



ALBERTA, CANADA

MUSIC CITY STRATEGIES

Phase Two Report

West
Anthem

ALBERTA
music



Alberta
Government



National
Music
Centre
Centre
National
de Musique

Prepared by



BIRD CREATIVES

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This report is part of the groundwork, upon which West Anthem, the National Music Centre, the Government of Alberta and Alberta Music are building music city strategies.

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alberta spans five treaty territories and eight Métis settlements. Like their ancestors, many Indigenous individuals and families make their homes across the prairies, including the Blackfoot Confederacy – Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika – the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney Nakoda, and the Tsuu T’ina Nation. The Métis People of Alberta include the Six Regions of the Métis Nation of Alberta. Many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, both from here and as visitors from elsewhere, have helped care for these lands for generations. We recognize they have traditions and relationships to the land far outstretching the arrival of settlers.

We are extremely grateful for these lands on which we reside, work, and play. We make this acknowledgement as an act of gratitude and reconciliation. While championing music across Alberta, we intend for our work to contribute to the valuing of traditional musical forms and result in greater opportunity for the creative Indigenous talent who walk these lands today.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Many aspects of Canada’s music ecosystem were hit incredibly hard by lockdowns and health restrictions. Despite this, our nation’s music market grew by 12.6% to a total of US\$583.6 million in 2021¹. Similarly, within Alberta, certain members of the music industry—e.g., small-scale live music venues, independent touring artists, etc.—faced intense hardship, yet the 2022 summer saw well-attended and even sold-out music festivals. Within this context, Alberta’s music industry has the opportunity not only for recovery, but for resilient growth and renewed visioning of what is possible.

To take advantage of the opportunity present in the music industry, West Anthem, the National Music Centre, the Government of Alberta and Alberta Music are partnering to create music city strategies for Edmonton and Calgary and a toolkit for smaller municipalities. With such strategies in hand, Alberta can realize the economic benefits of music as we recover from the adverse effects of the pandemic. This also means investing in an industry that has countless positive knock-on effects for the wellbeing of Albertans and the liveability of our cities and towns.

As shown in the timeline below, the strategies will build on years of advocacy and work, most notably the West Anthem Music Ecosystem Study, published in October 2020.

Music cities are “communities of various sizes that have a vibrant music economy which they actively promote.”²

2012

Scotlyn Foundation and the National Music Centre found Alberta Music Cities Initiative (now known as West Anthem).

2014

[“Fertile Ground: The Alberta Music Cities Initiative”](#)
Published by the National Music Centre

2019

Over 3,040 respondents participated in West Anthem’s two online surveys between November 2019 and January 2020.

2020

[West Anthem Music Ecosystem Study](#)
published in October.

2020-2022

There was a very distracting world event. Can’t remember specifically, but it was “unprecedented”.

2022

West Anthem partners with Alberta Music and the Government of Alberta to develop music city strategies for Edmonton, Calgary, and a toolkit for smaller municipalities.

JUNE 2023

Phase 1 report on Music Ecosystem Updates released.

OCTOBER 2023

Phase 2 report released.

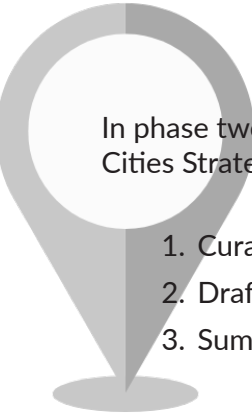
2023 -

Wrapping up ongoing engagement and secondary research and bringing it all together in strategy formation.

Over the next year, activities of the Music City Strategies include:

- Articulating how to differentiate Alberta, and Calgary and Edmonton as music cities
- Creating tailored music city strategies for Calgary and Edmonton
- Collaborating across municipalities and jurisdictions to determine common measures that allow us to track progress and successes for music cities
- Identifying and testing quick wins through intentional, small experiments to test and build on what works in the music industry
- Sharing a toolkit for smaller municipalities across Alberta to draw upon
- Supporting implementation, where possible, and monitoring outcomes

WE ARE HERE



In phase two we focused on setting the stage for the extensive engagement planned around the Music Cities Strategies in phase three. Key activities in phase two have included:

- 1. Curating a list of music festivals and ongoing/reliable music series across Alberta
- 2. Drafting a skeleton music city strategy for Edmonton and Calgary
- 3. Summarizing quick wins and opportunities to leverage

1 Curated Calendar of Music Events in Alberta

As part of setting the stage for the development of music city strategies for Edmonton and Calgary, and the toolkit for the rural municipalities in the province, we curated a list of music festivals within the province. Building from a list developed during writing of the Music Ecosystem Study, we know that festivals and ongoing music events are an important part of the music ecosystem. Specifically, music festivals can be a significant economic driver for tourism³ and festivals as part of the live music scene generally are part of a thriving music ecosystem⁴. Finally, music festivals offer social benefits as they can create meaningful community experiences. Curating such a comprehensive list allows us to take stock of what’s missing, where there are gaps, and how the list can be used to leverage and dovetail with opportunity areas from the Music Ecosystem Study (reviewed in phase one). That information informs the development of the Calgary and Edmonton music city strategies, and opportunities can be leveraged as part of the implementation plan slated to be completed in Fall/Winter of 2023.

Method

To identify music festivals and ongoing music events, we employed the following inclusion criteria:


- predictable (monthly, annually, etc.)
- reliable (unlikely to be canceled unexpectedly);
- large-scale or unique one-off events that **really** focus on music as explicitly stated in the “About this Festival” or mandate (e.g., Juno Awards, Music City Conference, etc.)
- occurring between April 2023 and September 2024

Using the established inclusion criteria, a two-pronged approach was taken to curate a comprehensive list of music festivals and events in Alberta:

- the list of festivals that was developed as part of the 2020 Music Ecosystem Report was reviewed by research associates to check whether the entries fit our definition of a music festival or festival with music as a focus and were still being offered in 2023 (in light of the pandemic we anticipated some festivals had been canceled or shut down)
- A hand search was undertaken using keywords “music festival” and geographic locations (Calgary, Edmonton, and 55 additional Albertan jurisdictions with populations >4K)

Outcomes of the searches were compiled, and a comprehensive calendar for music festivals/events in Alberta can be found here: <https://www.westanthem.com/events/>. Ideally this information will inform visitors about events as well as artists and vendors about job opportunities. The information is also being used by Alberta Music as a resource for their membership base.

16 JUN




Alternative Waves Music Festival
🕒 2023-06-16 - 2023-06-18
📍 Medicine Hat, Alberta
Annual Festivals

21 JUN




Sled Island
🕒 2023-06-21 - 2023-06-25
📍 Calgary, Alberta
Annual Festivals

23 JUN



RavenWood Music Festival
🕒 2023-06-23 - 2023-06-24
📍 Sherwood Park, Alberta
Annual Festivals

23 JUN




North Country Fair
🕒 2023-06-23 - 2023-06-25
📍 Slave Lake, Alberta
Annual Festivals

24 JUN



Beaver Fever
🕒 2023-06-24 - 2023-06-25
📍 Pincher Creek, Alberta
Annual Festivals

28 JUN



Sunset Festival
🕒 2023-06-28 - 2023-09-02
📍 Banff, Alberta
On-Going Series

2 Skeleton Music City Strategy for Edmonton and Calgary

Based on secondary research completed in phase one, we have developed a skeleton version of a music city strategy. By looking ahead, we identified key areas to guide the upcoming phase three engagement process.

SECTION 1 Did you hear?

Introduce the concept of a music city, describe the value of a music city strategy and make the case for why this is an important pursuit now (in general and specific to Edmonton/Calgary).

SECTION 2 How we got here.

Establish the credibility of the proposed strategy by reviewing the secondary re-search and engagement work within the context of West Anthem’s ongoing work.

SECTION 3 Where we’re going.

Reveal the framework for the city strategy. The frameworks for each city, while based on the review of music city and provincial music strategies in phase one, are dependent on results from the engagement work with music industry members.

SECTION 4 The way there.

Present the strategic recommendations with goals, tactics, timelines and mea-sures. While research informs this section, it is also dependent on engagement findings. Goals and tactics will reflect music industry priorities identified for Ed-monton and for Calgary in the engagement process.

Based on the skeleton outline, our engagement work in the next phase will focus on meaningfully adapting research to Edmonton and Calgary—using local knowledge to contextualize the secondary research findings and develop the framework for each strategy. Simultaneously, our engagement work will help determine the priority tactics for individual city strategies, in turn indicating where to focus evaluation efforts (i.e., identifying measures, KPIs, and indicators of success, etc.).



3 Opportunities and Quick Wins

In the Phase One Report we reviewed the 31 opportunity areas proposed in the 2020 Music Ecosystem Study. The ten opportunity areas that had seen little to no movement will be explored in our engagement work, to determine if these opportunities remain relevant to music industry members. In the continuing work additional opportunities and/or potential quick wins have been identified and are shared below.

1. We’ve got information to share! One quick win is actively sharing the West Anthem information. The lists and data sheets generated through this project (e.g., Calendar of Music Festivals, Data Dimensions of Canadian Music City Strategies, etc.) are meaningful resources to members of the music industry—Alberta Music is already making use of the festival list. This also suggests a longer-term, larger-scale opportunity such as an online music city knowledge hub that includes keeping lists up-to-date.

Some examples of how to add value through a music city knowledge hub:

- a. Create a public facing spreadsheet** of music festivals that promoters, managers, bands etc. access for planning tours and gigs.
- b. Define and complete a music spaces audit.** Keeping in mind that a thriving music industry requires spaces for musical education, performance, recording, and rehearsal, a regularly maintained list of such spaces would be a welcome resource especially to emerging or new-to-Alberta artists and music industry workers. It would also help track changes over time and identify gaps in music space offerings.
- c. Track engagement with the knowledge hub.** Use clicks and download numbers to identify popular resources. Create a feedback mechanism whereby users can identify gaps, provide feedback and participate in maintaining the integrity of the knowledge hub.
- d. Identify an organization or collaborative group to curate, create and update content.** An effective knowledge hub would need to remain up-to-date (for example, Music BC hosts a music resource page: <https://musicbc.org/home-old/resources/>).
- e. Create easy-to-read how-to documents for music industry folks** such as “How to stage a music event.” or “How to promote your show.”

Opportunities and Quick Wins Continued

2. Leverage our music festivals. Explore ways to create buzz or excitement around what is already on offer in Alberta - in a big way!

Some specific ideas to pursue:

- a. Work with Travel Alberta** to explore which current music offerings could dovetail with other big events they highlight across Alberta (not necessarily music focused). Consider coordinating with Explore Edmonton, Tourism Calgary, and Indigenous Tourism Alberta and encourage cross-promotion of events (e.g., if Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra focused on Sci-Fi inspired music during the Calgary Comic and Entertainment Expo).
- b. Package and promote festival events for effective marketing.** For example, imagine a camping circuit of summer festivals. Take advantage of the existing camping friendly festivals and strong camping culture in Alberta to develop a truly unique musical camping circuit (outline a suggested route, integrate “other sites to see”, play lists, etc.). Recruit campgrounds/sites on route as marketing partners. Similar types of marketing ‘packages’ could be created around resonating themes (e.g., seasons, genres, etc.).
- c. Highlight “family friendly” or all-ages festivals.** Create an electronic ‘sticker’ that organizations and venues use on marketing material or websites to communicate quickly and effectively that they are “family-friendly” based on a list of basic criteria (could be determined alongside Travel Alberta that could promote use of the sticker across events and venues outside of music).

3. Support venues that reliably support music assets.

Some specific ideas to pursue:

- a. Advocate for a unique music venue designation within Albertan jurisdictions** (e.g. “culture rooms”). Many music venues are currently designated as “night clubs” which can impede their ability to apply for funding to support music related costs in their spaces.
- b. Advocate for on-going funding support to help recovery efforts post pandemic.**

4. Convene a table of national industry advocates and representatives invested in the success of music cities.

Some specific ideas to pursue:

- a. Identify measures applicable across jurisdictions.** Identify (and/or develop) a framework that might serve as a Canadian framework for music cities and create a Canadian Music Cities Index. This would be key to tracking indicators in multiple cities over time, giving crucial insights on trends, successes, barriers and the impact of policy, funding, and strategic plans (e.g., compare cities by median musician wage, cost of living, venues affordability, etc.).

KEY MESSAGES

Below are key messages that West Anthem intends to use through this process to communicate both about our work, as well as the value of the music industry in Alberta overall.

- Music is a touchstone for health and wellbeing for Albertans.
- Music is a vibrant piece of Alberta’s diversifying economy
 - Alberta’s music industry has the opportunity to recover and grow post pandemic
 - The scope and impact of the music ecosystem extends far beyond musicians
- Music brings people together and can be used to complement and amplify many multi-sectoral strategic initiatives such as nighttime economies and creative economies to bring a higher quality of life to the people of Alberta.
 - We collaborate across the music ecosystem (levels of government, across musical silos, genres, and roles)
- We are bringing multiple perspectives to the table to ensure the strategic plans are well-informed, robust, unique and impactful.

NEXT STEPS

Currently in phase three, we have nearly completed the engagement phase which included extensive small groups and 1:1 conversations with music industry members. We also hosted an online survey over the summer and are wrapping up interviews with folks from smaller urban and rural jurisdictions. Findings from the engagement work will shape the final music city strategies for Calgary and Edmonton and identify helpful tools and resources for the smaller jurisdiction toolkit—the fourth phase of this project. All of this will work together to enhance the music industry across the province.

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Page 6 - Stock Image

Endnotes

1 <https://musiccanada.com/news/ifpi-releases-global-music-report-2022-capturing-the-innovation-driven-music-market-trends-in-canada-and-around-the-globe/>

2 <https://musiccanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The-Mastering-of-a-Music-City.pdf>

3 Music is the New Gastronomy: White Paper on Music and Tourism – Your Guide to Connecting Music and Tourism, and Making the Most Out of It (2018). Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6196988346950471baa32d7d/t/6261927ad605ae5210328b03/1650625511847/SOUND+DIPLOMACY+-+Music+Tourism+White+Paper.pdf>

4 Mastering of a Music City (2015). Retrieved from: <https://musiccanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The-Mastering-of-a-Music-City.pdf>