

# **Central Okanagan Music Strategy**

## **Industry Profile Executive Summary**

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Developed for

**The Central Okanagan Music Strategy**

Developed by

**Nordicity**



## Acknowledgements

The **Central Okanagan Music Strategy (COMS)** will be the guiding document to advance the music industry in the Central Okanagan, including Westbank First Nation and Sylix territory, Lake Country, Kelowna, West Kelowna, and Peachland. This industry profile is an important step for the completion of the COMS.



We respectfully acknowledge the Central Okanagan is on the traditional, unceded, ancestral territories of the Syilx/Okanagan people.

We would like to acknowledge and thank each of our funders for their generous support towards the completion of the Central Okanagan Music Strategy.

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We would also like to thank Creative Okanagan for the facilitation of this project.



Note: The document contained herein is an Executive Summary only. If you would like to read the full report, please contact [musicstrategy@creativeokanagan.com](mailto:musicstrategy@creativeokanagan.com) to request a copy.

## Executive Summary

A strong community is a culturally vibrant one. Music, along with the people and businesses that bring it to life, is a vital part of developing community culture. A crucial element to what makes the Central Okanagan a great place to live or visit is its music ecosystem including the people within it. Residents of the Central Okanagan move fluidly around the region on a regular basis, meaning a regional strategy is the most effective way to support the industry. The Central Okanagan Music Strategy (COMS) is led by a group of community members whose goal is to advance the sustainability of the music industry in the region. With the generous support of Creative Okanagan, the City of Kelowna, FACTOR, and Creative BC, the COMS process commenced with extensive community and industry engagement to inform the industry profile. Initiated in the Fall of 2019, the COMS is scheduled for completion in December 2021.



**1121 survey responses**  
**41 interviews**  
**9 focus groups**

Community engagement was sought via an online survey, focus groups and interviews. An industry profile of stakeholders was developed to ensure reasonable coverage of the industry’s variety and breadth. The consultation additionally enabled the exploration of themes identified in

the Kelowna 2020-2025 Cultural Plan, and provided the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the current music landscape in the Central Okanagan.

The report introduces the COMS project and provides a contextual overview of a rapidly evolving global music industry, the rise of municipal music planning, and the importance of music as a key part of COVID-19 urban recovery. In addition, it summarizes the Central Okanagan’s music ecosystem, and includes the following key findings:

- The most common means for community engagement with the music industry is attending live shows (86%) and listening to music online (76%). In addition, 64% reported listening to a local radio station a few times a week or more.
- The community *strongly agreed* that they would like to attend more events in the Central Okanagan and *disagreed* that there is an adequate number of venues in the region.
- Social media (81%) and word of mouth (72%) were the most common ways to find out about music events that were most often attended outdoors (78%) or at official performance venues (77%). Lack of awareness (36%) and parking (32%) were identified as key barriers to accessing music events in the region.
- Speaking to priorities, new/improved venues were noted as the top priority (58%), followed by funding for local musicians and organizations (45%).



**Significant majority ‘strongly agreed’ they’d like to attend more music events**



**460 stakeholders identified in the Central Okanagan music industry**

The industry profile identified a robust ecosystem of 460 stakeholders engaged in the industry, 60% of which were musicians. The largest cohort of industry professionals has been working in the industry for more than 20 years (32%), while generating less than 20% of their annual incomes from

music activities (63%). 32% of professionals indicated their 2020 revenue would decrease by more than half compared to 2019. Relatedly, it was noted that the most significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic were a lack of consumers/audiences (78%) or opportunities to benefit from tourism (76%), due to gathering and travel restrictions.

Regarding organizations in the industry, most operate as music promoters (37%) or venues (26%) and have been in the industry for over 20 years (39%). Organizations rely largely on contract and

volunteer workers, with those under the age of 35 and those who identify as female making up the largest cohorts of workers. 39% of organizations indicated earning less than \$50,000 in annual revenue in 2019, while 36% expected that figure to decrease by 50% or more in 2020. Cost of operations (92%), a lack of consumers/audiences/members (89%), and lack of adequate spaces (88%) were cited as the most significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research also identified key considerations for engagement, or departure points, for unpacking the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the music industry in the Central Okanagan. The findings include the following:

- The Central Okanagan is ripe for growth within the music industry, in part because of the **attractive lifestyle** offered by the region.
- A unique opportunity lies in **engaging youth in music** from a young age and retaining engaged and educated citizens locally.
- There are too **few purpose-built venues** or **spaces for rehearsal and collaboration** in the Central Okanagan.
- **Audiences have an appetite for more live shows** but want inexpensive and convenient entertainment options.
- **Lack of awareness** is a major barrier experienced by stakeholders in accessing music events in the Central Okanagan.
- **Innovative and collaborative partnerships** across organizations are also key to strengthening the music ecosystem.
- The **importance of community** is a cornerstone of the Central Okanagan, kept strong by well-connected groups of creatives and longstanding, established organizations.
- There is a need for **more accessible, streamlined, and flexible funding** designed to facilitate partnerships and support artists.
- The music industry in the Central Okanagan is **largely seasonal** with many events running from May-October but occurring sparsely in winter months due to a lack of indoor venues.
- Music industry stakeholders recognize that **more diversity, equity, and inclusion in the industry** is a key priority moving forward.

**“Having a strong music culture is important to the health and wellbeing of our community.”**

**“Music of all kinds impacts a community, so a broad-based approach will enliven and inform the entire valley.”**

### **Survey Respondents**

This report provides an overview of the music industry as it relates to the Central Okanagan, based on the data obtained during the public engagement phase of the COMS project. The findings from this report will pave the way for developing an evidence-based strategy in 2021, rooted in learnings from extensive stakeholder and community engagement.