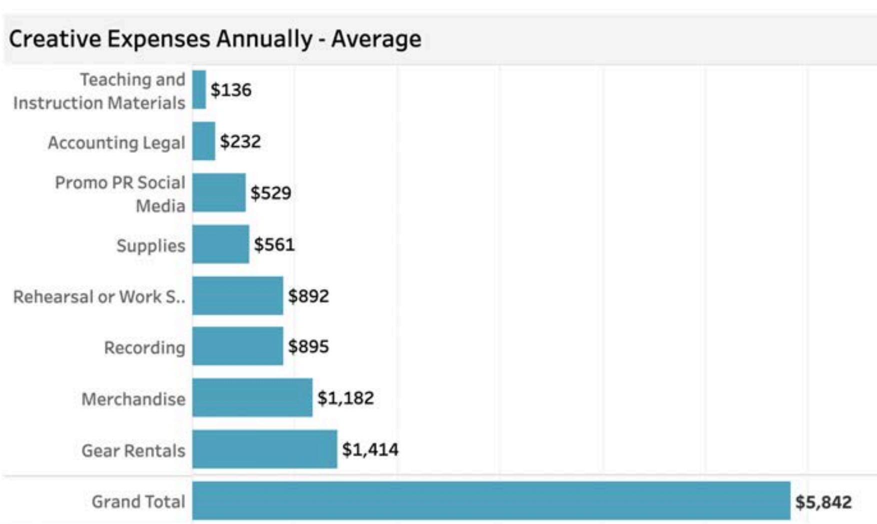
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Creative Profile (continued 2/3)

- **Sources of Income** - Income sources for Creatives in Cedar Rapids are varied, with local live performances being the most common, providing income for 13% who rely on it entirely and 36% for whom it is a significant source. Touring and teaching also play important roles, with 34% earning some income from touring and 22% from teaching. Other sources, including studio work, recordings, songwriting, and merchandise, contribute to a smaller portion of income. However, many Creatives report only partial or minimal income from these activities, with a majority relying on live performances as their financial foundation.



- **Spend** - Creative respondents in Cedar Rapids spend an average of $5,842 annually on music-related expenses, highlighting a significant investment in their careers. The breakdown indicates that the highest costs are for gear rentals and merchandise, averaging $1,414 and $1,182 respectively. Recording expenses account for $895 annually, while rehearsal or workspace costs average $892. Supplies and promotional activities such as PR and social media cost $561 and $529, respectively, while accounting/legal fees and teaching materials are the lowest at $232 and $136. This spending, with 45% kept local, underscores the critical role of Cedar Rapids Creatives in supporting the local economy through their financial contributions to various services and products provided by local industry.



$5,842
Average Creative Spend

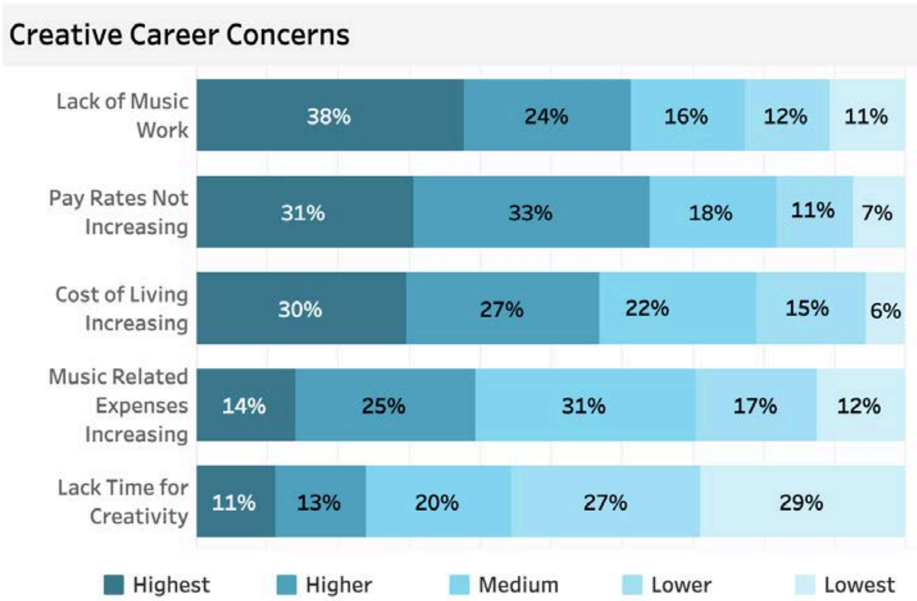
$1.7M
Total Creative Respondents Spend Annually

45%
Spent Locally

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

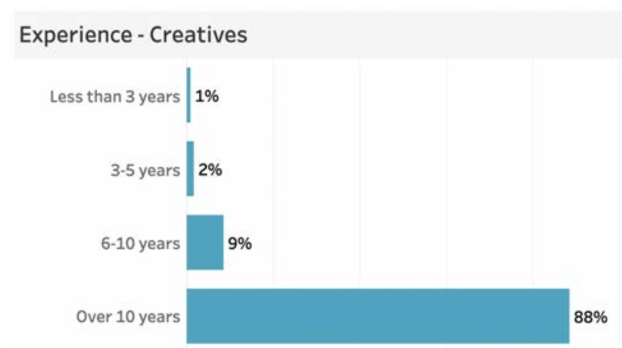
Creative Profile (continued 3/3)

- **Career Concerns** - The main career concerns for Cedar Rapids Creative respondents include the lack of music work, with 38% rating this as their highest concern. Stagnant pay rates are another significant issue, with 31% identifying it as their highest concern. Increasing cost of living is also a prominent challenge, ranking as the highest concern for 30% of respondents. Concerns about time for creativity and increasing music-related expenses are notable but to a lesser extent, with 11% and 14% respectively rating them as the highest concern.



> Opportunities for original artists seem limited unless you're already well-connected or part of a specific group.

- **Experience** - The majority of Creatives in Cedar Rapids (88%) have over 10 years of experience, showcasing a seasoned and established community of professionals. Meanwhile, 9% have 6-10 years of experience, and only 3% have been active in music for 5 years or less. This data highlights the dominance of experienced individuals within the local music ecosystem, with minimal representation from newer entrants.



> There's a lack of mentorship or guidance for musicians looking to grow professionally.

> Local creatives would benefit from shared resources, like community-run studios or equipment rental programs.

> Professional services, like mastering and mixing, are priced out of reach for most indie musicians here.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

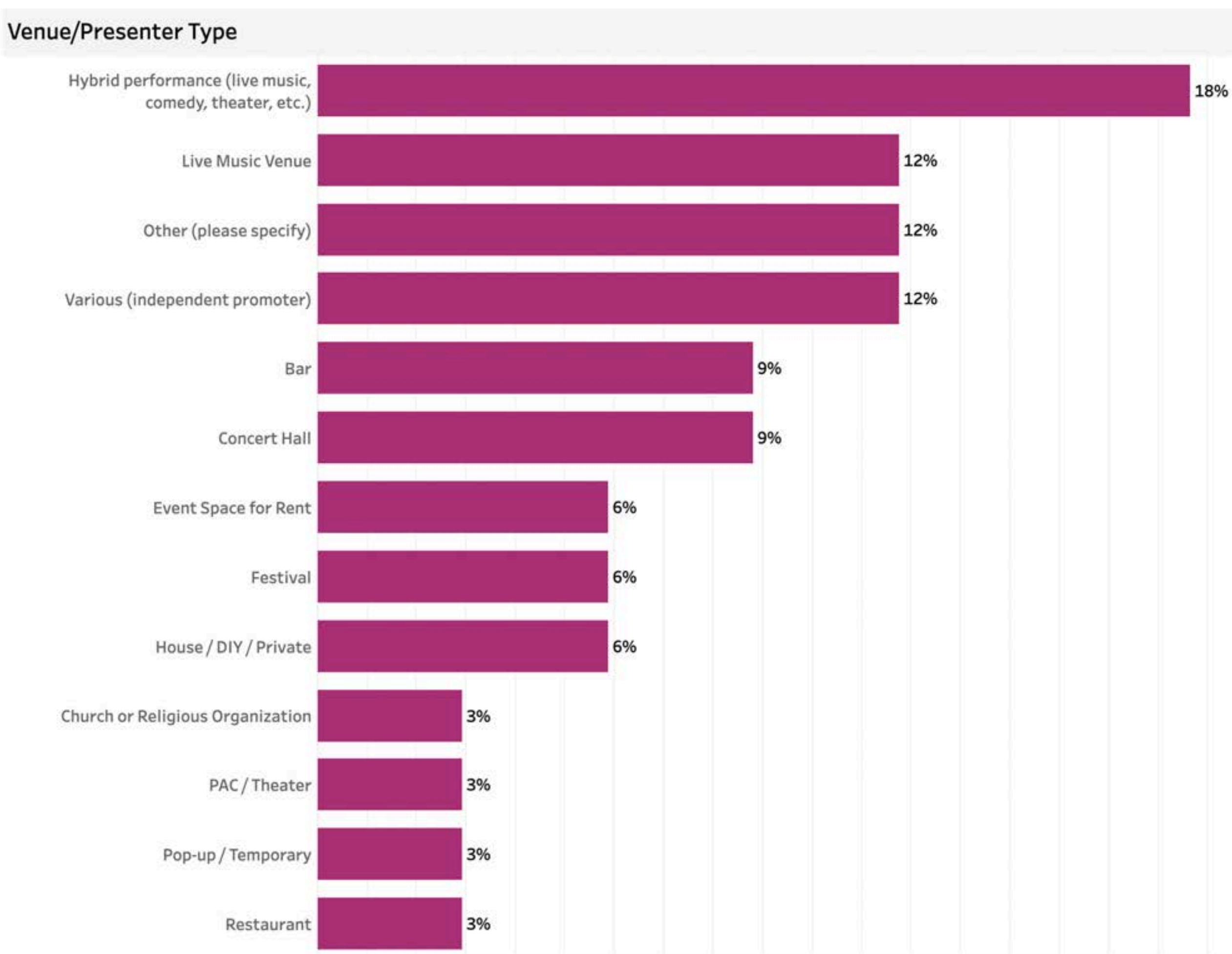
Venue/Presenter Profile

Cedar Rapids Venue/Presenter respondents reflect diverse ownership and operational structures, with 49% being nonprofit (tax-exempt) organizations and 32% locally owned for-profit entities. Informal venues, such as volunteer-run or DIY spaces, account for 11%, while other categories like for-profit (not locally owned), public/education/government venues, and religious organizations each represent 3%. Most Venues have a capacity of 1-100 (38%), followed by 101-200 (25%) and 351-500 (19%). Outdoor capabilities are prevalent, with 76% of Venues equipped for open-air events. On average, Venues host 47 live events annually for a total of 1,559 events across Cedar Rapids each year.

- **Venue/Presenter Type** - Hybrid performance venues (live music, comedy, theater) are the most common type of Venue, representing 18% of the total. Live Music Venues make up 12% as do Independent Promoters and "Other" Venue/Presenter types such as an annual nonprofit concert and a music society. Bars and Concert Halls each represent 9%, while Festivals, House/DIY/Private, and Event Spaces each represent 6%.

Venues average
47
live events/year

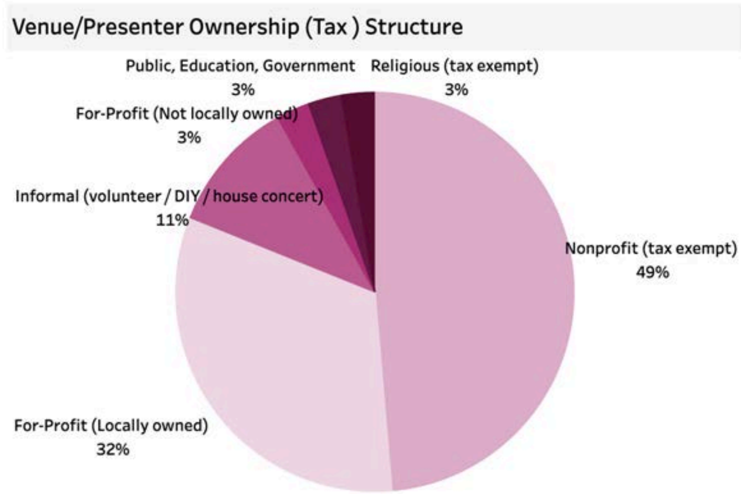
1,559
total live events/year



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Venue/Presenter Profile (continued)

- **Venue Ownership/Tax Structure** - The ownership structure of venues and presenters in Cedar Rapids is diverse. Nonprofit (tax-exempt) organizations make up 49% of the ownership, followed by for-profit (locally owned) entities at 32%. Informal venues, such as volunteer-run, DIY, or house concerts, account for 11%. Smaller categories include for-profit (not locally owned) venues, public/education/government venues, and religious (tax-exempt) venues, each representing 3% of the total.

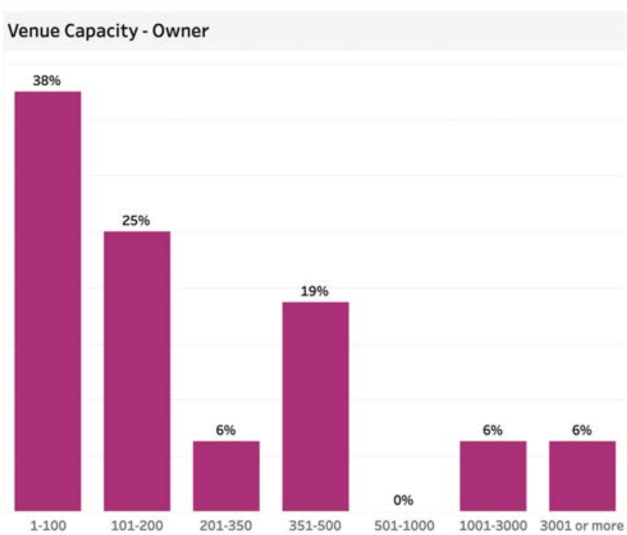


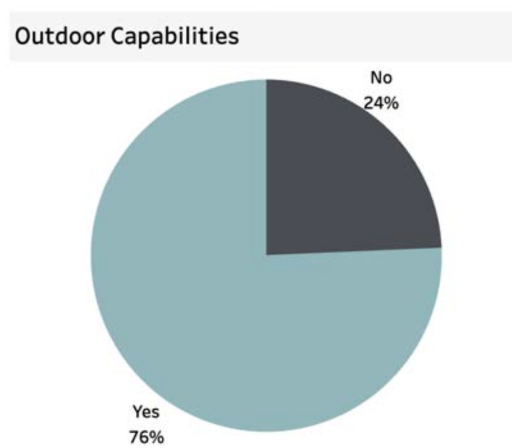
> The lack of all-ages venues is a huge problem for younger musicians.

> Several venues have shut down recently, leaving fewer options for performers.

> It's hard for venues to balance being profitable while still supporting local talent.

- **Venue Capacity & Outdoor Capabilities** - In the Cedar Rapids music ecosystem, venue capacities are dominated by smaller spaces, with the largest group having a capacity of 1-100 (38%). Other capacities include 101-200 (25%), 351-500 (19%), and larger spaces of 1001-3000 and over 3000, each representing 6%. Notably, no venues fall within the 501-1000 range. Additionally, 76% of venues report having outdoor capabilities, indicating a strong potential for hosting events in open-air settings, while 24% do not. This reflects a landscape suited to intimate performances and versatile outdoor event opportunities.





> We need more smaller venues. We need to work better together as a community. We're too small of a market.

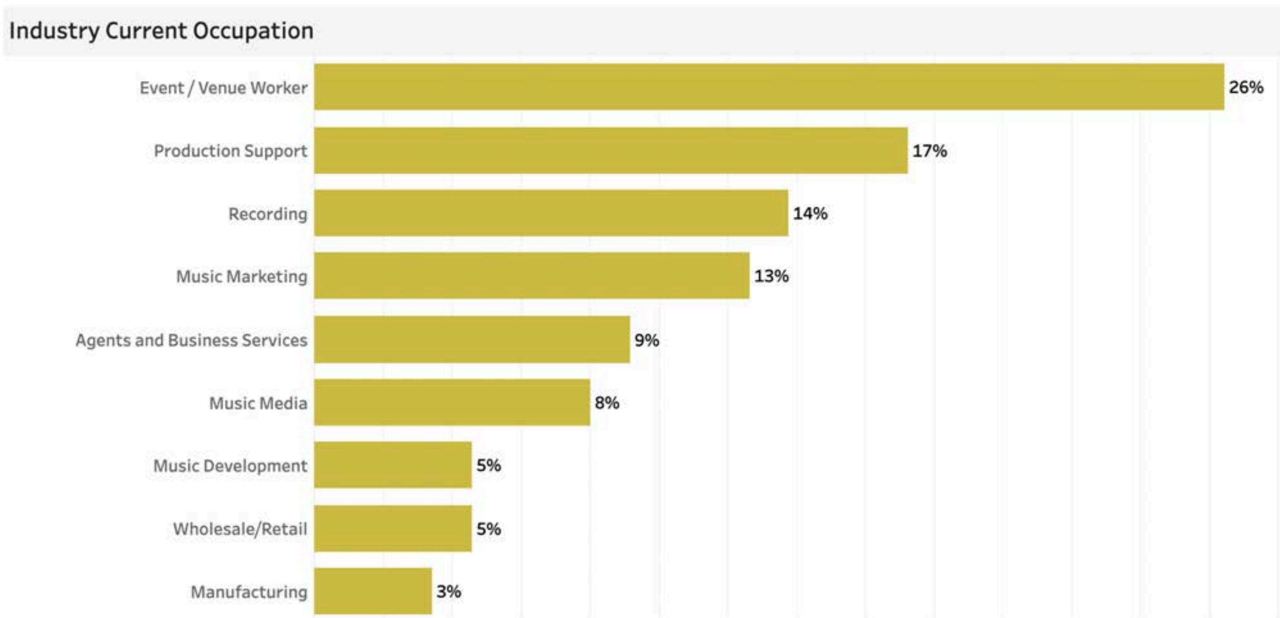
> Collaborative venues that support workshops or open mic nights could help nurture local talent.

> Noise complaints are a huge issue for venues near residential areas, and there's no clear solution from the city.

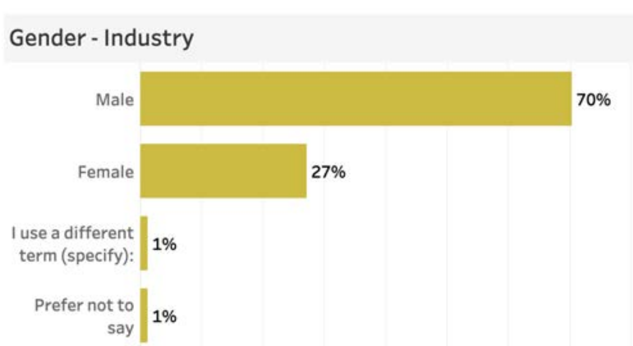
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Industry Profile

The Cedar Rapids Music Industry respondents primarily work as event and venue workers (26%), followed by production support (17%), recording (14%), and music marketing roles (13%). Creative respondents access Industry services through a mix of local, non-local, and DIY approaches, with many Creatives independently managing services like publicity, booking, and management. The client base is predominantly local, with some national and limited international engagement. The industry is male-dominated, with 70% identifying as men and 27% as women, presenting an opportunity for greater gender diversity.



- **Industry Occupation** - The occupations of industry respondents in Cedar Rapids are diverse, with event/venue workers comprising 26%, followed by production support roles at 17%. Recording professionals make up 14%, and music marketing accounts for 13%. Agents and business services represent 9%, while music media accounts for 8%. Smaller segments include music development, wholesale/retail at 5% each, and manufacturing at 3%. This diversity highlights the breadth of roles within the local music industry.



- **Gender** - Cedar Rapids Music Industry is predominantly people who identify as male (70%) and 27% who identify as women, presenting an opportunity for greater gender diversity.

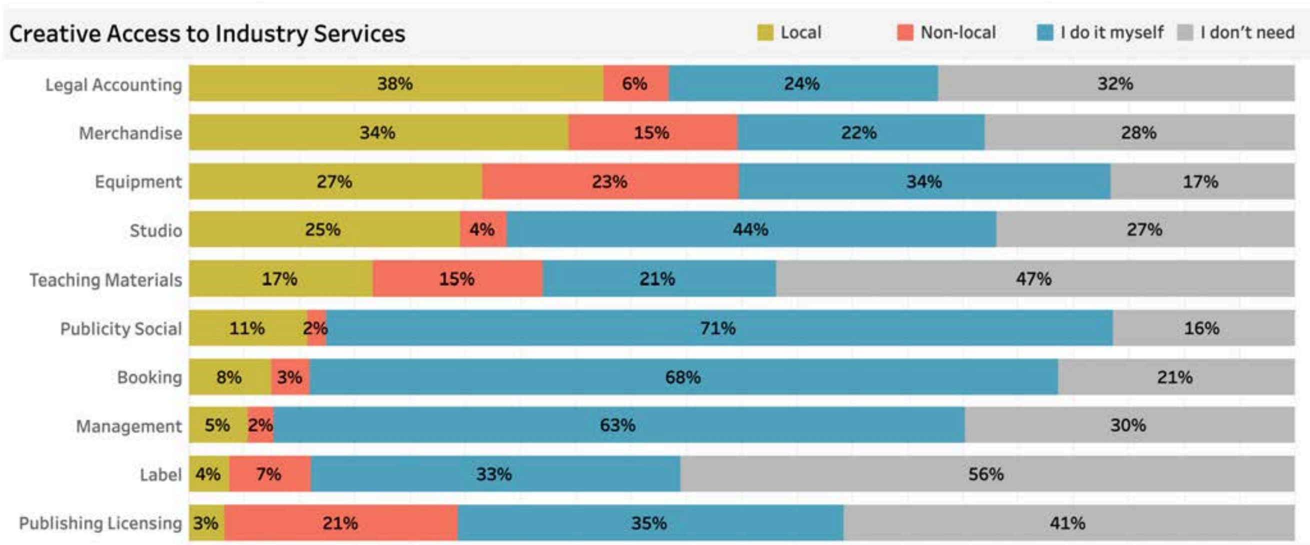
> The industry here feels like an afterthought—it's not treated as a serious part of the city's economy.

> The music industry here isn't seen as a viable career path, which discourages young people from pursuing it.

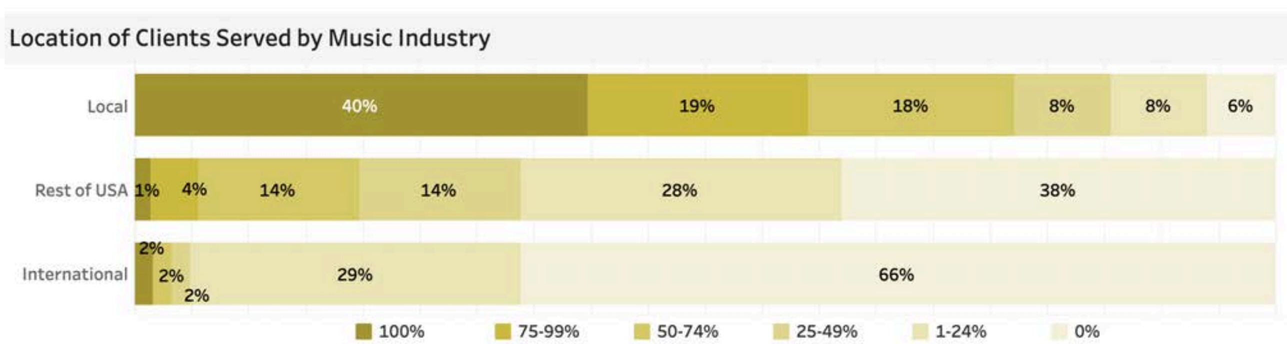
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Industry Profile (continued)

- **Creative Access to Industry** - Creative respondents access industry services through a mix of local, non-local, and DIY approaches. Legal/accounting services are managed locally by 38%, while 24% handle them independently. Merchandise services are 34% local, 22% DIY, and 15% non-local. For equipment and studio services, 27% and 25% rely on local resources, while 34% and 44%, respectively, manage these themselves. Teaching materials are handled independently by 21%, with 17% using local resources. Publicity/social and booking services are primarily DIY, with 71% and 68% managing them on their own. Management follows a similar trend, with 63% DIY. Label and publishing/licensing services see the lowest local usage (4-3%), with many creatives managing these independently (56% and 41%).



- **Location of Clients** - Cedar Rapids Music Industry is serving primarily local clients. Across the majority of the Industry client base, 77% are local, 19% are national, and 4% are international. This highlights a strong local focus as well as some national clients and a few international.



> If the industry was taken more seriously, it could create real jobs and opportunities for the city.

> The music industry in Cedar Rapids feels fragmented—there's no central hub or network to connect everyone.

> There aren't enough events where industry professionals can meet and collaborate.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity

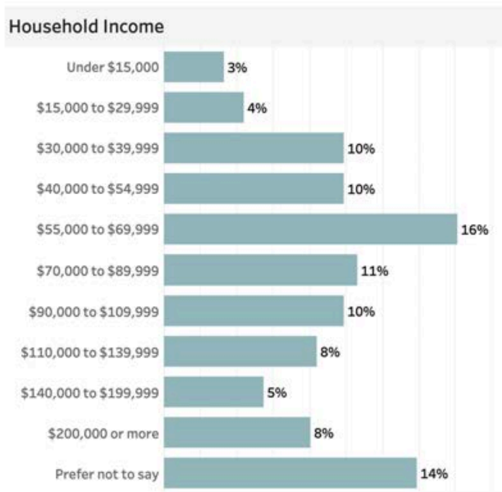
Music generates a total of $9M in income annually across all respondents, with 22% of respondents' household income coming from music and an average annual music income of $19K. Most respondents are freelancers (47%) or part of a band (43%), with 55% receiving independent/direct payments. A significant 43% of those with less than three years of experience are unpaid. Two-thirds (67%) work outside of music, with 86% relying on these jobs as their primary income source. Only 34% hold IP rights, and 57% lack formal royalty collection. Local performances are more frequent, averaging $337 per show compared to $375 for touring. Venues host an average of 47 live events annually, with mixed levels of local talent representation in bookings.

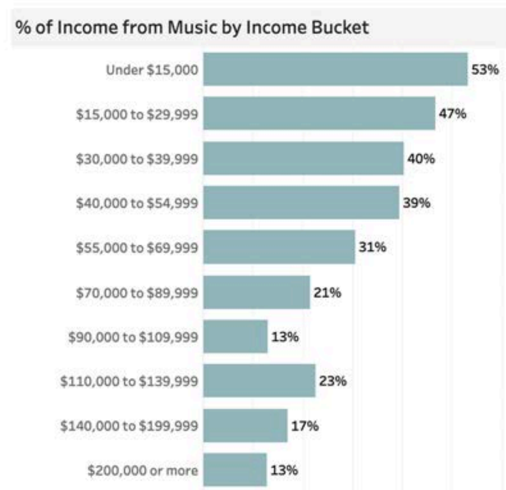
Music generates a total of **$9M** in income annually across all respondents

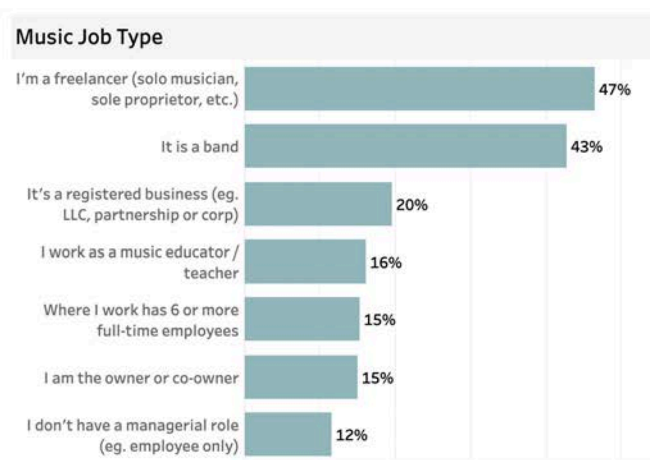
22% of respondent annual income comes from music

Average household income for respondents is **$86K**

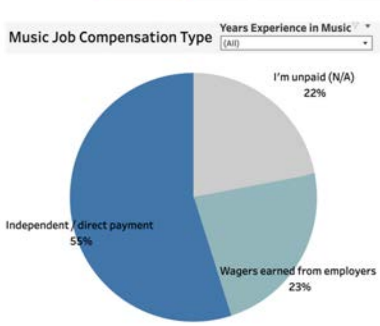
Average annual income from music is **$19K**/respondent

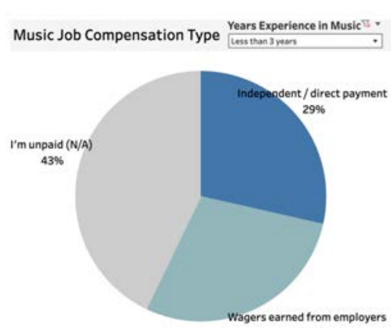


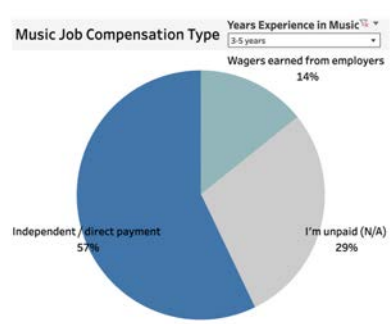




- **Music Job Type/Compensation** -In Cedar Rapids, the majority of music workers are freelancers (47%) or part of a band (43%), with 20% operating as registered businesses and 16% working as music educators. Compensation is primarily independent/direct payment (55%), followed by wages from employers (23%). However, 22% of respondents report being unpaid. This trend is particularly notable for those with less than 3 years of experience, where 43% are unpaid, compared to 29% for those with 3-5 years. This highlights a significant challenge for early-career individuals within the music ecosystem.



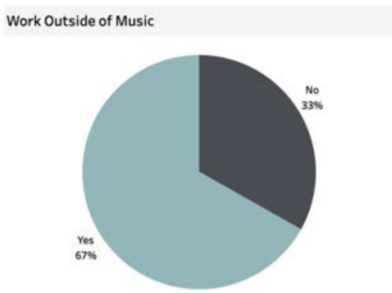


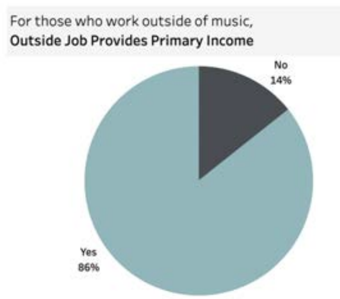


Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

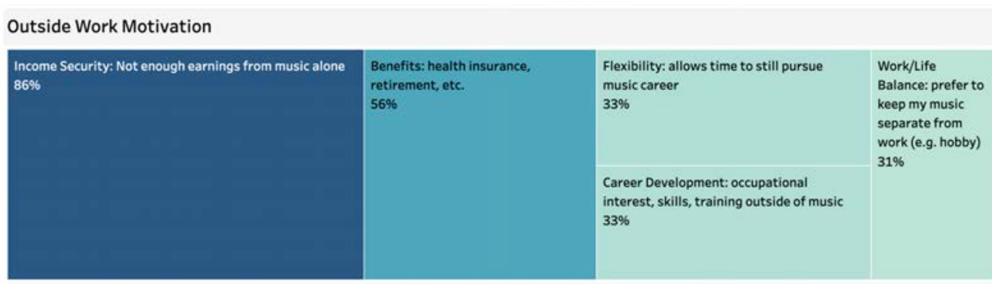
Economic Activity (continued 2/3)

- **Work Outside Music** - A majority of Cedar Rapids music respondents, 67%, work outside of the music industry to supplement their income. Of those, 86% identify their outside job as their primary source of income. This demonstrates the financial challenges faced by music professionals, with a significant portion requiring secondary employment to sustain their livelihoods. Only 33% of respondents report working exclusively in the music industry, highlighting the prevalent reliance on supplemental income.



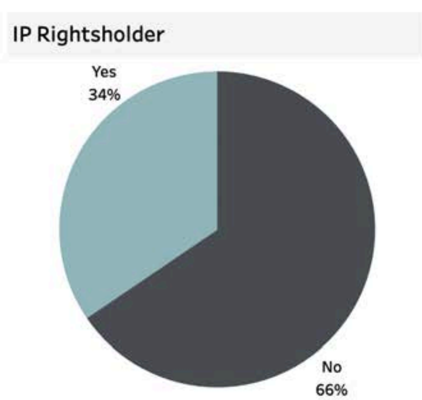


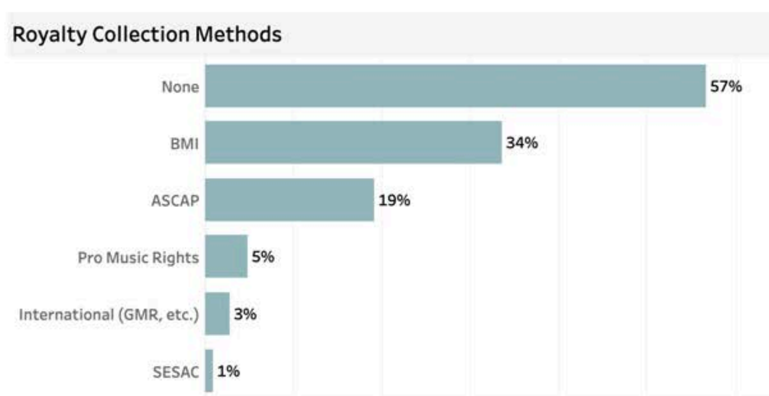
> "The economic potential of the music industry here is untapped—there's no infrastructure to scale businesses."



> "The financial struggles across the ecosystem are interlinked—if one sector grows, it could benefit the others."

- **Publishing/Licensing** - Among Cedar Rapids respondents, 34% hold intellectual property (IP) rights. For royalty collection, 57% do not use any formal method, while BMI (34%) and ASCAP (19%) are the most utilized. Smaller percentages use Pro Music Rights (5%), international agencies (3%), or SESAC (1%). Regarding licensing, 51% do not engage in any licensing activities. Of those who do, 26% rely on a provider (e.g., label services or aggregators), 19% work with a publisher or rights administrator, and 11% have their record label or sync representative handle licensing. This highlights significant gaps in both royalty collection and licensing activities among creatives.





Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Economic Activity (continued 3/3)

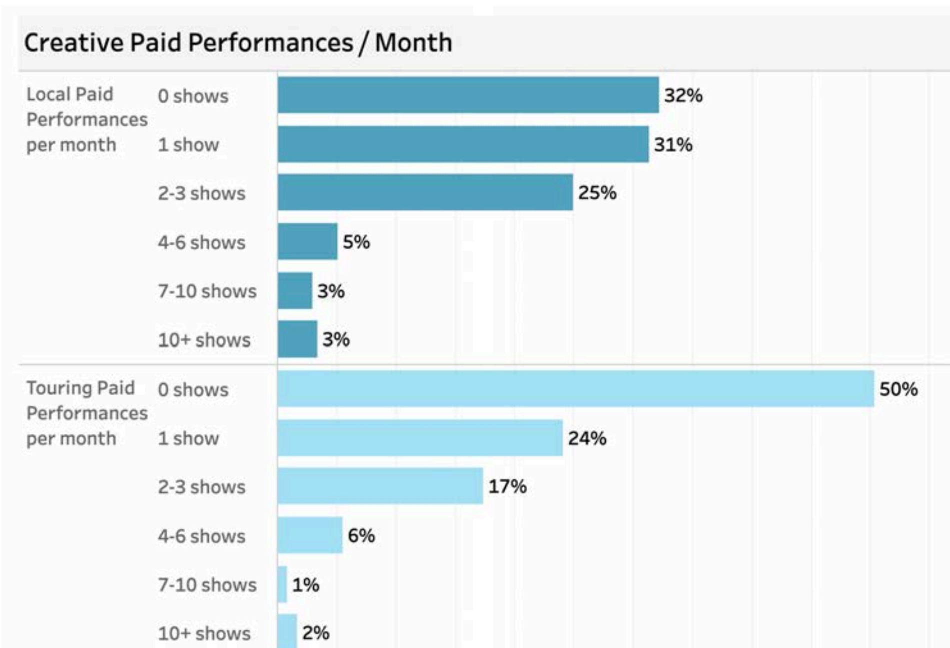
- **Creative Performance Frequency & Pay** - Among Cedar Rapids respondents, 32% do not perform local paid shows monthly, while 31% perform just one, and 25% perform 2-3 shows. Only 5% perform 4-6 shows, while 3% perform 7-10 shows, and another 3% perform 10 or more local shows. Touring activity is less frequent, with 50% not performing any paid touring shows, while 24% perform one show monthly, and 17% perform 2-3 shows. The average pay per local performance is $337, slightly lower than touring gigs, which average $375 per performance. The median pay for both is $150. This data reflects the limited frequency of both local and touring performances among creatives, alongside moderate variations in pay between these performance types.

$337
average pay/local gig

$375
average pay/touring gig

$150
median pay/local gig

$150
median pay/touring gig



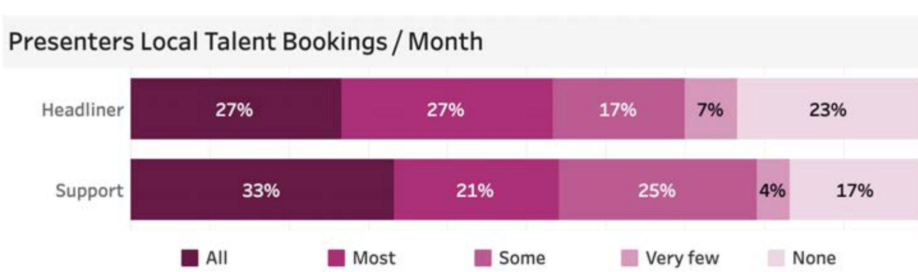
> "Pay scales are horrendous, we can travel two hours in every direction and make significantly more."

> "The cost of professional services, like recording or marketing, is too high for most creatives here."

> "The city underestimates the economic impact of music on the overall economy."

> "Venues are struggling to make ends meet with rising operational costs and inconsistent attendance."

- **Venue Live Events and Local Talent Bookings** - Venues in Cedar Rapids host an average of 47 live events per year, totaling 1,559 events among all respondents. Regarding local talent bookings, 27% of presenters book local headliners for all their events, and 33% do so for supporting acts. Conversely, 23% book no local headliners, and 17% book no local supporting acts. This indicates varied levels of engagement with local talent among presenters, reflecting a mixed approach to incorporating local artists into live events.



Venues average
47
live events/year

1,559
total live events/year

Ecosystem Development

The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem respondents are seeking collaboration spaces (50%) and access to music industry services (47%), followed by a significant interest in networking (42%) and connections to other creative industries (40%). Financial support remains limited, with only 12% of respondents receiving assistance, primarily from informal sources like crowdfunding. The reliance on rented commercial spaces, including live performance venues (78%), underscores vulnerabilities to market fluctuations. Advocacy efforts are broadly supported, with 46% preferring a community-based collaborative, reflecting a desire for unified leadership. Venue respondents emphasize the importance of audience development tools (82%) and public performance spaces (48%) as key drivers for growth.

Local Music Resource Preferences

- 50% of respondents prioritize spaces for musical collaboration.
- 47% desire access to music industry services such as agencies, record labels, and management.
- 42% value opportunities for both virtual and in-person community networking.
- 40% seek to connect with other creative industries such as film/video, design, tech, gaming, etc.

“There is no centralized hub for information, so connecting with the broader music community is difficult.”

“Collaboration between venues, creatives, and industry professionals could generate more revenue for everyone.”

“We need a voice in the city council to advocate for musicians, venues, and the entire music ecosystem.”

“We need affordable studio spaces and better access to marketing resources to grow our audience.”

“It’s critical to create more networking opportunities across the creative and music industries.”

“Media is very disjunct. Each of us are in our own local news and information silo. Collaboration outside our individual information and community silos is very difficult.”

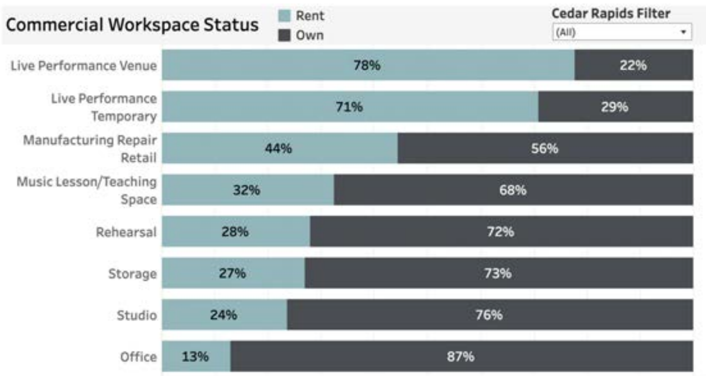
“Venues face uncertainty with rental increases—it’s hard to plan long-term.”

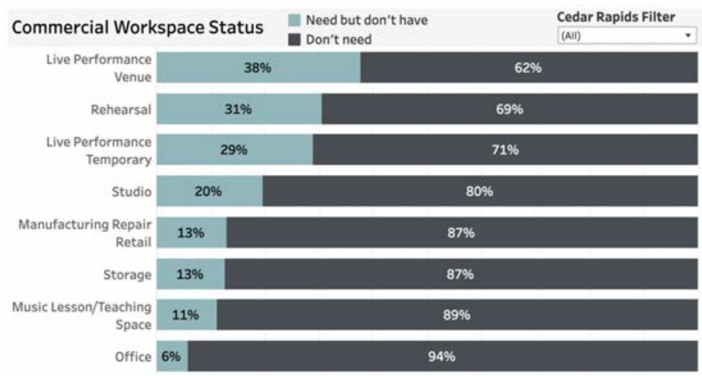
“Most artists and venues are renting their spaces, which makes them vulnerable to market shifts.”

“Advertising. Trying to reach all of your targeted audience. I think the local news agencies could definitely help with event exposure.”

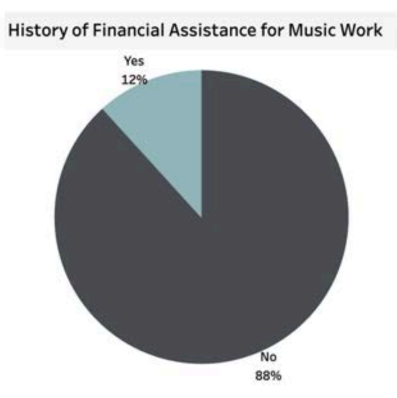
Ecosystem Development (continued 2/4)

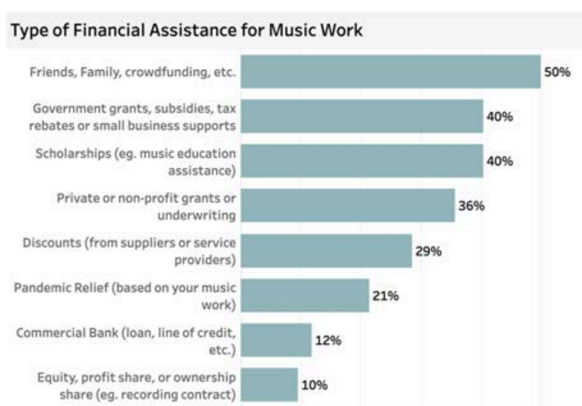
- **Commercial Workspace Status -** The majority of respondents in Cedar Rapids rent their commercial workspaces, with 78% renting live performance venues and 71% renting temporary live performance spaces. This high dependency on rental spaces makes these venue types particularly susceptible to market trends and economic fluctuations. For other types of spaces, 44% rent manufacturing, repair, and retail spaces, along with 28% of rehearsal spaces and 27% of storage spaces. This reliance on rentals highlights financial vulnerabilities and challenges in securing long-term stability within the local music ecosystem.



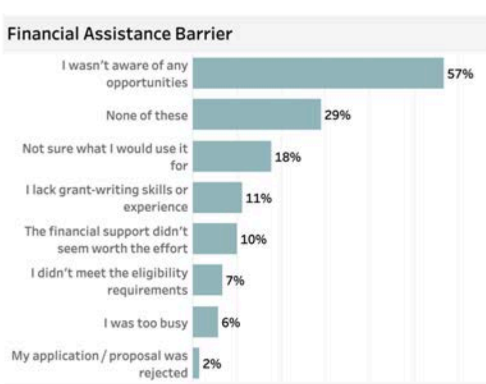


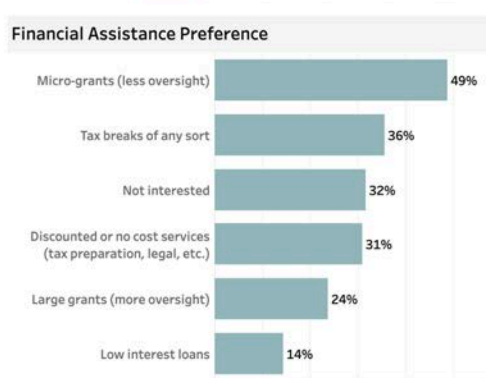
- **Financial Support** - Only 12% of Cedar Rapids respondents report receiving financial assistance for their music work. Support primarily comes from friends, family, or crowdfunding (50%), followed by government grants (40%) and scholarships (40%). Private or non-profit grants are utilized by 36%, while 29% benefit from discounts. Pandemic relief was cited by 21%, and smaller portions access bank loans (12%) or equity/ownership deals (10%). Barriers to accessing support include lack of awareness (57%), uncertainty about use (18%), and limited grant-writing skills (11%). Preferred forms of financial support are micro-grants (49%), tax breaks (36%), and discounted services (31%), indicating a need for accessible and flexible funding solutions.





> Grants and sponsorships are very hard to find. Most of our events are presented free or at low cost.



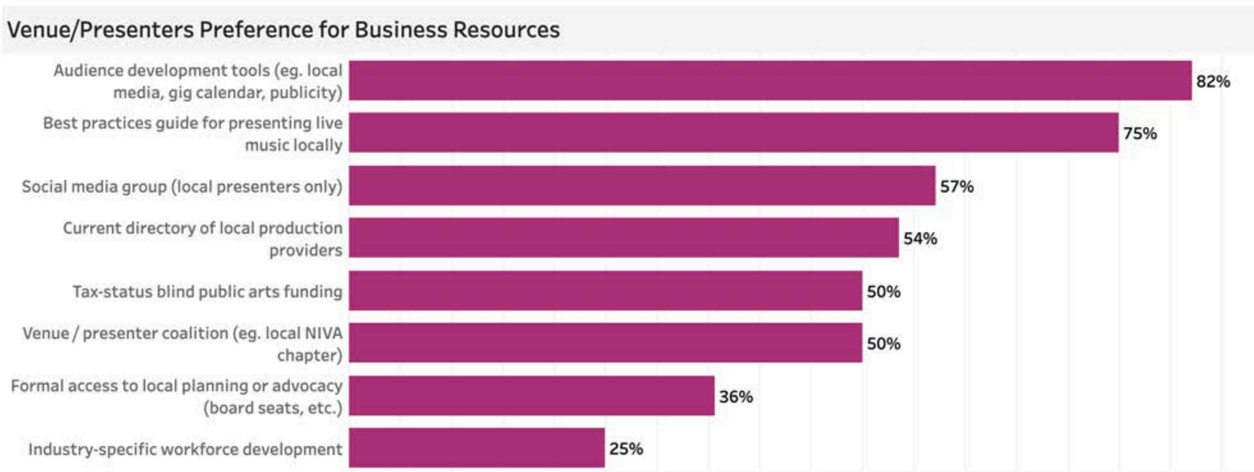


> Micro-grants would make a huge difference, especially for smaller, independent artists.

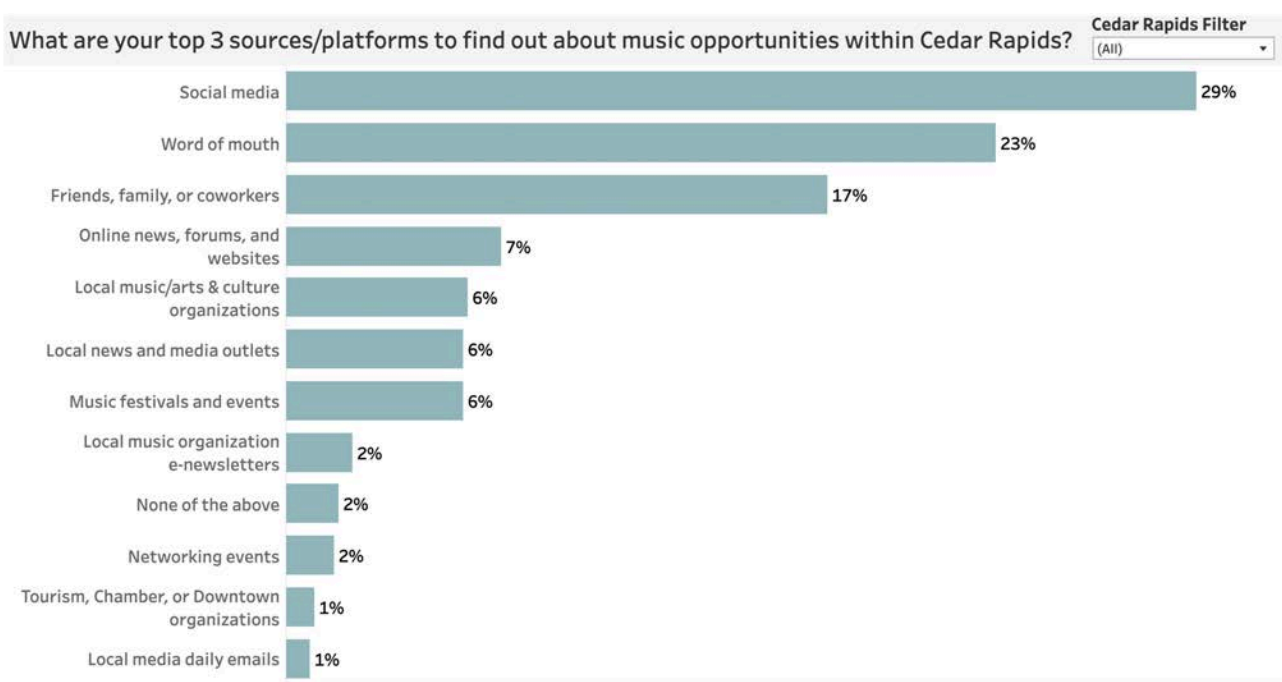
Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Ecosystem Development (continued 3/4)

- **Venue/Presenter Business Resources** - Cedar Rapids venue and presenter respondents prioritize audience development tools (82%) and best practices guides for presenting live music locally (75%). Social media groups specific to local presenters (57%) and a current directory of local production providers (54%) are also highly valued. Additionally, 50% of respondents express interest in tax-status-blind public arts funding and a venue/presenter coalition, such as a local NIVA chapter. Industry-specific workforce development (25%) and formal access to local planning or advocacy opportunities (36%) reflect broader needs for industry growth and collaboration.

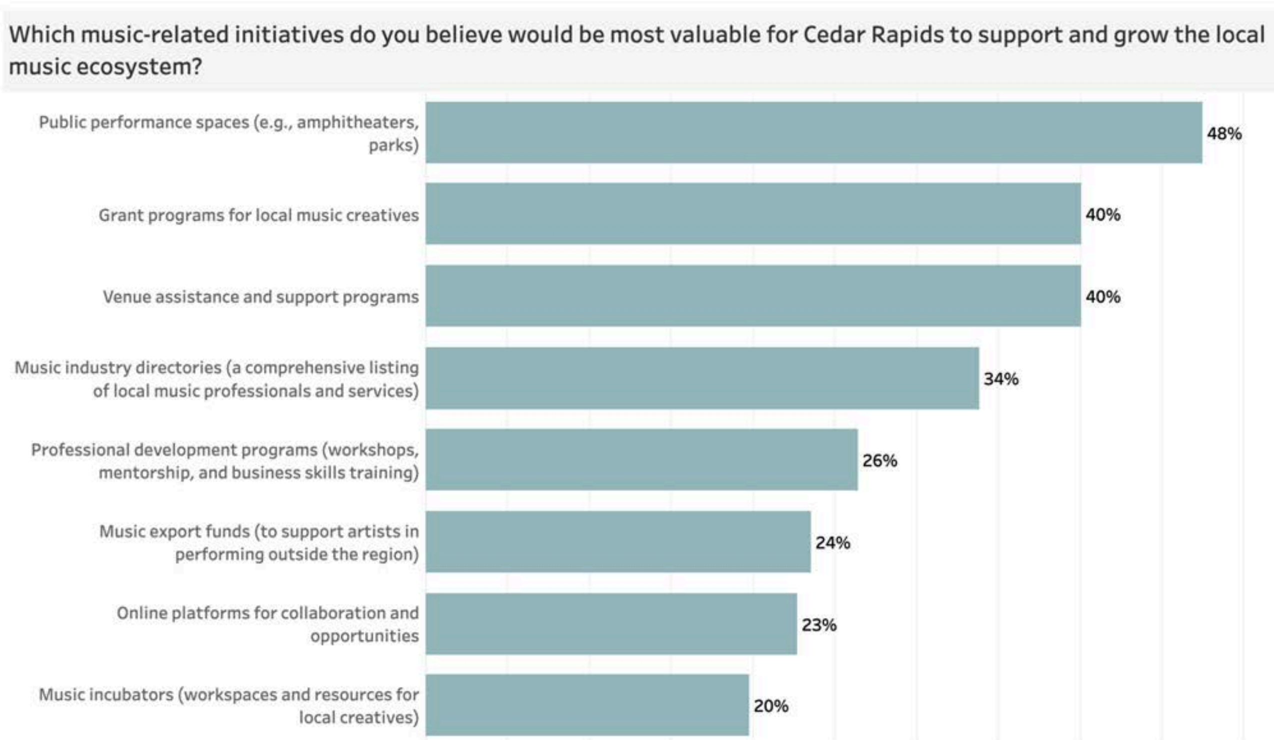


- **Information Sources for Music Opportunities** - Social media is the most commonly cited platform for discovering music opportunities in Cedar Rapids, with 29% of respondents ranking it among their top three. Word of mouth follows at 23%, while 17% rely on friends, family, or coworkers. Traditional sources such as local news outlets and cultural organizations accounted for a combined 18%, showing a clear preference for digital and personal networks.

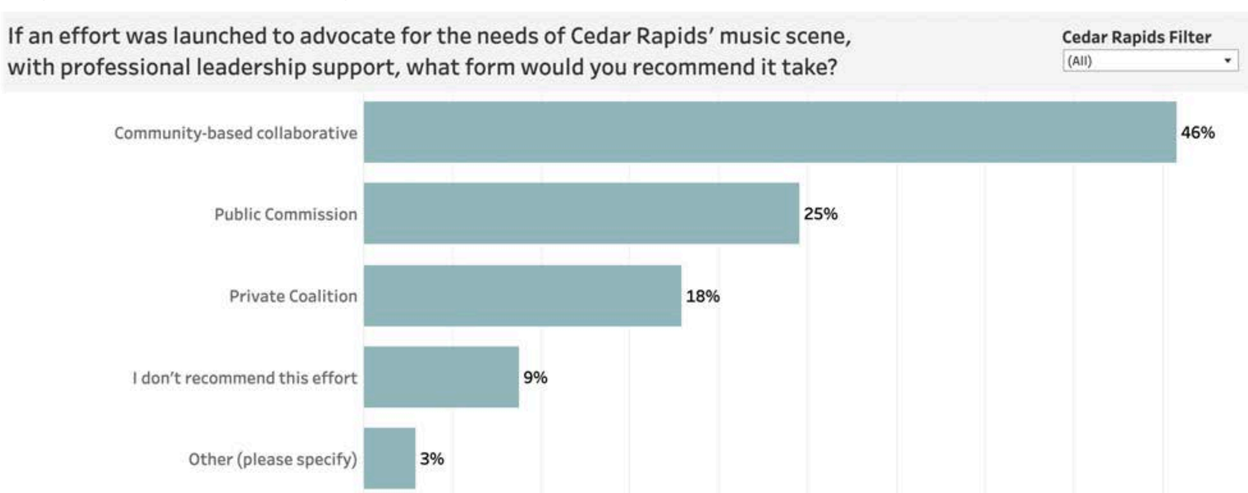


Ecosystem Development (continued 4/4)

- **Key Initiatives for Music Ecosystem Development** - Public performance spaces, such as amphitheaters and parks, are seen as the most valuable initiative, supported by 48% of respondents. Grant programs and venue assistance tied for second at 40%, emphasizing a need for financial and structural support. Other priorities include creating music industry directories (34%) and professional development programs (26%), underlining the need for resources that support both creatives and the broader ecosystem.



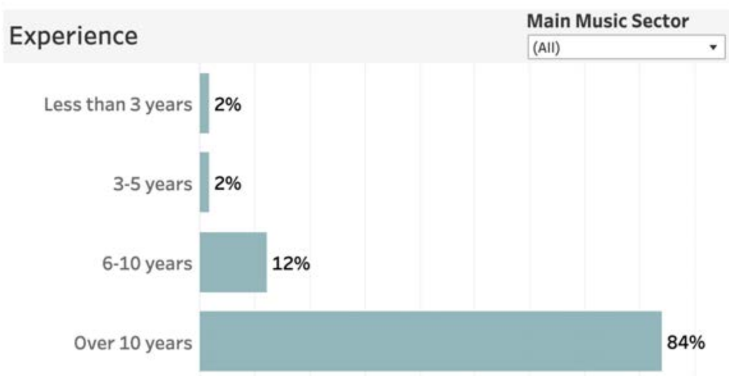
- **Preferred Form for Advocacy** - Among respondents, 46% favor a community-based collaborative to advocate for Cedar Rapids' music scene with professional leadership support. A public commission was the second most preferred option, chosen by 25%, followed by a private coalition at 18%. Only 9% of respondents stated they would not recommend such an effort, indicating general openness to organized advocacy initiatives.



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

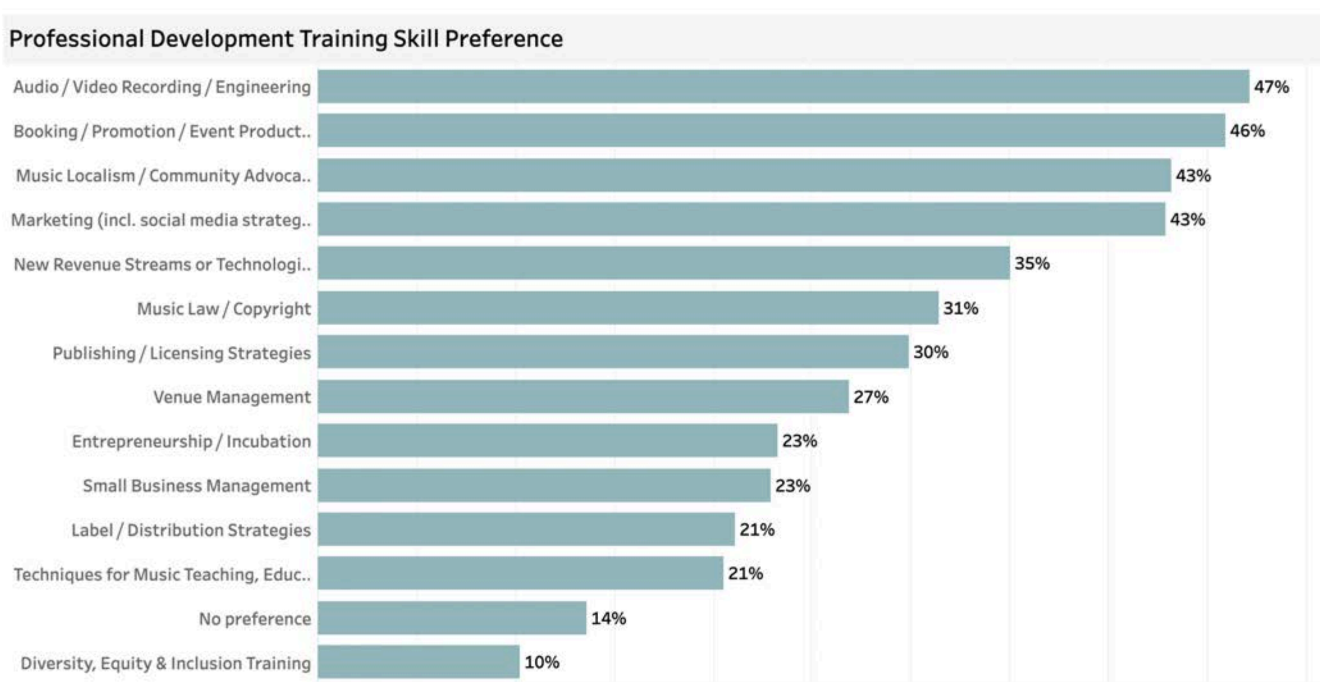
Workforce Development

Despite 84% of Cedar Rapids respondents having over 10 years of music industry experience, 73% do not hold memberships with professional organizations. Those who are affiliated are primarily connected to royalty collection and licensing organizations (13%), followed by professional trade organizations (7%) and unions (5%). For professional development, respondents prioritize continuing education and specialized training (40%), with strong interest in music localism and community advocacy (43%), audio/video recording and engineering (47%), and booking, promotion, and event production (46%).



> Many musicians have been in the industry for years but lack opportunities to update their skills or learn about new trends.

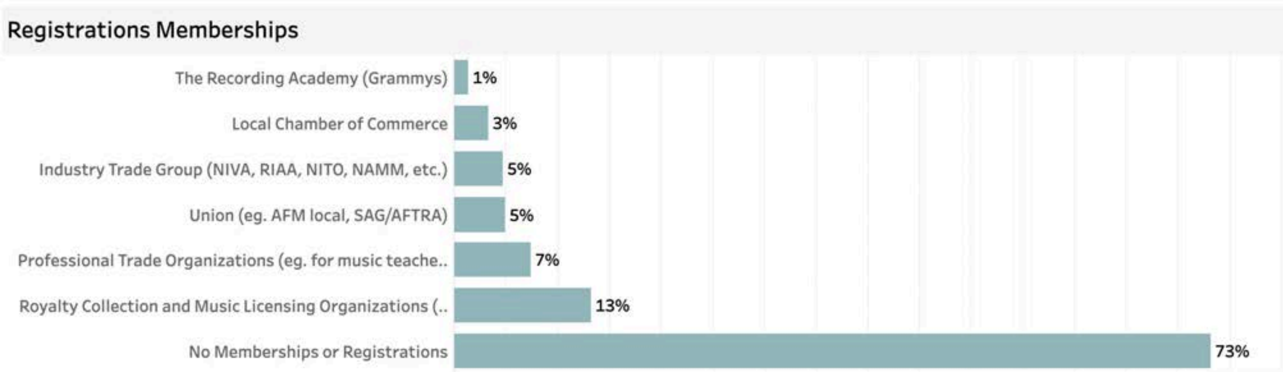
- **Professional Development** - Cedar Rapids respondents express a strong preference for continuing education and specialized training, with 40% prioritizing topics like licensing strategies. Music localism and community advocacy training is a key interest for 43% of respondents, reflecting a focus on building connections and advocating for regional music ecosystems. On skill-specific interests, audio/video recording and engineering lead at 47%, closely followed by booking, promotion, and event production (46%). Other significant interests include marketing, including social media strategies (43%). These preferences highlight a need for diverse, skill-oriented professional development opportunities to strengthen the local music community.



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Workforce Development (continued)

- **Professional Industry Associations** - A significant majority of Cedar Rapids respondents (73%) do not hold memberships or registrations with professional industry organizations. Among those who do, 13% are affiliated with royalty collection and music licensing organizations. Smaller groups include professional trade organizations (7%), unions such as AFM or SAG/AFTRA (5%), and industry trade groups like NIVA or NAMM (5%). Membership in local chambers of commerce accounts for 3%, while only 1% are affiliated with the Recording Academy.



> If we had a way to bring together people from different parts of the industry—like venues, artists, and engineers—for shared learning, it would be a game-changer.

> There's a need for local music advocacy and training on how to build connections with other creative industries.

> The community would benefit from training programs that focus on audio engineering and event production.

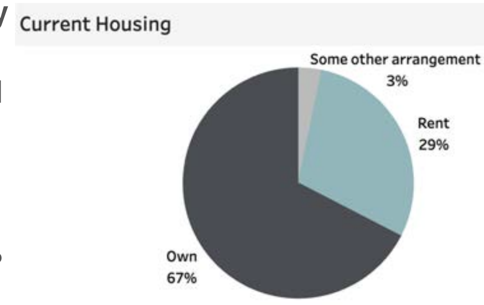
> There’s no formal mentorship or leadership training for people entering the music industry in this area.

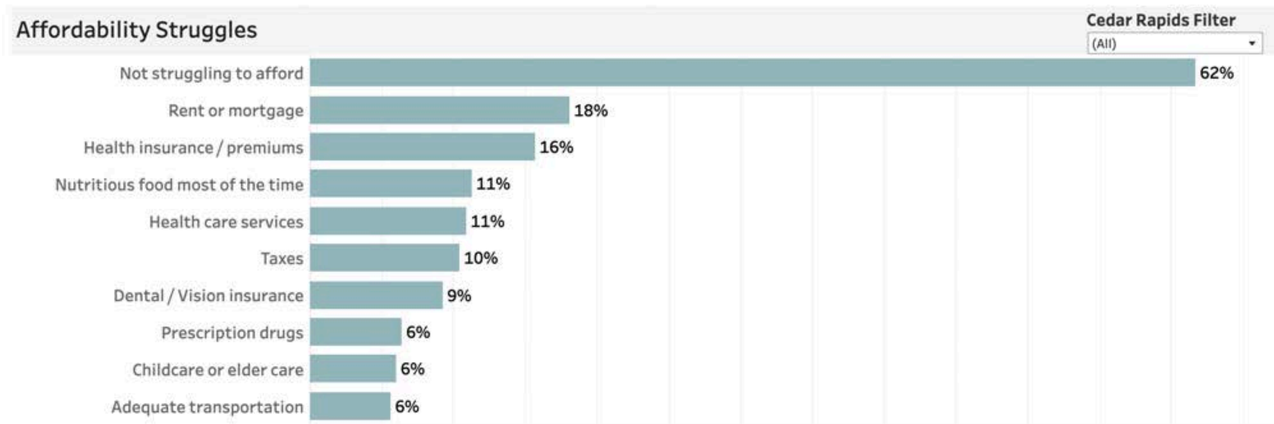
> Workshops on social media strategy and marketing would really help creatives reach a wider audience.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Livability

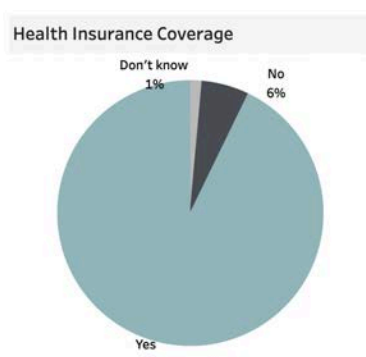
Cedar Rapids respondents report that 62% do not face affordability struggles, while 18% struggle with rent or mortgage payments, and 16% with health insurance premiums, noting that 93% have secured health insurance -- one of the highest across the Music Census. Music career challenges are led by low or uncertain pay (82%) and lack of benefits like retirement (51%). Talent costs rank as the highest concern among Venue and Presenter challenges, with 25% marking it as their top issue. Cedar Rapids also boasts a stable homeownership rate, with 67% owning their homes and 29% renting.

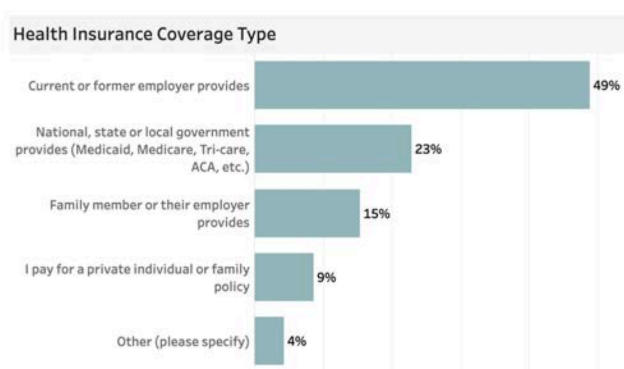




- **Affordability** - Cedar Rapids respondents report that 62% do not face affordability struggles. Among those who do, 18% struggle with rent or mortgage payments, and 16% face challenges affording health insurance premiums. Other concerns include access to nutritious food (11%), healthcare services (11%), and taxes (10%). Additional affordability issues include dental/vision insurance (9%), prescription drugs (6%), childcare or elder care (6%), and adequate transportation (6%), highlighting gaps in financial and social support within the community.

- **Health Insurance -** Most Cedar Rapids respondents (93%) have health insurance, noting that 6% do not have health insurance and 1% don't know. Most receive these benefits from an employer (49%) although 23% access government health benefit offerings (Medicaid, Medicare, ACA, etc.). For 15% health insurance is obtained through a family member and 9% pay for a private or family policy.



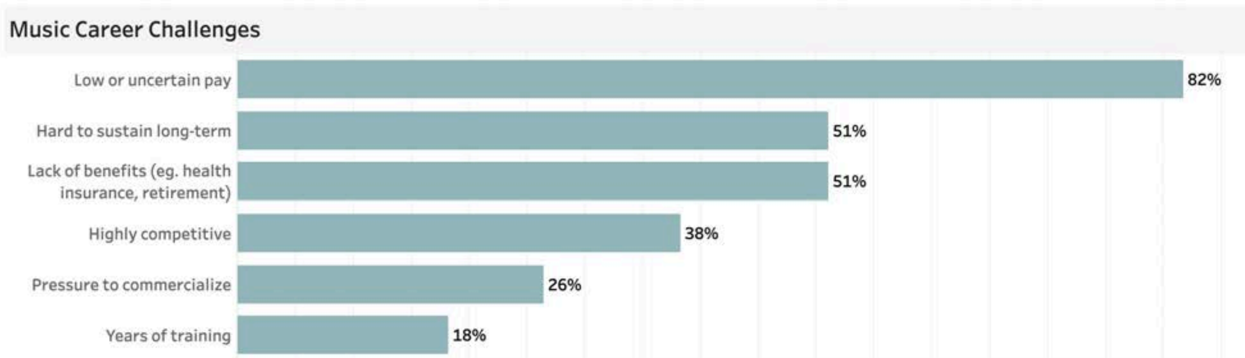


> Housing is generally affordable, but health insurance is a big problem for a lot of creatives.

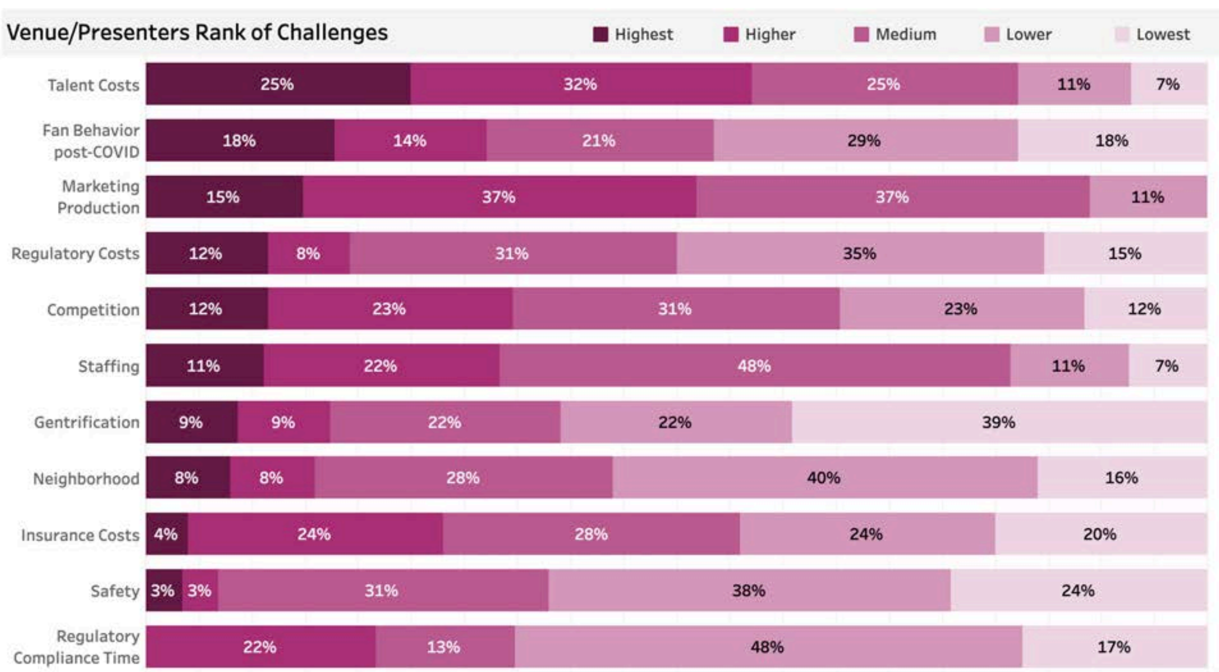
> I can't afford proper dental care or vision insurance even though I've been working in the industry for over a decade.

Livability (continued)

- **Music Career Challenges** - Cedar Rapids survey respondents across all sectors identified low or uncertain pay as the most significant challenge, cited by 82%. Additionally, 51% of respondents highlighted difficulties in sustaining a music career long-term and a lack of benefits, such as health insurance and retirement plans. The competitive nature of the music industry was noted by 38%, while 26% reported pressure to commercialize their work. These findings underscore the systemic challenges that impact the financial and professional stability of local music professionals.



- **Venue/Presenters Rank of Challenges** - Venue and presenter respondents in Cedar Rapids identify talent costs as the most significant challenge, with 25% ranking it as the highest concern and 32% as a higher concern. Marketing and production costs follow, with 15% citing them as the highest challenge and 37% as higher. Other notable concerns include regulatory costs, competition, and fan behavior post-COVID, which rank medium to high. Staffing issues and insurance costs are also mentioned but tend to rank medium or lower in priority. Gentrification, neighborhood factors, safety, and regulatory compliance time are predominantly lower-ranking challenges, reflecting varying degrees of impact across the industry.



> "There's simply not enough music work to go around, which forces people out of the scene."

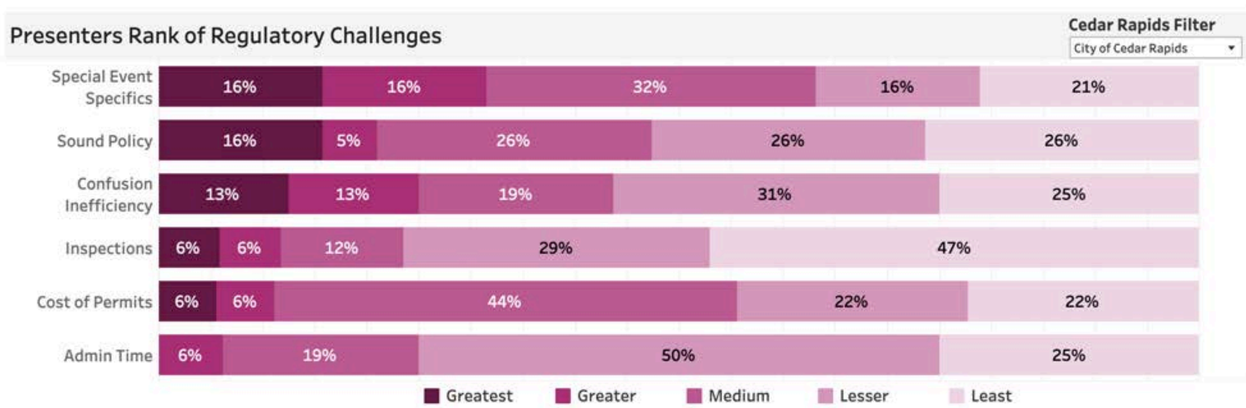
> "Post-COVID, we've seen a huge shift in fan behavior, which has added to our financial challenges."

> "I spend more time hustling for gigs and worrying about money than actually creating music."

> "The rising cost of marketing and production is a major concern for our venue."

Music-Friendly Policies

Top regulatory challenges for Venues and Presenters in Cedar Rapids include special event specifics and sound policies, with confusion inefficiency around interfacing with the City also a notable concern. Frequently encountered processes include street/parking issues (67%) and insurance requirements for live music (57%). Venue and Presenter respondents emphasize the need for regulatory streamlining, advocating for a single point of contact (71%), tax incentives (64%), and a webpage of current regulations for live music (64%). Expanding live music events and cultural programming (30%) is the music community's top recommendation for energizing downtown, supported by calls for regular programming in public spaces (18%) and greater event diversity (16%). Financial assistance preferences are diverse, with 45% favoring micro-grants and 33% preferring tax breaks or express no interest in assistance, and 29% seek discounted services. These findings underscore the need for accessible regulatory frameworks and community-driven strategies to support Cedar Rapids' music ecosystem.



- **Regulatory Challenges** - Venue/Presenters in Cedar Rapids face several regulatory challenges, with special event specifics, sound policy, and confusion inefficiency topping the list. Special event specifics is considered the greatest challenge by 16% of respondents although 64% rank it high. While 16% also rank sound policy as their top challenge, 47% mark it as a medium-greatest challenge, and similarly 45% feel impacted by confusion inefficiency with 13% marking it as their top challenge. While only 6% mark cost of permits as their top challenge, 56% find inspections a concern, while inspections and administrative time each present challenges for 24% and 25% of respondents, respectively.

> "There needs to be more collaboration between city officials and the music community."

> "We need a single point of contact in the city for all permitting and regulatory questions."

> "Noise ordinances are too restrictive and hurt outdoor events."

> "Regulations should account for smaller, non-commercial events that are critical to the local music culture."

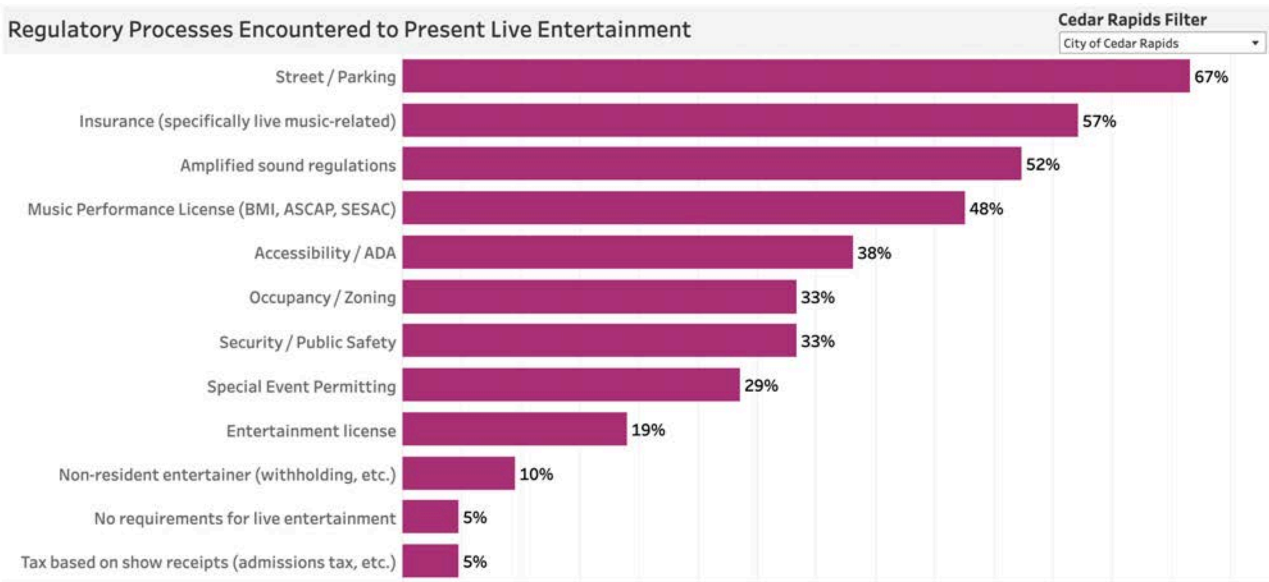
> "Polices favor large events, leaving small and medium sized promoters behind."

> "We need someone who understands the needs of musicians and venues on a policymaking level."

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Music-Friendly Policies (continued 2/3)

- **Regulatory Fluency** - Street and parking issues are the most frequently encountered regulatory processes for presenting live entertainment in Cedar Rapids, noted by 67% of respondents. Insurance requirements specifically for live music follow, cited by 57%, while amplified sound regulations are encountered by 52%. Music performance licensing (48%) and accessibility/ADA requirements (38%) are other notable regulatory processes. Occupancy/zoning and security/public safety regulations are encountered by 33% each, while special event permitting is cited by 29%. Less commonly encountered processes include entertainment licenses (19%), non-resident entertainer taxes (10%), and no requirements for live entertainment or tax-based receipts (5% each). These findings highlight the range of regulatory processes navigated by Venues and Presenters.

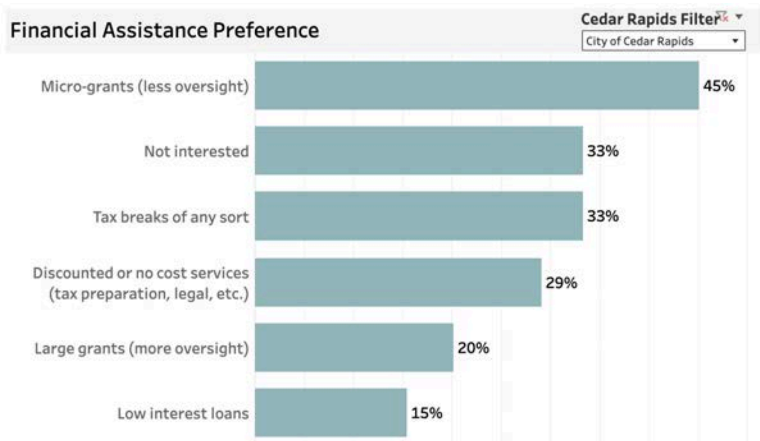


- **Venue/Presenter Tool Preference** - Cedar Rapids Venue/Presenter respondents emphasize the importance of streamlined permitting processes, with 71% favoring a single point of contact for regulatory needs. Tax incentives, waivers, and discounts for hosting live music are equally significant, supported by 64%. A dedicated webpage for live music regulations and having an advocate inside city government, such as an Office of Nightlife or Creative Industries, are also preferred by 64% and 57%, respectively. Additional tools include tiered compliance structures based on presentation scale (50%) and online portals for permitting and communication (36%). Annual training sessions and updates from regulatory bodies are valued by 29% of respondents, reflecting an interest in accessible and supportive regulatory frameworks.

Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Music-Friendly Policies (continued 3/3)

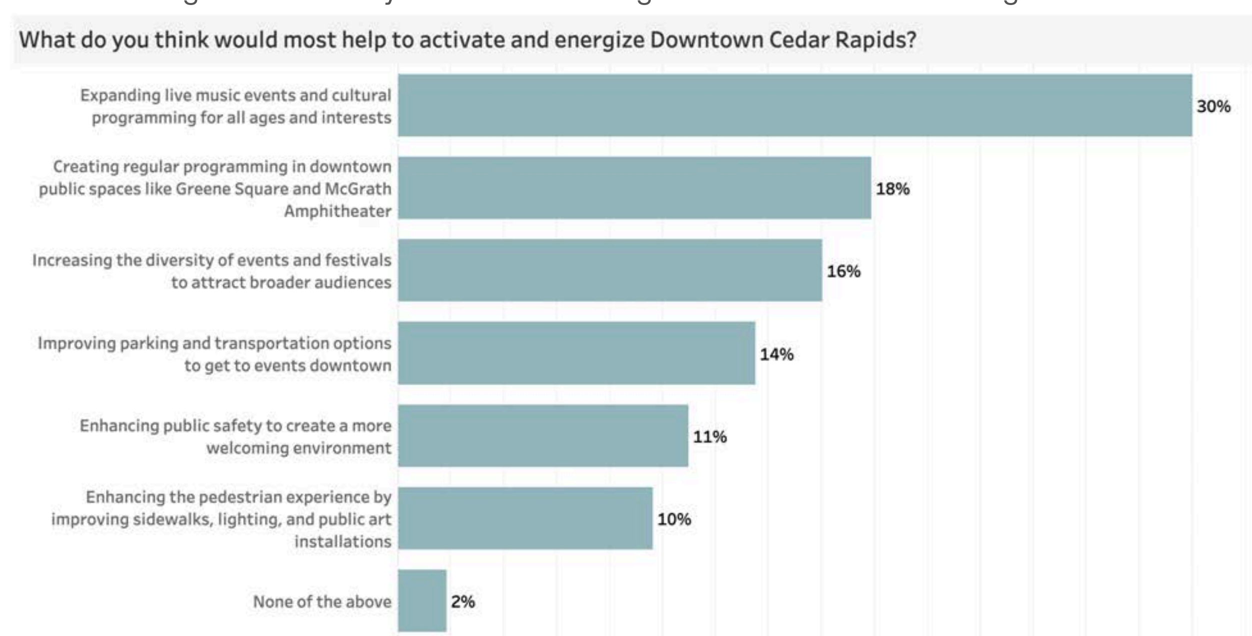
- **Financial Assistance Preferences** - Cedar Rapids respondents show a preference for micro-grants with less oversight, favored by 45%. Tax breaks and discounted or no-cost services, such as tax preparation or legal assistance, are each preferred by 33% of respondents. Larger grants with more oversight are less popular, with only 20% of respondents favoring them, while low-interest loans are the least preferred option at 15%. A significant portion of respondents, 33%, indicated no interest in financial assistance, suggesting diverse needs and perspectives within the community.



> "We need micro-grants that are easy to apply for without excessive oversight."

> "The city doesn't have policies in place to actively support live music."

- **Community Insights on Downtown Cedar Rapids Activation** - Cedar Rapids respondents highlight expanding live music events and cultural programming for all ages and interests as the top priority to energize downtown, with 30% identifying this as the most impactful approach. Creating regular programming in public spaces such as Greene Square and McGrath Amphitheater follows at 18%, emphasizing the value of consistent cultural offerings. Increasing the diversity of events and festivals to attract broader audiences is also a key focus, cited by 16% of respondents. Improving parking and transportation options ranks next at 14%, reflecting accessibility concerns. Public safety enhancements (11%) and improvements to the pedestrian experience, such as better sidewalks, lighting, and public art (10%), round out the suggestions, showcasing the community's interest in making downtown more welcoming and vibrant.



Music Ecosystem Health Assessment

Culture & Belonging

The Cedar Rapids music ecosystem offers many positive experiences but also faces challenges. Challenges include perceptions of elitism (69%), homogeneity (70%), and competitiveness (55%). However, the ecosystem's greatest strengths are its sense of safety (74%), inclusivity (67%), and being largely non-homophobic (66%). These findings highlight the need to address perceptions of exclusivity while building on the community's welcoming and cooperative aspects.

Subgroup Insights
Please see the online dashboard at CedarRapidsMusic.com 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 Cedar Rapids ecosystem are people who identify as Black, African or African American and people who identify as Two or more races. While not quite as consistent but still experiencing the negative side of the music ecosystem frequently are those who identify as part of Industry, people who are 40-54 years old, people who identify as Bisexual, and people who identify as Hispanic.

"Lack of diversity and support for women and/or people of color in the music scene."

"The scene needs to be welcoming to all ages and interests, including youth-focused opportunities."

"Inclusivity at festivals and major events needs to improve. Organizers should ask, 'Who are we overlooking?"

"Inclusivity in music opportunities must include experimental and non-mainstream genres."

"We need to move past the mindset dividing cover bands and original music to foster inclusivity."

"The music scene is dominated by older male bands. Younger and more diverse bands need a platform."

Key Insights

Ecosystem Imbalance:
- Creatives dominate the music ecosystem (72%), but there's a lack of venues (8%) and industry professionals (20%) is in the optimal range.
- The ecosystem exhibits racial, age, gender, and genre homogeneity.

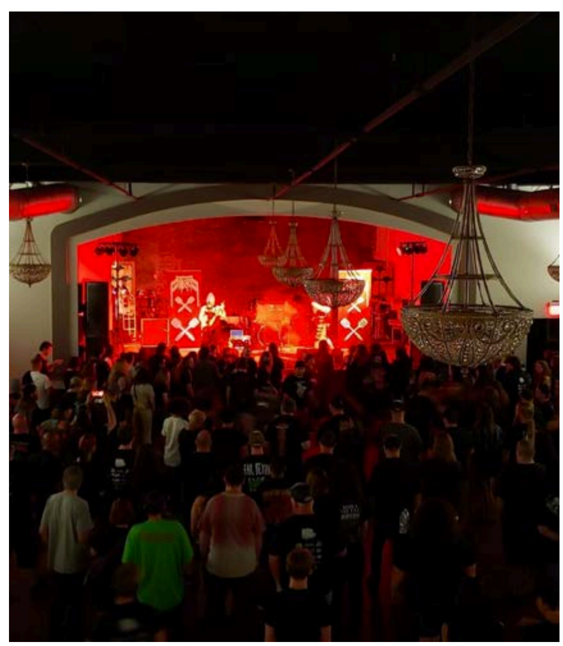
Financial and Career Pressures:
- Many Creatives face stagnant pay rates (31%) and rising costs (30%), with live performances being the primary income source.
- A significant 67% of music professionals rely on non-music jobs as their main source of income.

Venue Challenges:
- Smaller venue capacities dominate (1-100 people), limiting options for mid-size performances.
- Noise complaints, venue closures, and lack of all-ages spaces hinder growth.

Industry Disconnect and Development Needs:
- The local music industry lacks a centralized hub, leading to fragmentation.
- Only 13% of respondents are members of professional organizations, highlighting gaps in professional networking and support.
- There is strong demand for skill-based training in event production, audio engineering, and marketing.

Regulatory Barriers:
- Amplified sound regulations and unclear permitting processes create challenges for Venues and Presenters.
- Most respondents prefer simplified regulatory systems, such as a single point of entry for all permitting needs.

Community Inclusivity Gaps:
- Perceptions of elitism (69%) and homogeneity (70%) limit the breadth of the ecosystem.
- Younger and diverse artists lack opportunities to showcase their work, and collaboration across ecosystem sectors is minimal.



Photos Courtesy of Nick George, Iowa Metal Underground

Community Action Opportunities

1 **Create a Cedar Rapids Music Taskforce:**
- Establish a time-limited City taskforce to act as a central leadership body for the music ecosystem actions.
- Form working groups to tackle specific policies (regulatory, venue capacity gaps, and financial support).

2 **Launch a Local Music Journalism Initiative:**
- Partner with local media outlets and university journalism programs to increase coverage of local artists, events, and industry news.
- Focus on storytelling to elevate the visibility of underrepresented genres and voices.

3 **Develop the Leaders in Cedar Rapids Music Program:**
- Create a leadership program to empower advocates from across the music ecosystem.
- Build cross-sector connections to unify efforts and foster trusted leaders to drive long-term growth and policy change.

4 **Promote Diversity and Youth Engagement:**
- Create mentorship and networking programs for women, youth, and artists of color.
- Support youth-focused initiatives, all-ages venues, and educational workshops, to nurture emerging talent.

5 **Expand Infrastructure and Collaboration:**
- Invest in mid-sized venues (300-750 capacity) and support existing small-capacity spaces.
- Establish community-run studios and shared resources to lower costs for creatives and foster collaboration.

6 **Streamline Regulatory Processes:**
- Simplify permitting with a single city entry point for all music-related regulatory needs.
- Revise noise ordinances to balance residential concerns with support for outdoor and small-scale events.

7 **Economic Sustainability Models - Support initiatives to improve financial stability including:**
- Flexible Financial Assistance Options - Introduce accessible micro-grants, tax breaks, or subsidies for Creatives and Venues to alleviate economic pressures and support sustainable careers in music.
- Diversify Revenue Streams - Educate artists to tap into a spectrum of potential revenue streams, including digital content creation, merchandise, licensing/royalties, teaching, etc. to build a resilient financial base.

8 **Activate Downtown with Regular Programming:**
- Create year-round programming in public spaces like Greene Square and McGrath Amphitheater.
- Prioritize diverse, inclusive events that appeal to all ages and musical preferences.

9 **Build Advocacy and Awareness:**
- Form a community-based collaborative to advocate for the music ecosystem, with professional leadership.
- Highlight music's economic activity to gain city and business community buy-in for ecosystem investment.


Photos Courtesy of fp Music Academy, Cedar Rapids Opera