



# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT CALL TO ACTION

An Opportunity To Support Recovery in Battle Creek

## THE BATTLE CREEK CULTURAL COUNCIL

This proposal is submitted by Blvcksheep, FRDM City, and Penetrator Events in partnership with global consultancy [Sound Diplomacy](#) and workforce development accelerator [gener8tor](#), to support the recovery and resilience of Battle Creek's music, culture and night time economy. This is a once in a general opportunity to invest in the city's creative industries and support both the economic development and tourism sector.

The impact of COVID-19 on the music and night time economy is extensive. The sectors have been amongst the hardest hit by COVID. Live performance employment is **down 38%** and total music sector employment is **down 42%** compared to March 2020, according to the Department of Labor.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of venues have closed. Localities **have lost billions in economic impact** due to festival cancellations. Downtowns and main streets remain distressed and cultural venues and festivals are shuttered. This has had a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities, many already lacking the policies, infrastructure and resources to thrive before COVID-19 and recover quickly after the pandemic passes.

Music and cultural venues were the first small businesses to close under the pandemic, with the majority of musicians and music workers still unemployed to date. Recent economic impact data indicate that music workers have suffered devastating losses. However, The **return on investment** of music is unmatched. Thus culture, music and night time industries can play a critical role in economic recovery, though there are no substantial federal or state programs meeting this need. For example, every \$1 invested in music venues and the night time economy, the music economy generates \$12 in the wider economy.<sup>2</sup> For example, in Sound Diplomacy's analysis in Tulsa, OK; Fort Worth, TX; Indianapolis, IN; NW Arkansas, Huntsville, AL; St. Augustine, FL; San Francisco, CA; New Orleans, LA and Muscle Shoals, AL music jobs grew at **twice the rate** of the national average. In these cities, the music economy grew annually since 2010, accounting for up to 3% of total jobs. The wider night time economy accounts for **10-15% of all jobs**, looking at NYC as an example.<sup>3</sup> Music consumption increased by over 8% in 2019 and is set to double in value by 2025, according to Goldman Sachs, despite COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> According to Bloomberg, over \$2 billion has been invested in music and creative rights in 2020, making it one of the most attractive, alternative investments in 2021.<sup>5</sup>

As the city continues to discuss allocation of \$30.91m in funds from the American Rescue Plan, we propose the creation of **Battle Creek Cultural Council** to both support a sector that has been adversely impacted, but also one that offers unmatched opportunities to create jobs, drive revenue, attract and retain talent and support all residents in a ethical, diverse and inclusive manner.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag512.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://loopchicago.com/assets/f4fdb1e00/Arts-in-the-Loop-Study.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mome/nightlife/economic-impact-study.page>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/pages/infographics/music-streaming/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-01-11/best-alternative-investments-to-buy-in-2021-whisky-music-rights-reding>



## Executive Summary

The Battle Creek Cultural Council will deliver training, upskilling, marketing support and investment, to grow Battle Creek’s cultural economy. It will invest in local artists and businesses, provide global leading research and data to support local policymaking and represent the city to the world. Its work will be aligned with, and dedicated to, meeting the objectives of the American Rescue Plan Act - to support very small businesses and sole proprietors, impacted industries and disadvantaged communities. For a modest \$700,000 investment per year over 3 years (from summer 2021 to December 2024), the Battle Creek Cultural Council will deliver:

1. **Small Business Investment**
2. **Job Creation and Education**
3. **Research, Data and Policy**
4. **Marketing**
5. **Programming**

## Investment Areas (per year)

<u>Investment Area</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Small Businesses and Sole Proprietors	\$100,000	Grants To Create New Content in Battle Creek & support music venues
Job Creation and Education	\$200,000	Deliver a nationally accredited music accelerator program for 50 artists per year, via <a href="#">gener8tor music</a> .
Research, Data & Policy	\$100,000	Deliver economic impact assessment, regulatory and policy assessment and research to monitor and assess Battle Creek’s creative economy
Marketing, Business Attraction and Tourism	\$100,000	Invest in marketing Battle Creek’s music and cultural assets
Programming	\$100,000	Support Battle Creek’s existing creative businesses and artists by programming new content
Administration & Set-Up	\$100,000	Costs to create and run the Council



## CASE STUDY: Huntsville, Alabama

The City Invested in a Full Music Strategy in 2018

### Results include:

- The 4th Most Moved To City in 2020<sup>6</sup>
- An Increase in housing building permits by 65% in 2019, compared to 2018<sup>7</sup>
- Welcoming a bespoke 8,000 amphitheater, developed by industry experts Ben Lovett (Mumford and Sons) and Mike Luba (Forest Hill Stadium, Queens) in 2022<sup>8</sup>
- Named the 15th Best Place to Live in America<sup>9</sup> in 2020 and in the top 15 the past three years
- Enjoys one of the south's oldest & longest running symphony orchestras
- Huntsville is the 10th best economically performing large city in the U.S., according to the Milken Institute
- The music audit is one of the Mayor Innovation Project's 7 Steps to Recovery & Resilience<sup>10</sup>
- In one square mile downtown, there are no fewer than 12 major construction projects announced in 2019, totalling more than \$400 million of investment. This is led by the redevelopment of Von Braun Music Center.<sup>11</sup>

"Thank you and your team's work in Huntsville. Our entire community has grown over this process."

- **Shane Davis, Director of Urban and Economic Development, City of Huntsville**

## Conclusion

This is Battle Creek's **call to action** to use ARPA state and local aid funds to meet this gap in order to offer (1) impacted industry support to the music industry, which has been devastated by this crisis and, (2) technical assistance for hundreds of musicians and music businesses who are overwhelmingly small business owners from underinvested communities via a nationally ranked accelerator program. Because this would support those in the industry left out of the Shuttered Venue Operator Grants<sup>12</sup>, **this investment avoids duplicating efforts and immediately restarts the economy** through the music and night time industry.

The **American Rescue Plan Act** offers an opportunity for communities to invest in themselves and music is an effective tool to do so. The music and night time economy sectors consist primarily of very small businesses and sole proprietors. Music is the heartbeat of America - a part of life everywhere; it attracts modern jobs suited to the 21st Century and is a proven talent retention tool. Music is technologically advanced and can be created and distributed from anywhere. With careful and intentional investment, music and the night time economy can improve communities. It breathes life and regenerates main streets, downtowns and empty buildings. It is used to market destinations. It can be sustainable, reduce community divisions and support wellbeing and health objectives. With a robust strategy, action plan and a set of community-led

<sup>6</sup><https://www.waaytv.com/content/news/Huntsville-ranked-4-most-moved-to-city-in-2020---573881421.html>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.al.com/news/huntsville/2020/02/by-the-numbers-huntsvilles-growth-goes-beyond-just-population.html>

<sup>8</sup> [www.huntsvilleamphitheater.com](http://www.huntsvilleamphitheater.com)

<sup>9</sup> <https://patch.com/alabama/across-al/huntsville-among-best-places-live-2020-u-s-news>

<sup>10</sup><https://mayorsinnovation.org/our-work/publications/mip-publications/introducing-7-steps-to-municipal-resilience-recovery/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.al.com/news/2019/12/the-dizzying-development-of-downtown-huntsville.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant>



initiatives, it will deliver economic, social and cultural **benefits that we can measure and track.**

Battle Creek will benefit from investing in music and the cultural night time economy. It is an effective, equitable and sustainable sector that provides direct and indirect benefit. To get started, speak to us: [kate@sounddiplomacy.com](mailto:kate@sounddiplomacy.com) or [shain@sounddiplomacy.com](mailto:shain@sounddiplomacy.com).

### **Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Like in all cities, communities of color - each facing unique barriers to opportunity - are underrepresented in segments of the Battle Creek creative economy. The historical lack of representation and systemic inequities facing people of color and other diverse communities inhibits participation, creating less access and a lack of ownership, professional networks and mentorship, audience and genre development, physical spaces, and platforms to explore. As a result, the Cultural Council will prioritize artists from impacted communities, and commit to uphold, and be held accountable to, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, gender and sexism are particularly problematic in the creative Industries - including, but not limited to, venue ownership, frequency of performances, income, and economic opportunities. Gender is a primary determinant of social equity, and therefore the Battle Creek Cultural Council will commit to gender equality. It will also abide by the below Inclusion, Equity and Diversity statement.

**INCLUSION** - Its policy is to be intentional in engaging all voices, all genres, all styles & all disciplines in our stakeholder engagement process. We will work with all parties to encourage inclusion of all voices across race, gender, style, discipline, age and vocation.

**EQUITY** - Its objective is to engage with the widest set of music assets, voices and infrastructure. Music and culture is everywhere and it comes in all shapes, sounds and sizes. We embrace all genres, styles, colours, representations and opinions through the research and auditing process, from start-to-finish.

**DIVERSITY** - Music and culture are our universal language. We all speak it. Its principle will be to celebrate diversity throughout all actions, in every way it manifests.

### **BC TEAM:**

Vania Word, Co-Founder of Blvcksheep | Label Manager  
James McGee, Co-Founder of Blvcksheep  
Brandon Fitzpatrick, Co- Founder of Blvcksheep | Director of Operations  
Justin Andert, Founder of FRDM City & Color the Creek  
Jeremy Andrews, Founder of Penetrator Events  
Audrey Merlihan, Owner of Free City Magazine  
Shain Shapiro, Founder and CEO, Sound Diplomacy  
Joe Kirgues, co-founder, gener8tor music accelerator