

West
Anthem

ALBERTA MUSIC CITIES
GRANT PROGRAM
2025 WRAP-UP REPORT



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ALBERTA MUSIC CITIES GRANT PROGRAM

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Program Overview

Facilitated by Bird Creatives (General Manager of West Anthem) under the direction of the Steering Committee, the Alberta Music Cities Grant Program was launched by West Anthem with funding from Alberta Music and Calgary Arts Development (CADA) to support experimental and impactful initiatives that strengthen Alberta's music ecosystem. The program aimed to fund small-scale, community-led projects aligned with West Anthem's strategic priorities, particularly those supporting music sector development, community collaboration, and cross-sector innovation.

- **Program Launch:** December 2024
- **Application Deadline:** January 27, 2025
- **Notification:** February 28, 2025
- **Total Applications Received:** 94, including 23 ineligible applications¹
- **Total Projects Funded:** 9
- **Total Funding Disbursed:** \$76,350²
- **Funding Partners:** Alberta Music, CADA

Strategic Priorities Addressed

Funded projects advanced a priority area from the Music City Strategies and/or Rural and Small City Toolkit. City strategies included these high-level priorities:

- Increase use of and access to available spaces in Calgary for diverse music activities
- Maximize the positive impact of digital tools, particularly for sharing industry information and resources
- Forge connections between music and other industries
- Implement music-friendly bylaws, policies, and programs
- Increase music-dedicated funding
- Improve ongoing communication between the music industry, policy makers, and funders
- Leverage the strength of diversity in the growing music industry
- Foster music professionals' development for long term career viability
- Maximize the impacts of music businesses and entrepreneurs

¹ Ineligible applicants were contacted and the eligibility issue was identified (e.g., ineligible timeline proposed, etc.)

² CORRECTION made February 2026: This previously stated \$89,897 was disbursed to 9 projects. This mistakenly included sponsorship funds given to a related project (but not selected through the grant program) and jury member honoraria.



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The Rural and Small City Toolkit named eight priority areas:

- Music Tourism
- Networking & Relationships
- Regulatory & Government Support
- People
- Spaces and Places
- Professional Development
- Social Benefit
- Infrastructure

Funded Projects Summary

A full overview of funded recipients and their project descriptions is included in Appendix A.

A notable aspect of the 2025 intake is that some funding contributions were tied to specific municipalities. As a result, a majority of funded projects were based in Calgary, where Calgary Arts Development (CADA) contributed directly to the grant pool. This municipal funding structure influenced geographic distribution and highlights the importance of regional funding diversification in any future program iterations.

Common Feedback Themes

Several applicants requested clarification or transparency regarding:

- Juror selection and scoring methodology
- Budget allocations and total program size
- Conflict of interest handling
- Specific feedback on unsuccessful applications

While individual feedback was not issued for all applicants, this report intends to provide clarity on the evaluation process and funding decisions.

Jury Composition

Applications were reviewed by a panel of independent jurors with expertise in music, community engagement, and cultural development. Each juror declared any conflicts of interest as well as confidentiality agreements and recused themselves from deliberations where necessary.

2025 Jurors:



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- Rene Williams
- Eman Safadi
- Adam Fox

Evaluation Criteria

Applications were evaluated on the following criteria:

- Innovation & Radical Intent (25%):
 - The degree to which the proposal is experimental, innovative, and aims for radical change.
- Relevance to West Anthem's Strategies/Toolkit (25%):
 - How well the experiment aligns with one or more of the music city strategy tactics, priority directions or toolkit ideas.
- Impact on Alberta's Music Scene and Sustainability (25%):
 - Potential to contribute positively and sustainably to the local music ecosystem.
 - What is the impact and longevity of the experiment beyond this initial funding?
 - How well can the proposed impact be measured and/or demonstrated?
- Feasibility (25%):
 - Strength of the experiment plan, including partnerships, budget, timeline and reporting plan.

Priority was given to projects that demonstrated a novel or experimental approach, had clear community or cross-sector benefits, and were feasible within a modest budget.

Conflict of Interest Management

West Anthem acknowledges that Alberta's music ecosystem is highly interconnected. The following measures were implemented to manage potential conflicts of interest:

- Jurors submitted formal conflict of interest declarations prior to adjudication.
- Jurors recused themselves from reviewing or scoring any application where a conflict was identified.
- The West Anthem Steering Committee did not receive copies of applications, were not informed of applicant nor project details before the jury selection was made, and did not participate in any scoring of applications.

A formal Conflict of Interest Policy is in development and will be published alongside any future program intakes.



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Learnings & Recommendations for Future Iterations

1. Enhance Transparency

- Publicly share the total amount of funding available at the outset of program intake
- Publicly share the formal conflict of interest policy and confidentiality policy
- Report on recusals where applicable

2. Clarify Evaluation Criteria

- Define "radical experimentation" more clearly
- Require applicants to differentiate between new vs. existing initiatives

3. Strengthen Equity & Regional Representation

- Target outreach to rural/small-city Alberta
- Consider applying a mandatory geographic balance to jury decisions
- Engage jurors from rural Alberta and equity-denied communities

4. Improve Communication Post-Intake

- Track jury comments/notes during deliberation and share as feedback to unsuccessful applicants
- Publish wrap up report shortly after successful applicants are confirmed (i.e., signed funding agreements are in place)

Conclusion

The 2025 Alberta Music Cities Grant Program was itself an experiment. West Anthem had heard in 2023 engagement work that musicians, industry workers, and music businesses were frustrated by narrow and limiting funding criteria. This was an attempt to model a more accessible, responsive funding opportunity. The strong response demonstrated a clear demand for funding in Alberta, especially for for-profit applications. The nine funded projects reflect a wide range of innovative, community-focused, and cross-sector potential. West Anthem will continue refining the program structure and transparency to ensure future rounds are as inclusive, clear, and equitable as possible.



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Program Impact & Next Steps

- Supporting Innovation: The grant program has enabled recipients to launch initiatives that enhance music industry development, diversity, and accessibility.
- Fostering Growth: Funded projects emphasize education, mentorship, artist support, and community engagement, ensuring long-term benefits for Alberta's music sector.
- Future Advocacy: Data from this program will be used to advocate for increased funding and policy support for Alberta's music communities as the program was oversubscribed.

Continued Engagement: West Anthem will work closely with grant recipients to socialize their success stories and amplify their impact through case studies and industry reports.

Appendix A: Funded Project Overview (See "Funded Projects Overview" for complete recipient list and descriptions.)



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Appendix A: Funded Project Overview

The West Anthem Alberta Music Cities Grant Program supports innovative projects that strengthen Alberta’s music ecosystem. In 2025, the program received an overwhelming number of applications, demonstrating high demand for funding and support in Alberta’s music industry. Below is an overview of the nine funded projects, their objectives, and anticipated impacts.

Recipient	Amount	Timeframe	Project Name & Description	Location	Project Focus	Key Impact Areas
Celestial Music Group	\$9,270.00	Mar. 31 - Oct. 30, 2025	<p>Leveraging Spotify playlists, paid advertising, and curated placement strategies to create an innovative and scalable solution for emerging Alberta-based artists.</p> <p>Over the past few years, we have developed and grown our own Spotify playlists through targeted paid ad traffic, creating a self-sustaining ecosystem where upcoming artists’ songs are placed strategically to drive viewership, increase streaming numbers, and build broader recognition.</p>	Alberta-wide	Support for emerging artists	Creating opportunities for artists, enhancing industry sustainability
The Creating Hope Society of Alberta	\$8,829.00	Apr. 30 - Oct. 29, 2025	<p>WE OUT HERE YEG: This multifaceted project combines a music mentorship program with a documentary film production.</p> <p>The mentorship program, running for 12 weeks per session over four sessions per year, engages youth aged 14-17 at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre (EYOC).</p>	Edmonton, AB	Indigenous and marginalized youth music mentorship	Providing music education to youth in the justice system, storytelling through documentary filmmaking
Girls Rock Camp Calgary Society	\$9,270.00	Mar. 31 - Nov. 14, 2025	BAM! Camp (Building Allied Music) mentors cis/trans girls and non-binary youth in teamwork and creative expression, creating a safe and encouraging environment for them to thrive and meet their personal and music-focused goals.	Calgary, AB	Youth music education	Empowering young musicians, fostering mentorship and inclusion



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International Avenue Arts & Culture	\$9,270.00	May 22-23, 2025	East Town Get Down (ETGD) transforms Calgary's Forest Lawn into a vibrant live music hub for one night, showcasing 40 artists across 10 venues along International Avenue (17 Ave SE). Funding will support ETGD partnering with other Alberta-based events to explore local, inter-city touring opportunities by creating additional performance opportunities for musicians and bands beyond the local ETGD event.	Calgary, AB	Music and arts programming in diverse communities	Building cultural bridges through music, increasing access to live performances
Jyn-Ting Ying	\$9,000.00	Mar. 9 - Aug 9, 2025	A series of live music events held in unconventional venues in the heart of Edmonton's North Chinatown region, particularly showcasing traditional instruments infrequently highlighted in Edmonton's music scene.	Edmonton, AB	Cultural music initiatives	Promoting diversity and inclusion in Alberta's music industry
Music Calgary	\$9,270.00	June 26-27, 2025	Music Calgary plans to host a weekend of showcases across two Calgary quadrants—one in Rockyview NW and in Seton SW, activating non-traditional community spaces to explore the possibility of intra-city touring.	Calgary, AB	Community engagement and music ecosystem development	<p>Increased use of and access to available spaces for diverse music activities.</p> <p>Building connections between music and other industries.</p> <p>Fostering professional development for music professionals to enhance career visibility.</p>



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Oscill8 Electronic Performing Arts Society	\$9,270.00	Nov. 7-9, 2025	SYNC: Sound and Image Conference Designed to catalyze Alberta's creative economy, SYNC brings together artists, producers, and enthusiasts across music, film, and visual arts for a weekend of collaboration, skill-building, and community connection. SYNC is intentionally designed to break down silos, spark new partnerships, and drive long-term impact.	Calgary, AB	Electronic music and visual arts conference	Professional development, industry networking, global exposure for Alberta artists
Purple City Music Festival, Rain Shadow Productions	\$8,490.00	Sept. 4-6, 2025	Talk City Conference: Talk City will expand into a three-day free-access music conference. The event will feature four keynote speakers from across North America, offering mentorship, career development, and networking opportunities for emerging and mid-level artists and music professionals, with a focus on equity-deserving groups.	Edmonton, AB	Expanding Alberta's music business education	Providing free industry panels, mentorship, and networking opportunities for underrepresented groups
Women In Music Canada (Alberta Chapter)	\$3,681.00	Mar. 31 - Dec 13, 2025	Music Industry Meet-Ups at key industry events across AB, such as Edmonton International Jazz Festival (June 2025). Our goal is to organize six meet-ups throughout the year in partnership with various music community events in Alberta.	Edmonton and Region	Networking and mentorship for women and non-binary music professionals	Strengthening industry collaboration, fostering equity and inclusion