



CITY OF MONROE

SOUND
DIPLOMACY

MONROE

MUSIC STRATEGY

October 2023

Executive Summary



Image © Dylan Jung

1. FOREWORD

The City of Monroe moves to the rhythms of the music that have shaped our area for generations. Northeast Louisiana has produced some of music's greatest names, and we are still producing those that are making their mark on all genres of music.

Embarking on this strategy with Sound Diplomacy has been a journey that has shown us not just the layers of our cultural identity that are woven into our music ecosystem, but also the importance that our musicians, venues, studios, etc. retain when it comes to their place in the larger economy and cultural health of our City.

I hope that the recommendations in this plan are as inspiring as they are motivating, and that as you read, you are blown away yet again at the opportunities for quality of life here in the 318 that arts and culture provides. The richness of heritage we are blessed with in Ouachita Parish means that we are to be good stewards of that as we navigate the present and plan for the future. Monroe is honored to work with Sound Diplomacy to elevate creative place-keeping to the forefront of our economic development work, and to promote the interests of our musicians and artists every step of the way.

I look forward to continuing this work alongside the many community partners that have already been involved, and those that will join us as we continue to accomplish the plans set out here, in this parish-wide music strategy. Let's keep grooving, Monroe!

Mayor Friday Ellis
City of Monroe



Image © Skylar Henry

2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

Monroe is poised to become a performing arts destination with music at its core. New leadership, a Downtown vision and recent local investment have elevated the existing prime location and infrastructure of Monroe for growth and additional revenue.

Musicians and artists are considered to be one of the biggest strengths of the area, yet many lack opportunities for professionalization, there are disparities in music education provision across Ouachita Parish, and Monroe is missing a clear brand that ties its music industry together and celebrates the variety of activities taking place.

The City of Monroe and its strategic partners are engaged with, enthusiastic about, and supportive of the local music ecosystem, but what is needed now is understanding, strategic alignment, and routes to foster and facilitate growth in the industry in order to increase resilience, boost the local economy, and put Monroe on the map of music destinations, celebrating what makes it unique.

This Music Strategy for the City of Monroe looks at the entire city's music ecosystem, and where relevant analyzes the wider area of Ouachita Parish. It explores in depth at how the existing music industry works, what the needs are and how the future can look through focused strategic planning.

The research methodology was composed of five interrelated steps that led to the final recommendations.



MUSIC ECOSYSTEM ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A measure of the direct, indirect, and induced economic impact of the music ecosystem in Ouachita Parish (based on data from 2020).

SWOT ANALYSIS

All data was collated and analyzed through the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) technique. This process allows us to compare and contrast findings and think strategically.

The above five steps leads into the **Strategic Plan** where the final analysis and findings inform a set of actionable recommendations. An implementation timeline is provided alongside, where relevant, best case examples.

REGULATORY ASSESSMENT & COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A full analysis of the regulatory framework and programs that exist in and around Monroe which affect the music ecosystem. Includes a literature of relevant strategic documents.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

One part was an online survey developed by Sound Diplomacy and the City of Monroe, distributed to local stakeholders (447 responses¹ were included in the final analysis). The other part of this work were the stakeholder roundtables held throughout 2023. These roundtables involved 39 individuals from the region.

ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

An index of music ecosystem assets in Ouachita Parish. Produced using a database built from secondary sources.

3. CITY AT A GLANCE

TOPIC	IN PLACE?	CITY'S POLICY	BEST CASE
MUSIC EDUCATION	Yes	While there isn't a standardized curriculum in Monroe City Schools, music classes are available in the school system from elementary school and carry through high school. There are also educational pipelines for music teachers.	Nashville's Music Makes Us seeks to eliminate barriers to music education and increase student participation. It also provides a contemporary curriculum that embraces new technologies and reflects the diverse student population. ²
FUNDING SUPPORT	Yes	The Northeast Louisiana Arts Council, ³ the Louisiana Office of Tourism, ⁴ Discover Monroe–West Monroe, ⁵ and the Louisiana Office of Entertainment Industry Development offers grants and incentives that musicians and music organizations can access. ⁶ There are no funds led by the City of Monroe itself.	The Denver Music Advancement Fund was launched in 2018 as a collective investment led by Denver Arts & Venues (A&V) ⁷ to support initiatives that advance the Denver Music Strategy ⁸ and Denver's Cultural Plan. ⁹ In 2022, \$475,000 in funding was awarded to applicants.
BUSINESS LICENSING	Yes	Anyone wishing to conduct business in Monroe must obtain an Occupational License. The license cost for a live music oriented venue is between \$60 and \$6,200. ¹⁰	The City of New Orleans has a Mayoral Office of Cultural Economy. It provides zoning, permitting, and licensing guidance for the benefit of businesses from the creative sectors. ¹¹
LIQUOR LICENSING	Yes	All liquor retailers are required to obtain an alcoholic beverages license from the City each year. ¹² There is no clear information on how to apply for an alcohol permit on the City of Monroe website.	Lafayette's Consolidated Government website has a specific section for alcohol and noise control under the Community Development & Planning Department. ¹³
SPECIAL EVENT PERMITTING	Yes	The City of Monroe provides a web page under the Community Affairs Department containing general guidelines for holding a special event (concert or festival). ¹⁴ Special event permits must also be obtained from the Louisiana Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control.	Seattle's Special Events Office has its own website with extensive guidelines on how to apply and what to expect when requesting a Special Event Permit. ¹⁵
NOISE ORDINANCE	Yes	In commercial districts sound is limited to 70 dBA during the day and 65 dBA at night. ¹⁶ There is no guidance specifically for venues, events, or places that play music.	Boulder, Colorado's sound ordinance policy is publicly available and contains information on how to measure noise ¹⁷ and permitted levels, among other things. ¹⁸
HEALTH & WELLBEING INITIATIVES	No	There is an initiative called Healthy Funroe that focuses on getting people outside and moving, and involves local musicians and members of the health community.	Music Minds Matter (MMM) ¹⁹ is a dedicated mental health support line and service for the UK music community run by Help Musicians. ²⁰
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & RECYCLING	Partial	Keep Monroe Beautiful is a Monroe Community Affairs Department initiative aimed at encouraging people to take greater responsibility for improving their community environments. ²¹ There is no specific guidance for music, arts, or culture.	The Green Music Initiative is a non-profit independent cross-sector think tank and platform in Germany. It promotes environmental sustainability in the music and entertainment industry. ²²

TOPIC	IN PLACE?	CITY'S POLICY	BEST CASE
BUSKING	No	There is no city-wide busking policy in Monroe and busking or street performance is not explicitly included in the City Code of Ordinances.	The Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans ²³ provides a Guide to New Orleans Street Performance. ²⁴ The Guide is intended not just for performers, but also for enforcement agencies, businesses, residents and neighborhood organizations.
AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT	No	There are no city-wide audience development programs. However, Sound Diplomacy did find adjacent projects. The City of Monroe does not currently have a centralized calendar of events but there is a calendar on the Discover Monroe–West Monroe website with a music category filter.	The Toronto New Music Passport was a program developed by the Toronto New Music Alliance in 2012 that allowed music and arts enthusiasts to explore some of the new music being presented throughout the city.
MUSIC OFFICE	No	The Louisiana Office of Entertainment Industry Development OEID encompasses music, film, interactive and digital media, and live performance. ²⁵ There is a state-wide music officer position inside the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development. In addition, the City of Monroe has an Economic and Cultural Development Officer.	The Austin Music Office sits within the Economic Development Department's Music and Entertainment Division. The Music Officer liaises with the Texas Music Office. Strategic priority areas include the affordability of spaces, land use regulations, and entertainment licenses. ²⁶
ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT	Yes	The Riverside Cultural District is a designated Economic Development District and has been a Certified Cultural District since 2008. Since 2022, Monroe has had the Divine Nine Cultural District ²⁷ and another Certified Cultural District called the Lida Benton Cultural District.	Austin, Texas has six official entertainment districts, each distinct in aesthetic and offer. ²⁸ For example, Sixth Street District is known for its nightlife and is popular among younger demographics. ²⁹
AGENT OF CHANGE	No	The City of Monroe does not currently have an Agent of Change Policy in place.	Chapter 116 of the San Francisco Administrative Code makes it the responsibility of the property developer to inform any new residents of the existing sound in the area. San Francisco also protects music venues from hotel and motel sound complaints within 300 feet of the venue. ³⁰
PARKING REGULATIONS	Yes	Research showed there are no music-related parking regulations, such as designated loading/unloading zones.	In Nashville , a deal was brokered between Premier Parking and the local musicians' union, in which special \$5 nightly rates will be offered for musicians.
TRANSIT	Yes	Monroe Transit offers 11 fixed routes and paratransit services. ³¹ In 2005, the Monroe Transit Night Rider service was created with multiple routes through the city operating from Monday to Saturday until 10:30 p.m. The service was closed in January 2017. ³²	Toronto's Blue Night Network is the most extensive night-time transportation service in North America, with routes picking up after trains cease service between 1 a.m.–2 a.m. ³³

4. ECONOMIC IMPACT & EMPLOYMENT SUMMARY

TOPIC	IN PLACE?	CITY'S POLICY	BEST CASE
MUSIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	No	The City of Monroe does not currently offer music business development opportunities but there are various national organizations throughout Louisiana that offer resources for artists and music professionals to develop their businesses.	The Musicians' Union (MU) in the UK provides numerous free resources for musicians to develop their careers and business skills and for venues and music business professionals to ensure they are following fair and equitable practices. ³⁴
MUSIC HUB / WORKSPACE	No	Monroe does not currently have an official music hub or workspace open to the public. However, Biedenharn Hall at ULM has ample classroom, studio, and practice facilities in addition to the 284-seat Emy-Lou Biedenharn Recital Hall. ³⁵	The Oh Yeah Music Centre in Belfast provides affordable rehearsal space, a live music venue, a music exhibition, a cafe space, a recording studio, a songwriting room, and workshop spaces. The Centre rents offices to local music enterprises and is also a host campus to Belfast Metropolitan College. ³⁶
MUSIC NETWORK	No	Monroe does not currently have a city-wide music network.	Musicboard Berlin was founded in 2013 as a joint initiative of Berlin's music community and the state of Berlin. Since 2017, the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe has been responsible for Musicboard. ³⁷
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES	No	While there are currently no significant music-related economic development incentives operated by the City of Monroe, the Louisiana OEID runs three programs that offer tax incentives to music businesses.	The Austin Live Music Fund contributes a portion of newly increased hotel occupancy taxes to local for-profit music entities in order to support local artists. ³⁸ Since its inception, the Fund has grown to more than \$3 million ³⁹ with collections planned for distribution in mid-2023. ⁴⁰
MUSIC TOURISM	Incomplete	Whilst music is promoted to an extent, it is not currently a direct strategic focus of the City.	The Calgary Airport YYC Music Program allows artists and musicians to perform at terminals throughout the airport as a means of improving the guest experience and promoting local music.
MUSIC HERITAGE	No	While Monroe has a strong musical heritage, most of the physical heritage assets no longer exist or are not used for music or entertainment. ⁴¹ Enoch's Irish Pub & Cafe, established in 1980, is one of the only long-running venues in Monroe with regular live music. ⁴² The Northeast Louisiana Music Trail is a series of historical markers spread across the region's 11 parishes, including Ouachita Parish. ⁴³	The Uncommon People project in Sheffield, UK is an online "family tree" that celebrates the "DNA of Sheffield music". ⁴⁴ The project is open for anyone to submit anecdotes, photos, footage or audio about Sheffield bands. The website features a contribution page with a clear online form for people to add new artists and locations or update an existing entry. ⁴⁵

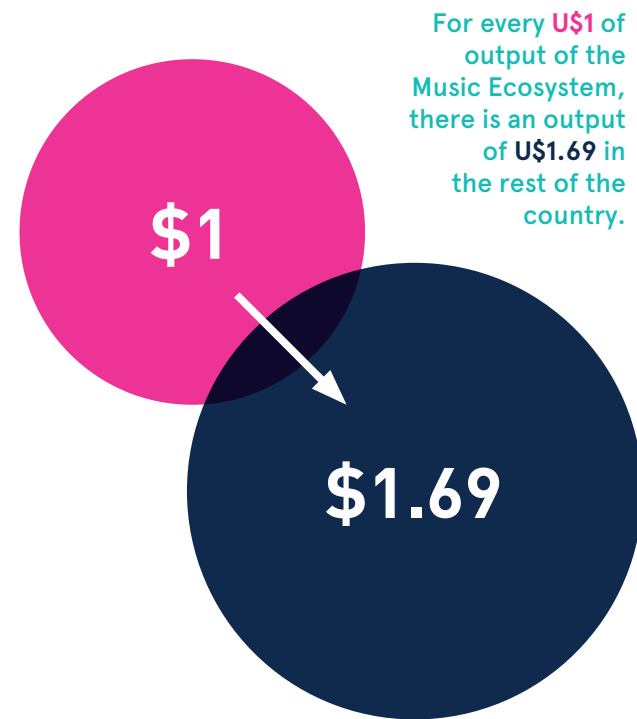


Image © Kelsaa McCrary

4.1 OUACHITA PARISH TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

	MUSIC ECOSYSTEM	Creation	Distribution	Exhibition	Production	Transversal
Total Turnover	\$142.3m	\$7.8m	\$48.2m	\$60.8m	\$5.6m	\$19.9m
Total employment	1,703	146	463	802	46	246
Total Value Added	\$76.0m	\$6.2m	\$26.4m	\$29.2m	\$3.0m	\$11.2m

TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT

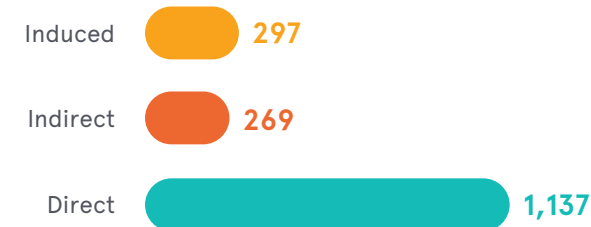


Developed by: Sound Diplomacy

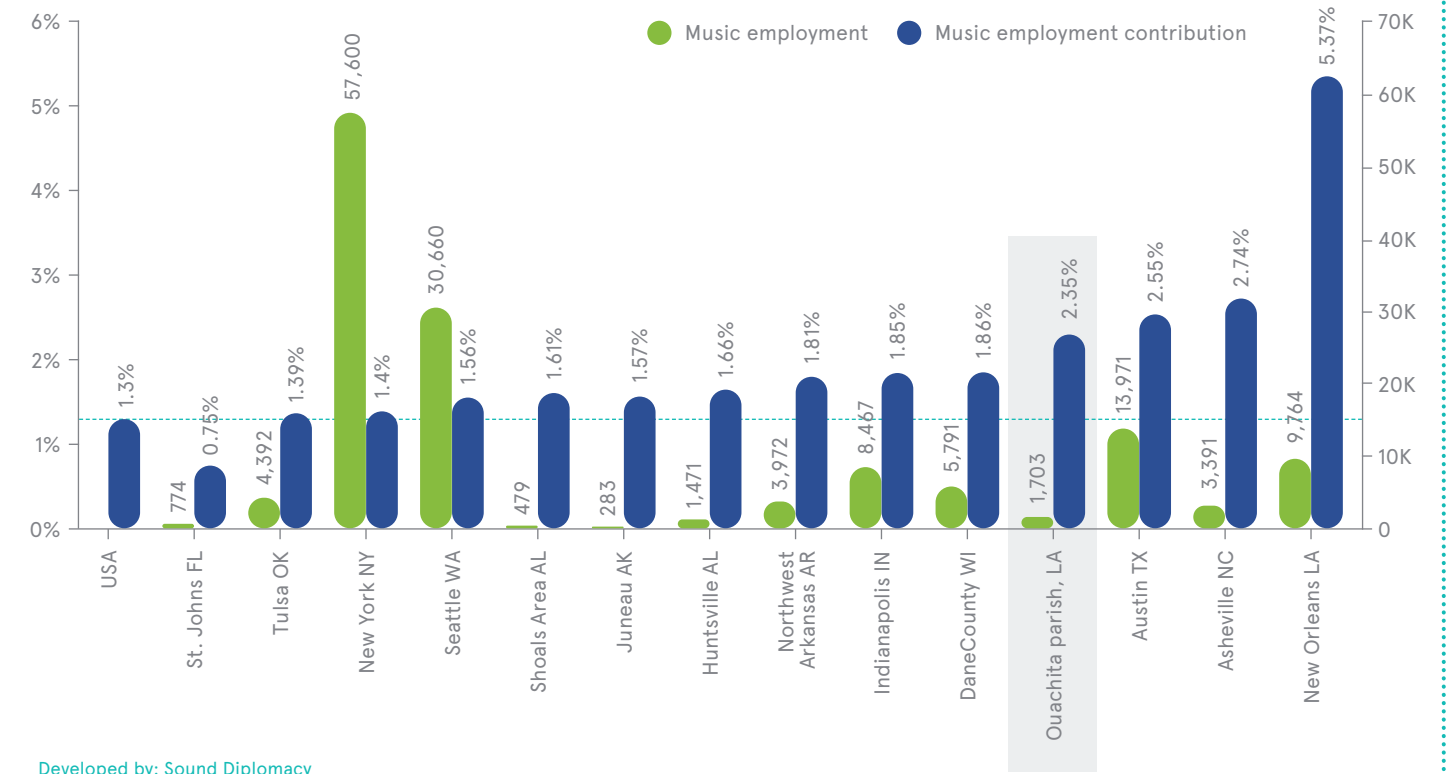
TOTAL MUSIC ECOSYSTEM OUTPUT (MILLIONS)



TOTAL MUSIC ECOSYSTEM EMPLOYMENT



MUSIC ECOSYSTEM TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, US CITIES

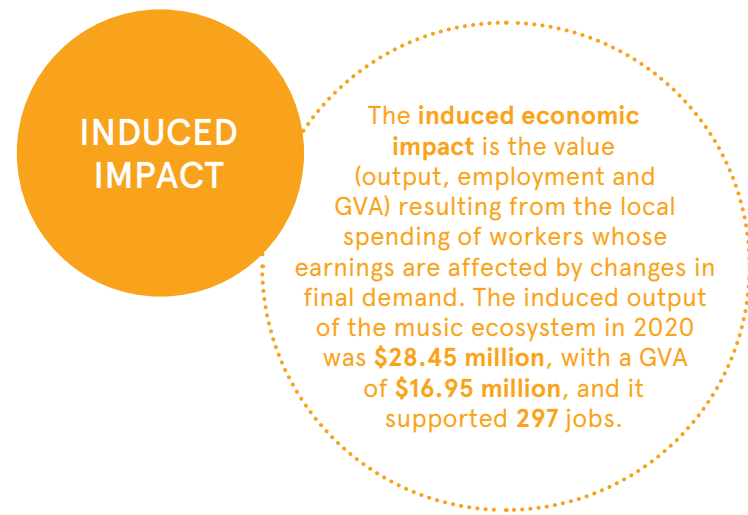
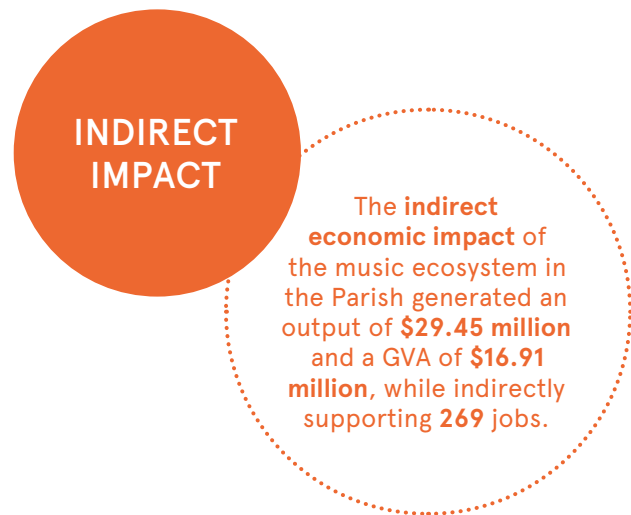
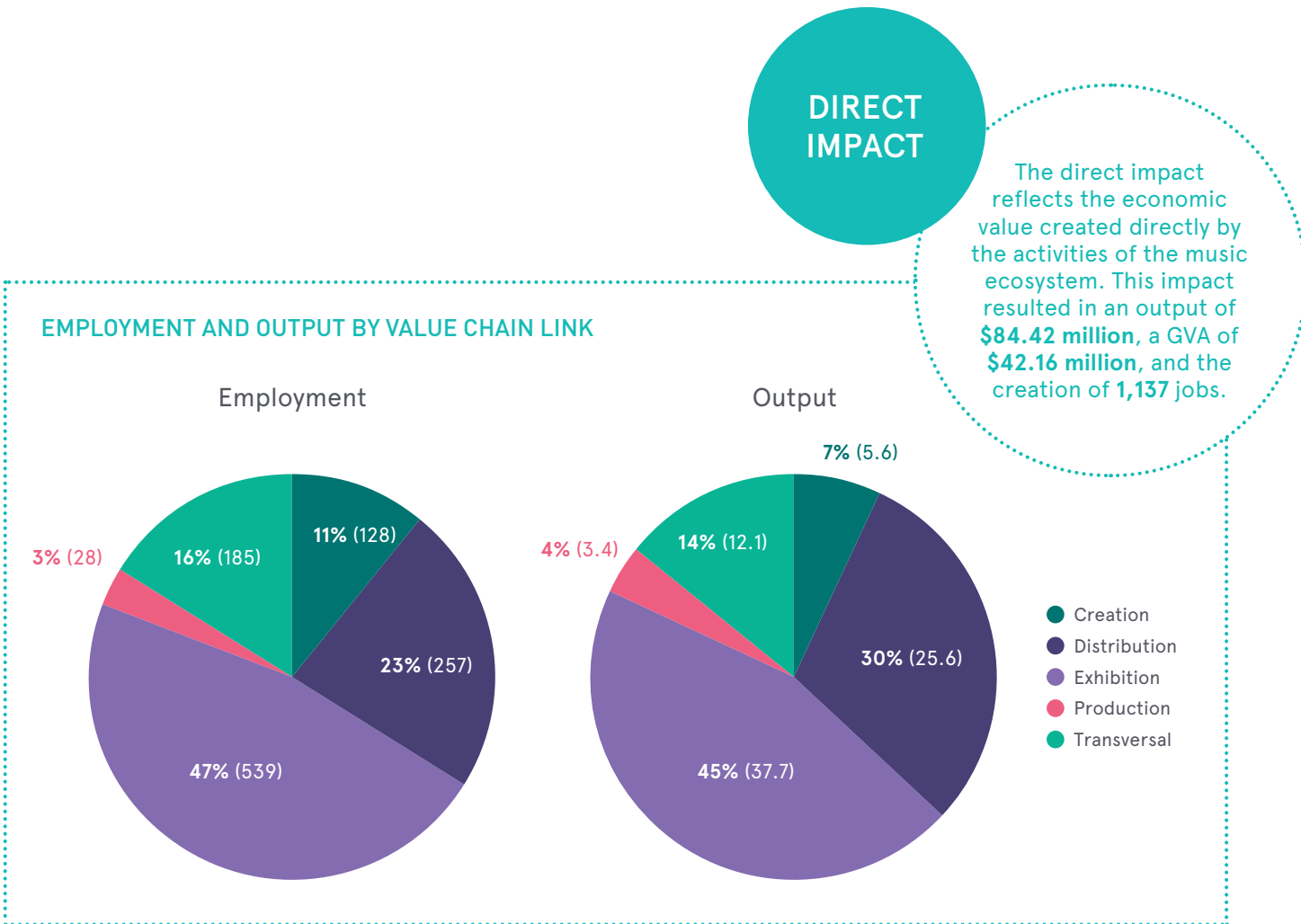


Developed by: Sound Diplomacy

In the case of Ouachita Parish, the music sector generates and supports **2.35%** of the local employment, which exceeds the national average contribution of music to national employment (**1.66%**).⁴⁶ However, Ouachita Parish ranks lower than other areas with a strong music industry presence, such as Austin or New Orleans,⁴⁷ where the music sector supports **2.55%** and **5.37%** of the local employment, respectively.



4.2 BREAKDOWN, DIRECT, INDIRECT AND INDUCED IMPACTS



5. MAPPING

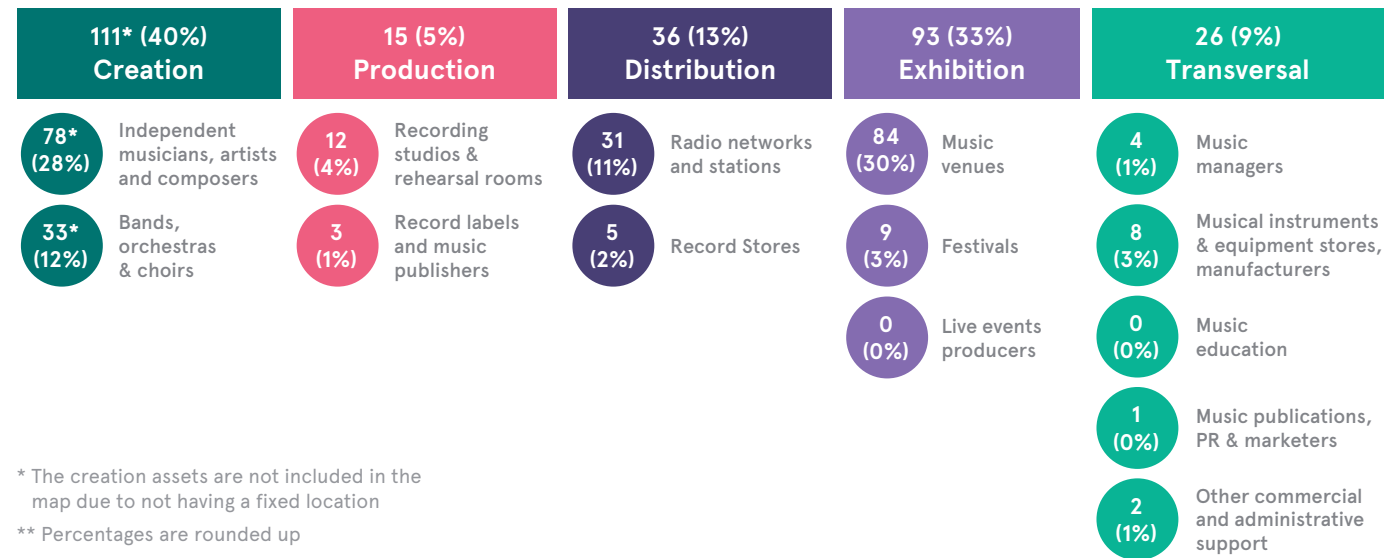


5. MAPPING

This mapping identified music ecosystem assets in Ouachita Parish, LA. The mapping was produced using a database built from secondary sources and georeferenced with [Sound Diplomacy's mapping tool](#).

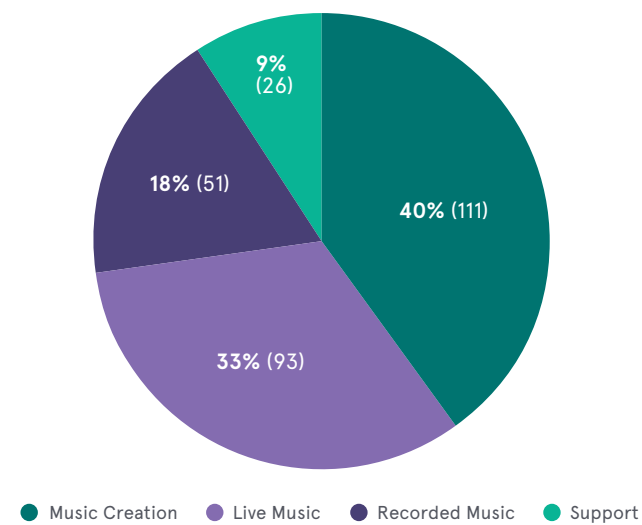
KEY FINDINGS: OUACHITA PARISH MUSIC ECOSYSTEM ECONOMIC IMPACT

MUSIC CHAIN VALUE IN OUACHITA PARISH: NUMBER OF ASSETS PER LINK AND TYPE OF AGENT

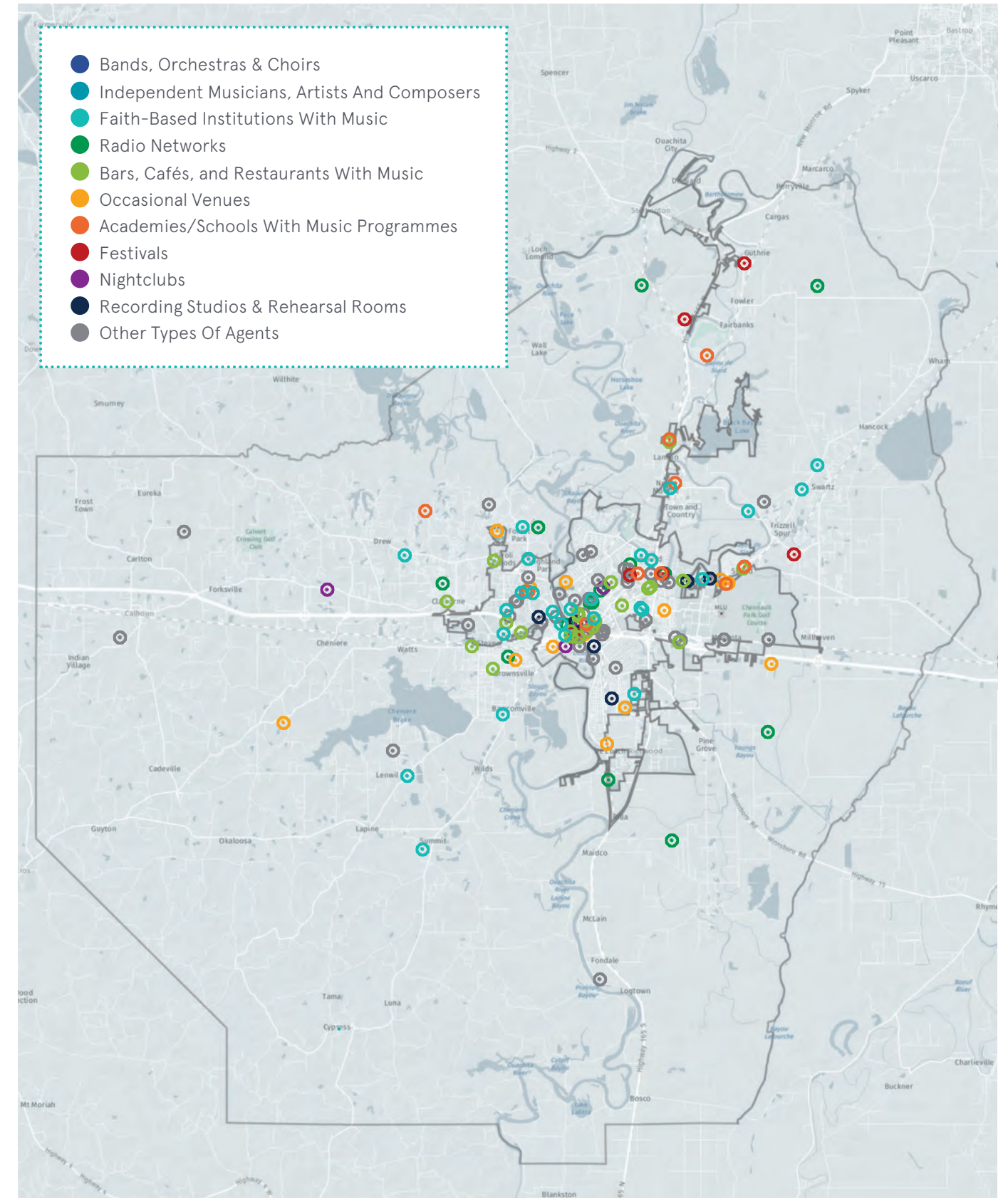
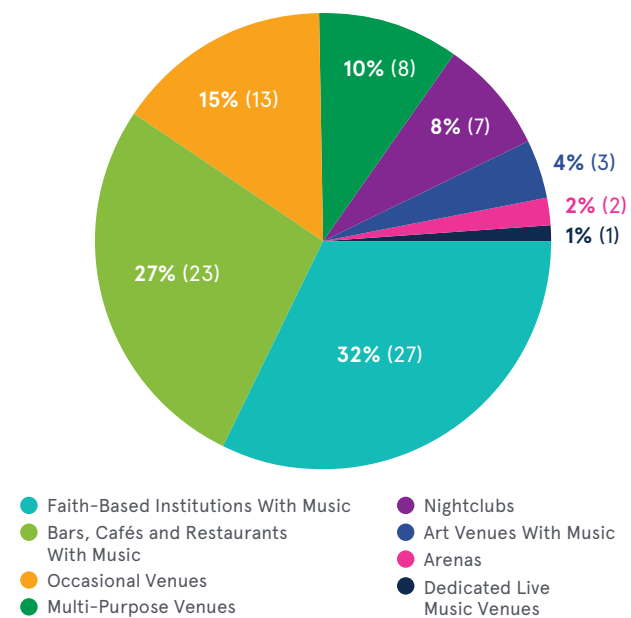


* The creation assets are not included in the map due to not having a fixed location
 ** Percentages are rounded up

ASSET CATEGORIES



TYPES OF MUSIC VENUES



Source: Sound Diplomacy

Of the **281 music ecosystem assets**, the ones related to the creation link (i.e. bands, orchestras, independent musicians and composers, etc) make up the greatest proportion of the music ecosystem with **111 (40%)**. They are followed by **93 assets (33%)** in the exhibition link, **36 (13%)** in the distribution link, **26 (9%)** that provide transversal support, and **15 (5%)** in the production link.

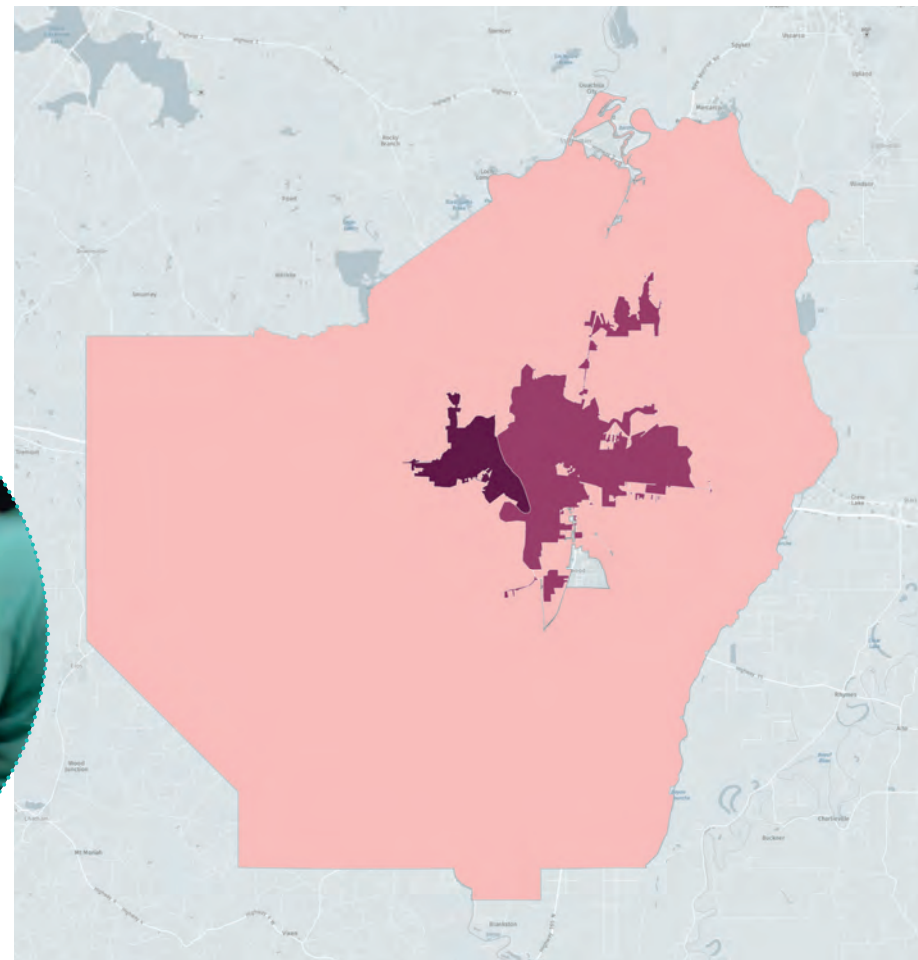


Despite the fact that the number of exhibition link assets is relatively high, only **11 venues (13%)** have the infrastructure suitable for live music (**1 dedicated live music venue (1%)**, **2 arenas (2%)** and **8 multipurpose venues (10%)**).

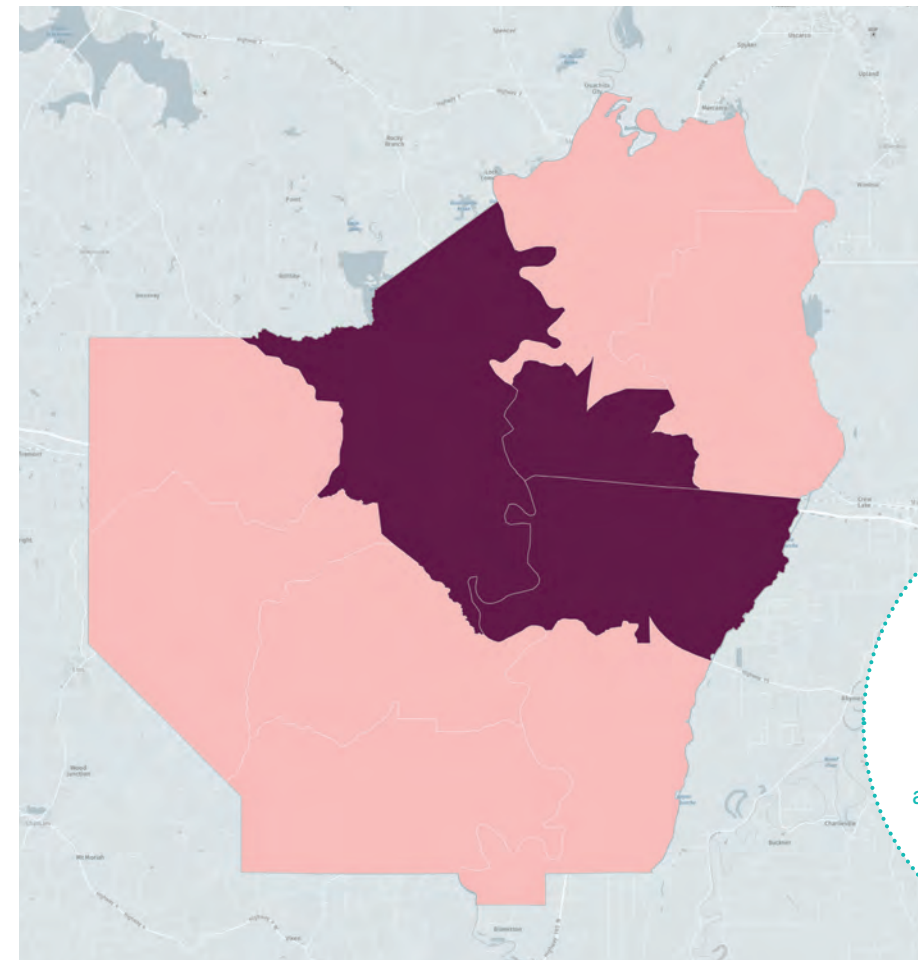
Overall, the music assets are mainly located in **Monroe (54%)** and **West Monroe (21%)** urban areas, whilst the rest of the territory has the remaining **25%** of assets.

LOCATION AND WARD DENSITY HEATMAPS: MUSIC ECOSYSTEM ASSETS IN OUACHITA PARISH, LA

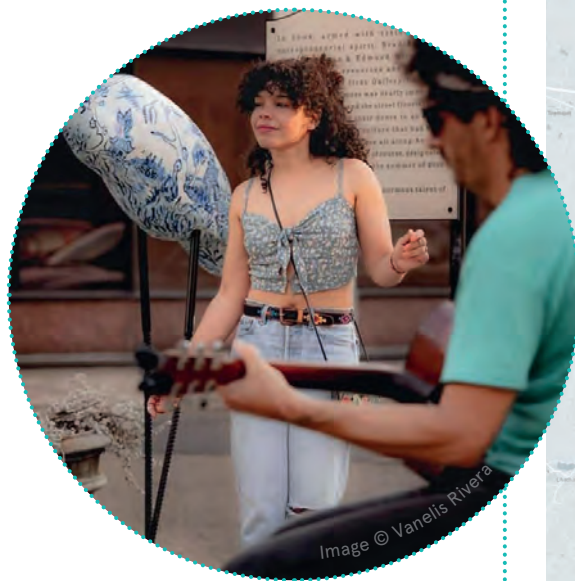
Location



Ward



Together, Monroe and West Monroe concentrate **3.1 assets per square mile** whilst outside of the urban areas there are only **0.1**. West Monroe is the location that concentrates most of these assets per square mile (**4.3**) and Monroe concentrates **2.8** assets per square mile.



6. SURVEY



A survey was developed and disseminated to inform the development of this music strategy. The survey targeted the local music ecosystem: musicians and artists, music-related businesses and organizations, and music fans. The main goal of the survey was to identify these local stakeholders' perception and experience of the Ouachita Parish music ecosystem.



Image © Dominique Pedleton



Image © Kelsea McCrary

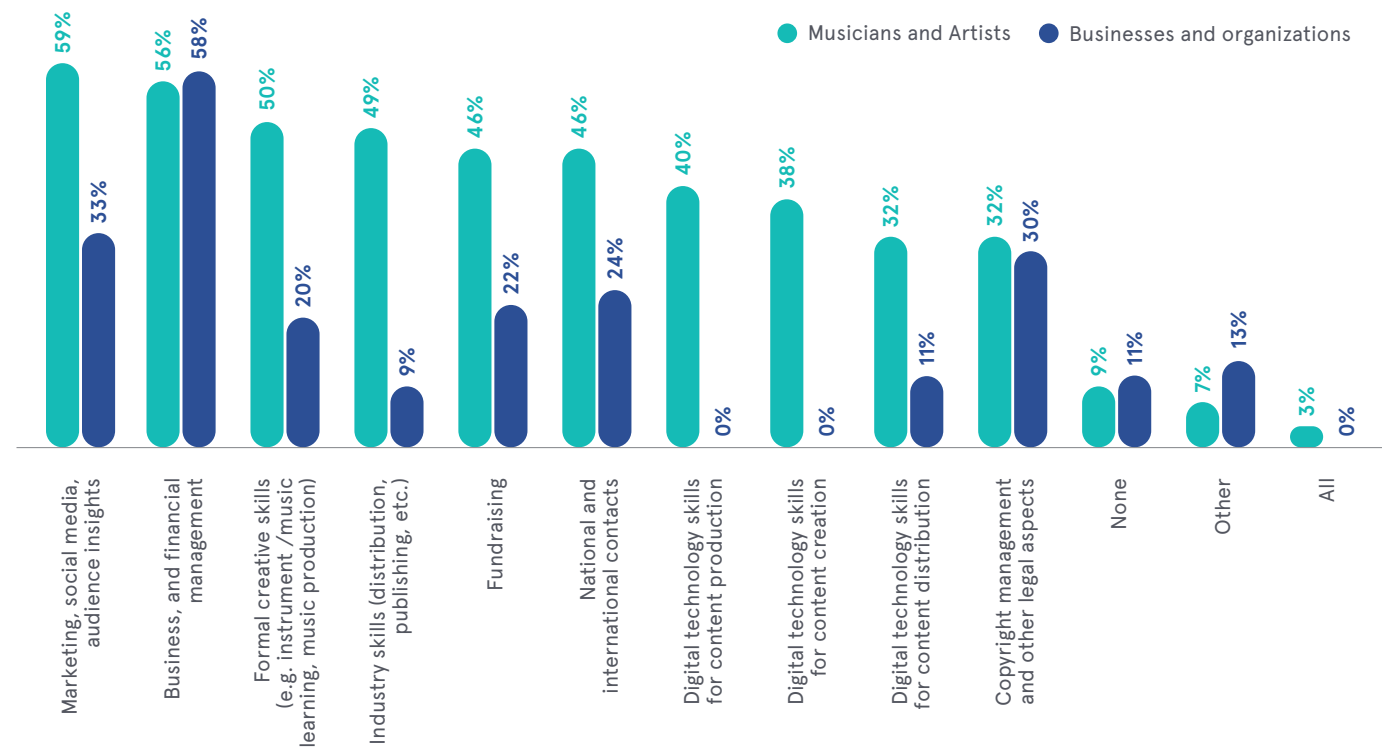
PROFESSIONALIZATION AND INDEPENDENCE

Local musicians and artists operate in a do-it-yourself (DIY)⁴⁸ manner, with low support from cultural intermediaries (i.e. music managers, bookers, record labels). For this reason they perceive they need many administrative, business and commercial skills to fulfill the roles that are not available to them: local musicians and artists do not rate

the managers, bookers, record labels, or copyright management organizations as having a high level of impact on their success in the local music ecosystem.

The following graph shows the perceived skills and knowledge gaps in the local music ecosystem.

SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE GAPS IN THE LOCAL MUSIC ECOSYSTEM



Developed by Sound Diplomacy

Marketing, business management, formal creative skills and industry know-how are points of major concern for musicians and artists in the area. Business and financial management is a concern for businesses and organizations.

The skills that are lacking are usually provided by intermediaries, either educational institutions, industry organizations, or individuals, with professional experience.

COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS

Just above half of local musicians and artists (51%) register and own most of the copyright, however they face a hurdle when it comes to the process of doing so. The most challenging procedures/licenses faced by musicians and artists were Intellectual Property registration (25%), and the process to obtain permission to use copyright (24%). Likewise, 36% of businesses and organizations found that the process to obtain permission to use copyright (36%) posed the greatest difficulty for them.



Image © Dylan Jung

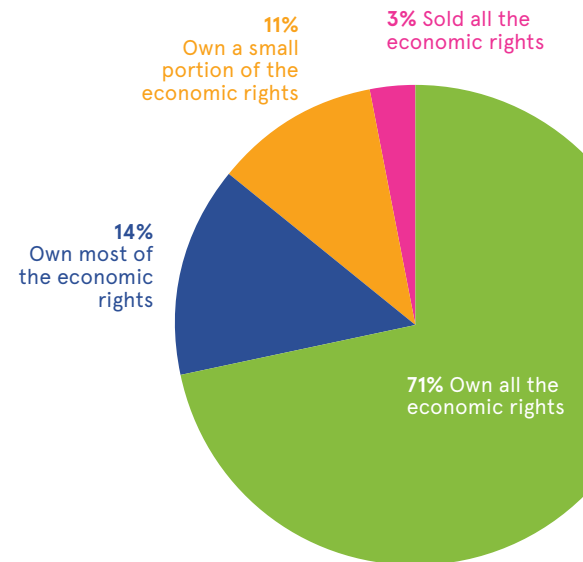
MUSIC ECOSYSTEM CHALLENGES: COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION AND OWNERSHIP

MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS: REGISTRATION OF COPYRIGHT



Developed by Sound Diplomacy

MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS: OWNERSHIP OF COPYRIGHT



Developed by Sound Diplomacy

Local musicians and artists gave a low rating when scoring the relevance of copyright management organizations to their activity (rating: 2.37).⁴⁹ Moreover, only 17% of local professional musicians and artists' music-related income comes from copyright or related rights (i.e. mechanical rights, performance rights, synchronization, print music).

Given the importance of copyright when it comes to potential earnings and protecting intellectual property, these results reveal a lack of understanding on this topic to be a major potential pitfall.

SOURCES OF INCOME

Digital technologies are not yet perceived as important sources of income for the local music ecosystem. As we see in the following chart, only 9% of local professional musicians and artists' revenue is derived from digital-mechanical rights (i.e. payment from streams, downloads). The majority of professional's revenue is derived from live performances (29%), and other music-related sources such as merchandise sales. Only 5% of their revenue comes from performance rights (i.e. payment from permission to play a song in public such as bars or venues), and 3% from other copyright revenue (i.e. permission to play a song in ads, print sheets, physical format such as CDs). The remaining 26% of their revenue comes from non-music related sources.

MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS: PROFESSIONALIZATION, INCOME, AND USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS: PROFESSIONALIZATION AND INCOME



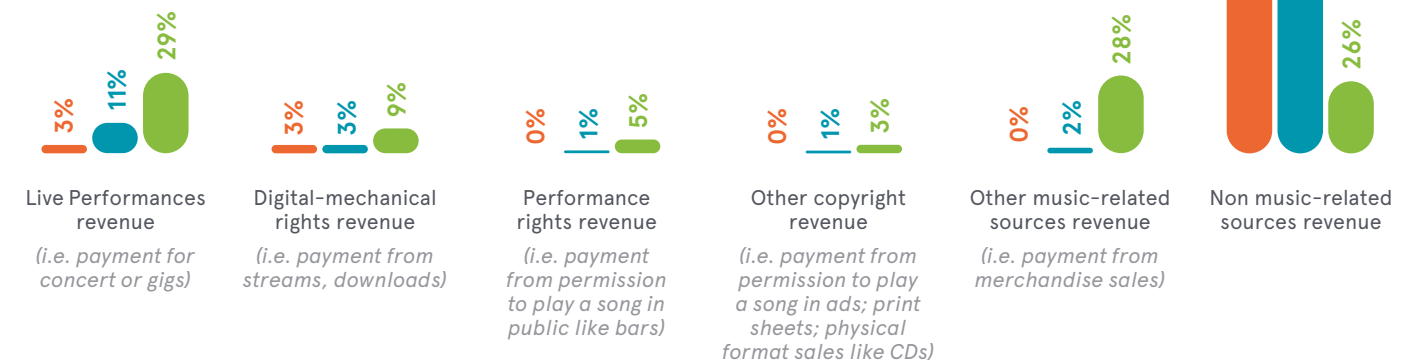
RELEVANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR INCOME GENERATION

How much do musicians and artists agree that digital technology has become an important source of income for music-related activities



RELEVANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR INCOME GENERATION

● Amateur ● Semi professional ● Professional



Businesses and organizations in the production link (i.e. recording studios and rehearsal rooms) are in agreement that digital technology is an important source of income (rating: 3.5), whilst exhibition link businesses (i.e. music venues), and transversal support link businesses (i.e. music education academies, music managers) disagree (rating: 1.50 and 1.0 respectively). This can be due to the higher dependence that exhibition businesses have on the in-person presence of audiences.

MUSIC VENUES AND LOCAL CONTENT

Local music fans perceive that the music venues are insufficient (rating: 2.45) and of mediocre quality (rating: 2.75).⁵¹ This can be linked to the fact that there are only 11 venues that have the infrastructure suitable for live music (1 dedicated live music venue, 2 arenas and 8 multipurpose venues) and therefore most of the live music scene occurs in spaces that are not specifically dedicated to live performance. Respondents said:

"We have no music venues for Large crowds in this area... We have a lot of musical talent in this area but no way to showcase it. Also the community wont come out for just music. They need other reasons to come out and for it to be nicer."

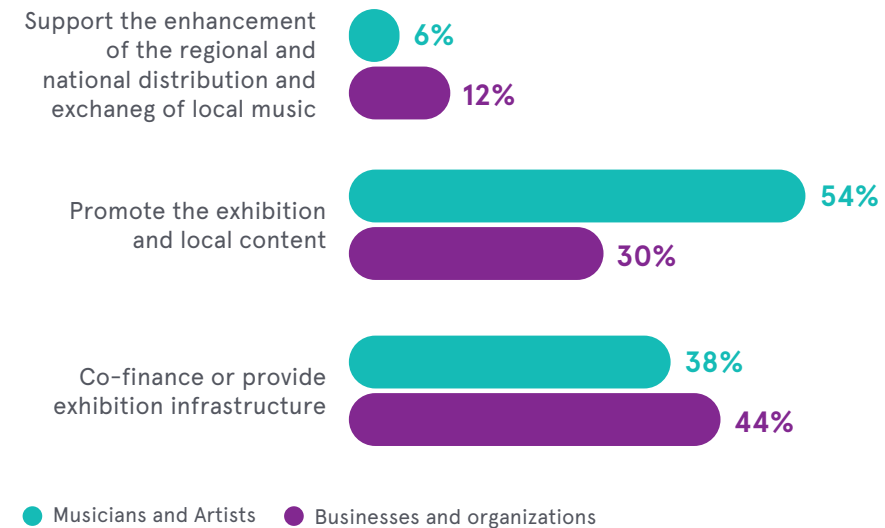
"I believe there are great artists in the Ouachita Parish area that can't find venues to express their music."

"We need more places for local bands to play in a family environment not just in the bar"

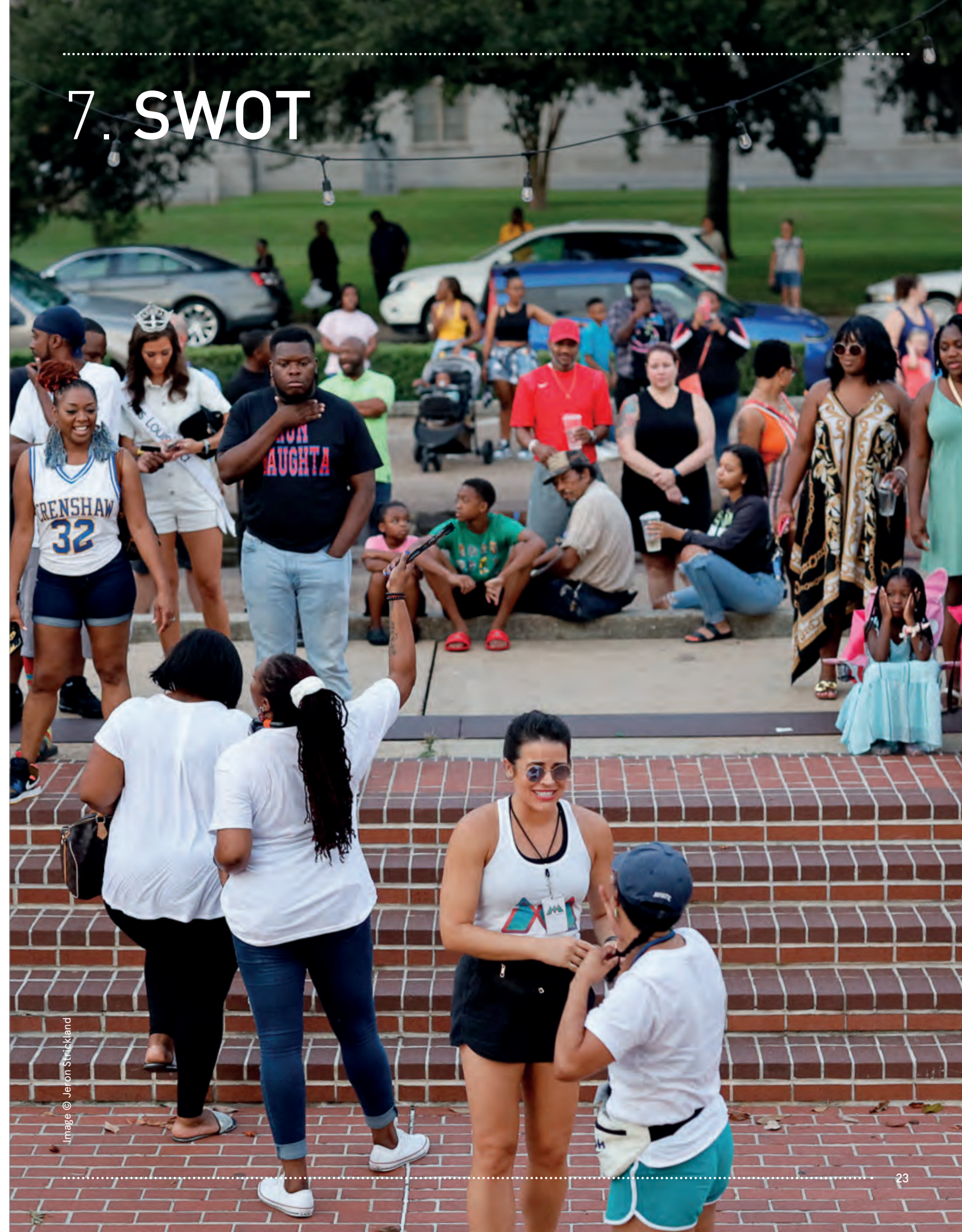
The local music ecosystem wants to see increased prioritization of improvements within the exhibition link by the local government: 38% of musicians and artists and 48% of businesses and organizations want it to co-finance or provide more live music infrastructure. This is in alignment with the finding that music fans believe that live venues across the Parish lack availability and are of low quality. The following graph shows the areas musicians and artists, and businesses and organizations want to see increased government support for.



CHARACTERISTICS SELECTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE MUSIC ECOSYSTEM FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION: EXHIBITION



7. SWOT



7. SWOT

STRENGTHS (INTERNAL)

GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is already synergy between different arts agencies. For example, the Louisiana Office of Entertainment Industry Development (OEID) and Northeast Louisiana Arts Council (NELAC) work with the Louisiana Division of the Arts and closely with the City.

The City of Monroe is thinking strategically about how to develop the music industry, including putting the Monroe Civic Center through an in-depth venue audit.

CITY POSITIONING AND MUSIC TOURISM

There are local grassroots initiatives to highlight music heritage and the passion of Monroe's residents. Such initiatives include the Northeast Louisiana Music Trail.

Monroe audiences have access to hundreds of events that include music every year. There were 646 community events in 2022.⁴⁸

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Monroe has a strong anchor for live music in the form of Enoch's, recognized by stakeholders as the center of the live music scene in Monroe, and was also named by most stakeholders as the only consistent, reliable and quality space to perform in.

Stakeholders agree that the caliber of local artists and musicians is high and diverse. Those involved in the music ecosystem say that artists from Ouachita Parish support each other, know each other, and play at or go to each others' gigs.

The size of Monroe allows artists to develop close working relationships with each other.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Faith-based institutions play a significant role in the origins of most musicians in Monroe.

MUSIC EDUCATION

The Louisiana Music Educators Association (LMEA) offers a mentoring program for new or emerging music teachers in all school districts through strategic professional partnerships and professional development opportunities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NELAC, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, and the OEID offer a number of grants and financial incentives (including state tax credits) that are accessible to music and music organizations in Monroe.

Organizations throughout Louisiana offer non-monetary support for artists and music professionals. NELAC serves Ouachita Parish and provides various artist resources. The Culturalyst website lists events, artists, organizations, and opportunities.

Gig swapping organized by local artists brings performers from outside of the area to Monroe to perform, while creating opportunities for themselves to perform in other cities, regions and states.

Monroe's music ecosystem supports a higher % of the total workforce in comparison to the national average. Ouachita Parish's music ecosystem (including faith-based organizations) generated and supported 2.35% of the local workforce, a contribution exceeding the national average of 1.66%.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

KEDM Public Radio acts as a major supporter of local music. Byway Blues, the Boot, and the Parish Playlist are just some examples of its championing of the local industry.

Music City Studios' radio station, Roetown Radio, provides greater amplification of local music and events.

WEAKNESSES (INTERNAL)

GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There is no music office/department/specialist working for the City in order to grow the local music ecosystem.

There are currently no significant music-related grants operated by the City of Monroe.

There is a perceived lack of coordination between event organizers (including government agents), leading to an oversupply of live music events.

For every \$1,000 of output generated by the music ecosystem there is an additional \$686 of output generated in the local economy. This rate of indirect and induced economic activity is lower than Sound Diplomacy would expect based on experience in other localities.

Some music business stakeholders said that there is too much financial risk for those who want to take on the responsibility of creating new events.

Keep Monroe Beautiful is the City's sustainability initiative but currently has no specific guidance for music, arts, or culture.

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

There is no clear guidance about licensing and permit processes for entertainment venues/events. For example, 36% of businesses and organizations found that the process to obtain permission to use copyrighted music posed the greatest difficulty for them.

There is no city-wide busking policy in Monroe and busking or street performance is not explicitly included in the City Code of Ordinances.

CITY POSITIONING AND MUSIC TOURISM

Monroe lacks a clear brand for its music industry.

The city lacks a multi-genre music festival.

The city is lacking an in depth Monroe Music website with its own socials that is used for marketing and gathering resources.

There are music-related tourism efforts but no centralized strategy for music tourism.

Monroe and Louisiana have a strong popular music history, and while some of these are conserved or promoted there is no strategy for doing this in a consistent way.





Image courtesy of Joel Jordan

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Artists don't feel they're getting fair pay from venues for gigs – pay hasn't risen with inflation. The saturation of the market and low consumer engagement will be a factor here.

Not all types of genres are being programmed in Monroe's live music circuit.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Bars, cafés & restaurants with music, nightclubs, art venues, and occasional venues (55% of the music-related venues in the city) typically don't have the equipment (sound/lighting) required for live music performances. Only 11 venues (13%) have the infrastructure suitable for live music: 1 dedicated live music venue (1%), 2 arenas (2%) and 8 multipurpose venues (10%).

There is a lack of distribution of assets throughout the Parish. A majority of the Parish's music assets (54%) are located in Monroe.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Education providers are concerned that there is not a unified vision or government lead for music education. While there could always be more alignment, more consistency, and more structure, music is available to students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The City is lacking a music network or participation in existing networks that could help to remedy challenges that the city's music ecosystem is facing.

Local musicians and artists do not rate managers, bookers, record labels, or copyright management organizations as having a high level of impact on their success in the local music ecosystem.

Survey data and roundtable discussions revealed a lack of business education and knowledge amongst artists.

There is no formal music career support or career pathway development opportunities (mentorships, work experience, training, courses, etc.)

Even though revenue from digital formats has increased globally and nationally, the local music ecosystem, made up of mainly independent artists, does not witness this increase. Only 9% of local professional musicians and artists' revenue is derived from digital-mechanical rights.

Artists aren't typically creating quality studio recordings. A culture of focusing on live gigs has led to recordings not being considered as important to careers.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

There is a disconnect between how artists view the music scene and how the general public views it. Local musicians, artists and music-related businesses/organizations believe musicians and artists are of high quality. However, the local audiences believe they are of mid-level quality.

Audiences aren't regularly attending local gigs, and some genres struggle to attract paying audience members. There is a strong sense from stakeholders that audiences don't see the value in live music enough to be willing to pay to attend gigs.

OPPORTUNITIES (EXTERNAL)

GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Strategic Plan intends to "identify specific initiatives designed to increase downtown livability, encourage private sector investment and job creation."

There is a 25% State Commercial Tax Credit, created in 2002 by the Louisiana Legislature, designed to encourage the redevelopment of income-producing historic buildings in Louisiana's Downtown Development Districts.

It's felt that the industry isn't tapping into the potential of being a College City, and that in general more could be done to increase links with University of Louisiana Monroe.

CITY POSITIONING AND MUSIC TOURISM

The tourism office also runs the Louisiana Festival & Events Recovery Grant (FERG) which is available for tourism events that take place in Louisiana, attract and retain visitors to the state, and have a positive impact on Louisiana's economy.

INFRASTRUCTURE

All stakeholders believe that the Civic Center is under utilized and would like to see the space activated with more music programming and events.

Various buildings in Monroe could be used or repurposed for the music ecosystem. The Miller-Roy Building and ULM's Biedenharn Hall are just two examples.

There are clear clusters of assets with a diversity of attributes around the Downtown Monroe area providing an opportunity for the Downtown Strategic Plan to build on and promote an existing music scene.

MUSIC EDUCATION

The Monroe Symphony Orchestra is keen to develop in-school programs in order to support music curricula.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

KEDM Public Radio is active in building and sustaining partnerships with sponsors, businesses, government and the music industry across Louisiana.

NELAC hosts Lunch and Learns as part of its Arts Entrepreneurial Training Program efforts to offer adult education.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Monroe's community survey on future Downtown policies and developments showed culture/arts as the sixth most important strength of Monroe. 60% of participants want more cultural attractions in Downtown Monroe.



Image © Jeron Strickland

THREATS (EXTERNAL)

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

Post-COVID, bars were given **fines and warnings connected to copyright which has discouraged them from playing music** – there's confusion about how to deal with this situation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

There are **no evening or Sunday options for public transport**. Monroe Transit offers 11 fixed routes and paratransit services. Services run from Monday through Saturday with the first bus at 6 a.m. and the last at 6:30 p.m.

MUSIC EDUCATION

Lack of funding for qualified teachers in schools and resources is causing a major problem. Music teachers tend to leave to work elsewhere.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ouachita Parish supports **fewer jobs than other areas with a strong music industry presence**, such as Austin or New Orleans, where the music sector supports 2.55% and 5.37% of the local employment, respectively.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Music associations agreed that **there is a general community apathy** as audience numbers at events are low.



8. RECOMMENDATIONS



8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The action plan outlined below will help nurture and grow Monroe’s burgeoning music ecosystem.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE TO:

- Direct the music ecosystem in a strategic manner with long term goals.
- Strengthen the formal relationship between actors within the ecosystem and foster collaboration.
- Ensure that musicians are properly compensated and have the opportunity to develop professionally.
- Embed music into all aspects of life in Monroe, tying it into other strategic plans.
- Encourage people to host events in Monroe through streamlined processes, and make events more sustainable.
- Increase the rate of audience participation, both from locals and visitors, with music events and the local music scene.
- Strengthen early years engagement with music by improving young peoples’ access to music education.
- Draw on Monroe’s music heritage to give it an authentic and attractive music identity.



GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

CITY POSITIONING AND MUSIC TOURISM

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

MUSIC EDUCATION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The feasibility of each recommendation has been determined by phases, as seen in the following table.

SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

RECOMMENDATION #1

Set Up a Regional Music Task Force

RECOMMENDATION #2

Advocate for a Regional Music Officer

RECOMMENDATION #3

Advocate for and Create a Fair Play Model

RECOMMENDATION #4

Align the Music Strategy with other recent economic strategies to ensure Arts and Culture remain on the agenda

RECOMMENDATION #5

Inform agents in the ecosystem of funding and investment opportunities for the music industry strategies to ensure Arts and Culture remain on the agenda

RECOMMENDATION #6

Develop a One-Stop Shop for Special Events

RECOMMENDATION #7

Introduce a Busking Ordinance for Downtown Monroe

RECOMMENDATION #8

Create a Sustainable Events Guide for City-run and sponsored events

SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
	RECOMMENDATION #9 Introduce an Open Cup Policy in the Downtown District	
	RECOMMENDATION #10 Define and Promote Monroe's Music Brand and Identity	
RECOMMENDATION #11 Further develop the oneroe.city/music website		
	RECOMMENDATION #12 Program an annual multi-genre weekend festival	
RECOMMENDATION #13 Create and implement an official programming strategy at the Civic Center		
RECOMMENDATION #14 Continue to support existing initiatives to ensure their longevity		
		RECOMMENDATION #15 Open a "Performance Equipment Library" to improve the quality of local live music Live Music Venues
	RECOMMENDATION #16 Encourage the creation of artist recordings	
	RECOMMENDATION #17 Implement local songwriting camps	

SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
	RECOMMENDATION #18 Identify and promote spaces that can be used for music performances and events	
		RECOMMENDATION #19 Advocate for the improvement of music education at the Parish and State level
		RECOMMENDATION #20 Advocate for the introduction of a Music Education Development Officer role in Ouachita Parish
	RECOMMENDATION #21 Create a Strategic Partnership with ULM and Other Local Higher Education Institutions	
	RECOMMENDATION #22 Develop and facilitate a music professionalization training and workshop programme	
RECOMMENDATION #23 Strengthen relationship between local music ecosystem and Performance Rights Organizations (PROs)		
	RECOMMENDATION #24 Inform agents in the ecosystem of funding and investment opportunities for the music industry strategies to ensure Arts and Culture remain on the agenda	

9. CONCLUSIONS



Image © Andrew Bailey

The research proves what Monroe has believed all along: that there is an abundance of talent, individual characteristics, unique cultures, a passionate community, the benefit of being located in a state that recognizes the value of music, and the foundation to develop a unique, successful and resilient music industry.

However, conversations and research also revealed a music education system that is in dire need of rehabilitation, an industry of musicians and performers that requires opportunities and support for professionalization, and a city that is missing out on better community engagement with the music industry, visitor attraction, and a cohesive and varied music ecosystem due to the lack of a strong, clear and effective identity.

With more strategic focus, utilizing the existing and strong contacts across the region and state, the City of Monroe can position itself as a leader in effective music ecosystem development. This report provides the City of Monroe with the data to demonstrate the value of music, and to advocate for and focus strategic planning to facilitate improvements and growth. The path forward includes further developing the city, parish

and region's current assets and implementing some that are new. Continued work to strengthen the music industry and acknowledge its worth as an economic, social and cultural driver for Monroe will mean that that path forward will lead the city and its stakeholders towards the success and recognition they are deserving of.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sound Diplomacy would like to thank every individual who worked with us, took an interest in the report, responded to the survey, attended a roundtable and shared information. Your participation and input has been invaluable and the work could not have been done without it.



Image © Mike Le Blanc

ABOUT SOUND DIPLOMACY

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Sound Diplomacy is a global research and strategy consultancy committed to building and supporting sustainable ecosystems that bring economic development to people, places and cities. They provide research and recommendations to businesses and policymakers to help them make informed decisions on the best use of places and how to stimulate economic, social and cultural growth. Sound Diplomacy's team of economists, analysts, researchers and consultants is based across the UK, Europe, North America and Latin America and has delivered results across six continents, in over 100 cities and 25 countries. For more information, please visit www.sounddiplomacy.com

ENDNOTES

Complete bibliographical information can be found in the full report.

- 1 The sampling method was non-probabilistic by volunteers. The survey had an approximate duration of 15 minutes and ran from March to April 2023. A total of 820 responses were collected (405 complete, 374 partial, and 41 disqualified). Out of the 374 partial responses, 42 were included in the analysis.
- 2 Metro Nashville Public Schools (n.d.)
- 3 Northeast Louisiana Arts Council (n.d., c)
- 4 Louisiana Office of Tourism (n.d., a)
- 5 Discover West Monroe (n.d.)
- 6 Louisiana Entertainment (n.d., b)
- 7 Arts & Venues Denver (n.d.)
- 8 Denver Arts and Venues (n.d., a)
- 9 Denver Arts and Venues (n.d., b)
- 10 City of Monroe (n.d., h)
- 11 City of New Orleans (2015)
- 12 Monroe – Louisiana Code of Ordinances (2022, b)
- 13 Lafayette Consolidated Government (n.d.)
- 14 City of Monroe (n.d., i)
- 15 Seattle Special Events Office (2019)
- 16 Monroe – Louisiana Code of Ordinances (2022, c)
- 17 Boulder County (n.d.)
- 18 City of Boulder (n.d.)
- 19 Music Minds Matter (n.d.)
- 20 Help Musicians (n.d.)
- 21 City of Monroe (n.d., b)
- 22 Green Music Initiative (n.d.)
- 23 The Music & Culture Coalition of New Orleans (n.d., b)
- 24 Squarespace (n.d.)
- 25 Louisiana Entertainment (n.d., b)
- 26 City of Austin Economic Development Department (2016)
- 27 Robinson, I. (n.d.) "Monroe City Council OK's new cultural arts district, named in honor of Black Greek organizations". Monroe News-Star. Online at <https://eu.thenewsstar.com/story/news/2022/06/15/divine-nine-cultural-arts-district-approved-monroe-city-council/7606711001/> accessed 20-10-2022
- 28 Austin Texas (n.d.)
- 29 6th Street (n.d.)
- 30 City of San Francisco (2015)
- 31 City of Monroe (n.d., g)
- 32 Mott, A. (2017)
- 33 Novakovic, Stefan (2017)
- 34 The Musicians' Union (n.d., c)
- 35 University of Louisiana at Monroe (n.d.)
- 36 Oh Yeah Music Centre (n.d., c)
- 37 Musicboard Berlin (n.d.)
- 38 Speak Up Austin (2022)
- 39 McQueen, E. & Bloxson, M. (2022)
- 40 Swiatecki, C. (2022)
- 41 64 Parishes (n.d.)
- 42 Facebook (n.d., a)
- 43 Facebook (n.d., b)
- 44 Uncommon People (n.d., c)
- 45 Uncommon People (n.d., b)
- 46 It is essential to point out that since in Ouachita Parish, faith-based organizations are of great importance for live music, this economic impact study includes music-related jobs of the NAICS Code "Religious Organization (813110)" as well as the indirect and induced jobs created by those jobs, which usually are not included in economic impact studies of the music ecosystem. This increases employment considerably by around 350 jobs. When excluding those jobs, the local contribution to employment equals 1.86%.
- 47 While New Orleans and Austin are not necessarily comparable territories with the music ecosystem of Ouachita Parish, we have included these findings to provide an ambitious benchmark with highly developed music ecosystems.
- 48 Refers to the execution of an activity by one-self, rather than paying someone else to it.
- 49 Local musicians and artists were asked to rate which local suppliers in the music ecosystem they perceive as being most relevant to their success. A rating of 5 indicated very high relevance to their success in the local music ecosystem, while a rating of 1 indicated no or very low relevance to their success.
- 50 Businesses and organizations were asked about the level of agreement (5), or disagreement (1) with the statement "Digital technology has become an important source of income for music-related activities".
- 51 Music fans were asked to rate the availability and quality of the various links in the local music value chain. A rating of 5 indicated very high availability or quality, and rating of 1 indicated very low availability or quality.
- 52 Findings from Sound Diplomacy's mapping of Ouachita Parish and quality of the various links in the local
- 53 Based on anecdotal evidence from the Monroe Chamber of Commerce
- 54 Faith-based organizations are usually not included in music ecosystem assessments. Their inclusion here is a contributing factor to why the workforce contribution percentage exceeds the national average by this much.

