



BRIDGING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

**Transforming learning strategies and partnerships to
build a diverse and thriving pipeline into the
Music and Live Entertainment Industry**



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Abstract: This white paper addresses the urgent need for a comprehensive transformation of learning and training that aligns classroom curriculum, career-readiness programming, and engages stakeholders from multiple sectors to support young people in successfully exploring, preparing, and finding placement in the live and recorded music industry, “the music industry”.

The live and recorded music industry is expansive and can provide a variety of viable career opportunities. The live music industry involves performances, encompassing concerts, festivals, and tours. It revolves around artists, venues, promoters, and production crews. Live music offers careers in artist management, concert promotion, ticketing, venue management, stage management, sound and lighting engineering, production, and tour management. On the other hand, the recorded music industry focuses on creating, producing, and distributing recorded music through albums, singles, sync, brand partnerships, and digital platforms. It includes roles such as music production, music supervision, A&R (Artist and Repertoire), marketing, distribution, and streaming platform management. Of course, there is crossover within these distinct areas of the industry. Career pathways in both areas of the industry include musicians, producers, agents, promoters, managers, sound engineers, label executives, music journalists, marketing, PR, and technology roles within music companies, just to name a few.

This paper outlines the current challenges faced by aspiring young talent, proposes innovative solutions, and envisions a future where meaningful career opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background or demographic factors. Leading to a diverse and thriving industry.

Introduction: The music industry offers a myriad of opportunities for creative expression, viable career pathways, and professional growth. Through a series of guided one-hour roundtable discussions with youth and stakeholders from the industry, education, philanthropy, and civic sectors, Music Forward collected input to categorize and address the challenges faced by 16-24-year-olds seeking entry into the music industry. Additionally, challenges that need to be addressed for successful implementation in the music industry and in education were identified. The discussions led to the identification of the critical skills needed to enter the industry and a series of recommended strategies to support diverse youth in finding success within the music industry. By identifying challenges and proposing solutions, actionable and collaborative solutions have been outlined that will foster a more inclusive, supportive, and thriving environment for young people pursuing careers in the music industry.

CRITICAL SKILLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE INDUSTRY

On-Stage Skills
Networking
Communication
Adaptability
Proactivity
Tenacity/Grit
Social Perceptiveness
Off-Stage Skills
Corporate/Business Literacy

Curiosity
Creativity
Problem Solving
Critical Thinking
Leadership
Resume/CV Building
Kindness and Empathy
Knowing One's Worth

CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY TO ENGAGE IN A ROBUST WORKFORCE PIPELINE

YOUTH:

- **Oversaturation of Music:** The oversaturation of music content creates a highly competitive environment, making it challenging for young talent to stand out.
- **Early Exposure Led by Knowledgeable Mentors:** Limited access to knowledgeable mentors in the early stages of career exploration prevents young people from gaining crucial industry insights.
- **Low/No Pay Internships:** Many aspiring individuals face the hurdle of low or unpaid internships, making it difficult to sustain themselves while gaining experience.
- **Wage Inequities:** Wage inequities persist within the industry, disproportionately affecting younger professionals seeking fair compensation.
- **Access and Resource Limitations:** Socioeconomic conditions and geographic location impact the ability of young people to fully participate in career planning and training opportunities.
- **Education Inequities:** Disparities in educational resources and opportunities hinder diverse individuals from building the necessary skills to succeed.
- **Lack of Knowledge About Careers and Navigation:** A lack of information and guidance about various career paths and how to navigate the industry leaves many young/future professionals unsure of how to proceed.
- **Balance Between Creative Pursuits & Survival:** The challenge of balancing creative pursuits with the practical need for financial stability is a significant concern.
- **Access and Resources:** Limited access to industry events, resources, and networks impedes young individuals' growth and development.
- **Industry Not Keeping Up with Technology:** The music industry's slow adoption of technology hampers innovation and hinders opportunities for emerging talents.

- **Industry Too Opaque:** The lack of transparency and clarity in industry practices and pathways makes it challenging for young people to find their way.
- **Misogyny and Racism:** Discriminatory practices such as misogyny and racism present additional barriers for underrepresented individuals entering the industry.

EDUCATION:

- **Limited Awareness of Opportunities:** Many educators lack information about music industry opportunities.
- **Lack of opportunities for youth to explore and prepare for careers:** Lack of access to industry limits hands-on learning supported by industry professionals who can share knowledge and experiences as models for career planning.
- **Lack of Trade Schools:** The absence of specialized trade schools and/or programs limits training opportunities. Equitable access can be limited by cost-prohibitive training models.
- **Youth Not Prepared for Industry Interaction:** Students are not trained to engage effectively with industry professionals.
- **Lack of Coaching/Mentoring:** Disconnect between education and industry leads to insufficient coaching and mentoring that hinder students' growth and career development.
- **Teachers' lack of Industry Standard Knowledge:** Teachers' lack of awareness about industry trends and the technical requirements impacts the quality of career-ready education.
- **Perception of CTE Teachers:** Industry professionals committed to entering the classroom as instructors are perceived as “lesser” educators than those that followed traditional education and training pathways.
- **Lack of Relevant Coursework:** The absence of relevant coursework hampers students' ability to gain industry-specific skills.

INDUSTRY:

- **Resistance to Change:** Industry reluctance to embrace new practices inhibits growth and adaptation.
- **Lack of Bridging Opportunities:** The absence of effective bridges into the industry complicates the transition for newcomers.
- **C-Suite Hiring Practices:** The industry's lack of change in upper management hiring practices perpetuates inequities.
- **Unclear Pathways:** Undefined pathways for entry create confusion for aspiring professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING DIVERSE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY

- I. **Financial Commitment for Entire Pathway:** Success in the realm of financial commitment for aspiring music industry professionals encompasses multiple layers of sustainable support and accessibility.

Solutions:

- Collaboration with organizations like Well Dunn and Music Forward to provide paid opportunities
- Advocacy for financial support from industry stakeholders
- Empowerment of students to recognize the value of their art and seek compensation

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Paid internships at every level of entry
- Provided comprehensive support including housing, childcare, and transportation
- Positive, paid internship opportunities that support cost of living
- Relief of anxiety by removing financial concerns during training
- Bridging unpaid internships with financial support for all-encompassing opportunities

- II. **Mentorship:** Mentorship is a crucial pillar for career development. Successful mentorship offers transparent, open, and honest communication between mentors and mentees.

Solutions:

- Engagement of mid-level executives who can invest time in mentorship
- Establish mentor-mentee connections for effective pairings
- Create a structured mentorship program that integrates with internships
- Emulate successful internship models like the Sony Music Global Scholars Program

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- A clear goal achieved through effective communication between mentor and mentee
- Access to industry-related events, resources, and opportunities facilitated by the mentor
- Honest guidance provided by the mentor, giving a realistic view of the industry
- Open and constructive conversations leading to personal and professional growth
- Structured but flexible meetings fostering exploration of the industry
- Placement of mentees within the industry
- Increased transparency about the industry
- Clear distinction between internships and mentorships

- III. **Apprenticeships:** Creating apprenticeship programs in collaboration with schools, organizations, and the music industry can provide paid training and education, setting young people up for success in diverse career pathways.

Solutions:

- Implementation of comprehensive apprenticeship programs to provide practical training
- Collaboration with industry professionals to create apprenticeship opportunities
- Ensure professional and business acumen before entering the workplace

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Increased availability of career readiness programs and training
- Partnerships with organizations and companies for paid education and training
- On the job training and mentorship for diverse music-related career paths, including studio sessions

- IV. **Start Early with Career Exploration:** Starting early with career exploration and providing continuous work-based learning opportunities can bridge the gap between education and employment.

Solutions:

- Offer career exploration programs in schools and community centers
- Partner with industry professionals to provide mentorship and workshops
- Create hands-on experiences for students to engage with various career paths

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Young individuals gaining exposure to diverse music industry roles
- Students making informed career decisions based on early exploration
- Increased interest and enthusiasm for pursuing music industry careers
- Establishment of pathways for young talent to enter the industry

- V. **Ongoing Opportunities to Engage Youth in Work-Based Learning:** Continuous work-based learning opportunities can bridge the gap between education and employment. Scholarships and programs that emphasize skill development can help young talents thrive.

Solutions:

- Develop long-term apprenticeship programs
- Establish partnerships with organizations for sustained work-based opportunities
- Provide resources for career progression through continuous learning

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Continual engagement of young individuals in industry-related activities
- Improved practical skills through consistent work-based learning experiences
- Transition of work-based learning into meaningful career pathways

- VI. **Expand Understanding of Career Opportunities Beyond Performance Pathways:** Early and ongoing opportunities to introduce the breadth of career pathways will allow for expanded reach to youth with an array of skills and interests. All programming interventions should cater to various music industry segments, including production, management, marketing, and more.

Solutions:

- Educate students about lesser-known roles in the music industry
- Create platforms to highlight successful individuals in non-performance roles
- Collaborate with industry associations to showcase varied career paths

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Recognition and utilization of non-performance career opportunities
- Diverse professionals entering various sectors of the music industry
- Reduction of career misconceptions and limited options

- VII. **Collaborate Rather than Compete:** By pooling resources and knowledge, the music industry can foster a culture of collaboration rather than competition.

Solutions:

- Pool resources and efforts for collective industry growth
- Promote a collaborative culture to counteract excessive competition
- Establish industry partnerships with colleges and universities for credit-based internships
- Create accessible pathways for entry into the industry that don't solely rely on college education

Success Indicators and Outcomes:

- Multiple pathways into entry level roles
- Shared resources that support sustainable pathways

Conclusion: The proposed solutions and outcomes will enable young people to find sustainable employment within the music industry. Successful activation will support a thriving and diverse workforce of well-trained entry-level candidates. This work will require multiple stakeholders to effectively execute including; diverse community organizations representing underrepresented communities, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for school and community engagement events, employers providing paid hands-on learning and job placement opportunities, human resources and finance departments with the ability to make funding and policy and decisions, labor relations representatives to advocate for fair labor opportunities, and educational institutions and K-12 educators to provide relevant and standards-based learning. With a collaborative collective of advocates, initiatives are more likely to successfully navigate roadblocks and remove prohibitive practices and behaviors in education and industry.

By implementing the proposed solutions, stakeholders in the music industry, education, philanthropy, and civic sectors can collectively address the challenges faced by 16-24-year-olds entering the industry. Through early career exploration, mentorship, financial support, apprenticeships, and collaboration, a more inclusive and supportive environment can be created, ensuring the success and well-being of young individuals pursuing careers in music.

ROUNDTABLES

Dates: April 2023: The Wiltern + August 2023: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS

1500 Sound Academy

Anonymous LLC

BMG

Cal State Entertainment
Alliance

California Department of
Education

Concord

Entertainment Community
Foundation

Entertainment Industry
Foundation

Grammy Museum

Inglewood School District

Inherit the Music

LA County Dept Arts and
Culture

Levitt Foundation

Live Nation

Live Nation Urban

Living Legacy Foundation

Music Will

Project Knucklehead

Save the Music

She is the Music

Sol & Sound

Sony

The ELMA Philanthropies

Ticketmaster

True Family Enterprises

Turnaround Arts

Venice Music

Well Dunn Foundation

Women in Music

Young Musicians Foundation

Young Producers Group

Young Aspiring Music
Industry Professionals

