

Denver Venues Readiness for Re-opening

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“We are the first to close and the last to reopen...”

Each year, hundreds of venues across Colorado host thousands of events, staffed by thousands of employees, and attended by millions of concertgoers across all walks of life. These entertainment hubs are important economic multipliers for our local economy, generating millions in tax revenue and providing jobs in our communities. The business generated by these companies also supports countless neighboring businesses such as restaurants, hotels, and retail.

Unfortunately, even once venues are permitted to reopen, it will take months for the industry to return to usual schedules. Tour artists have an intricate and complicated process of planning, scheduling, and tour routing, making a quick restart near impossible. While necessary to prevent the spread of COVID 19, new capacity limitations and other restrictions could inhibit the live entertainment industry’s ability to recover fully for some time. We are concerned that even if these entertainment venues are able to withstand the shutdowns, they will not be economically viable operating at 25 or 50 percent occupancy.

The National Independent Venue Association (NIVA), comprised of more than 1,000 of the most influential independent music venues and promoters across all 50 states and Washington, D.C, is working in an effort to lobby for support for independent venues across the United States. In Colorado, NIVA members represent 2,800+ employees, 2.7MM individual tickets sold annually, that equates to \$57.44MM dollars of direct annual revenue that has been impacted in the state. Our venue members have lost and will continue to lose \$4.79MM per month across Colorado. Moreover, entertainment hubs serve as revenue generators for neighboring businesses such as restaurants, hotels, and retail. One Chicago study found that \$1USD spent on a ticket at a small independent venue equated to \$12USD of economic activity. By those standards NIVA venue closures are leading to \$689.24MM of lost economic activity in Colorado alone; combined with lost ticket revenue, venues and surrounding businesses are losing \$62.22MM a month in Colorado.

Furthermore, According to a study in 2018 conducted by the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts (CBCA), economic activity from arts and culture organizations reached \$1.9 billion dollars in the State of Colorado. Every dollar spent by a cultural patron or by an organization for operations of a capital project creates an indirect ripple effect in our local economy. On average, in the State of Colorado, a cultural participant spends \$22.50 on non-ticket items per arts experience. This number represents a projected loss of \$60,750,000 in gross ancillary income for Colorado’s venues. Which equates to a devastating tax revenue loss for the City of Denver and State of Colorado.

Survey Questions

1) What Venue or Gathering Type best describes the cohort completing this survey?

- Outdoor Concert Venue: fixed seating or general admission (i.e., Levitt Pavilion, Red Rocks)
- Indoor Venue: fixed seating or general admission: (i.e., Fillmore Auditorium or Su Teatro)
- Outdoor or Indoor Special Events (i.e., Great American Beer Festival or neighborhood festival)

2) Please provide a list of those people or organizations that collaborated on this survey.

The following is a list of venues and promoters primarily in music but also includes additional cultural venues in Denver and Colorado that provide a diverse pool of capacities, clientele, genres, uses, and interests.

- AEG
 - Lost Lake - 200
 - Bluebird - 550
 - Ogden - 1,600
 - Mission Ballroom - 3,950
 - Red Rocks - 9,525
- Bohemian Foundation
 - Washingtons - 900
 - Armory - 200
 - Magic Rat - 120
 - Bohemian Nights Festival - 100,000
- Botanic Gardens (venue) - 1,200
- Cervantes - 400 / 1,000
- City Park Jazz - 5,000
- Control Group Productions - Immersive
- Curious Theatre Company - 145
- Dazzle Jazz - 200
- Denver Film Society
 - SIE Film Center - 40 / 147 /179
 - Film on the Rocks - 9,525
 - Denver Film Festival - 40,000
- Emporium Presents/Live Nation
 - Soiled Dove - 300
 - Fillmore Auditorium - 3,900
 - Levitt Pavilion Denver - 7,500
 - Lincoln Center - 1,180
 - Macky Auditorium - 2,040
 - Marquis Theater - 450
 - Ophelia's - Electric Soapbox - 375
 - Paramount Theatre - 1,870
 - Summit Music Hall - 1,100
- Hi-Dive - 200

- Levitt Pavilion Denver - 10,000
- Oriental Theatre - 700
- Phamaly Theatre Company
- Swallow Hill Music Association
 - Denver Botanic Gardens - 1,200
 - Swallow Hill Music Hall - 300
 - 4 Mile Historic Park
 - Clyfford Still (lawn)
- Two Parts
 - Underground Music Showcase Festival - 30,000
- Z2
 - Aggie Theater - 650
 - Chautauqua Park - 4,400
 - Boulder Theatre - 850
 - Fox Theatre - 625
 - Mishawaka Amphitheater - 950
 - Riverwalk Center - 770
 - Strings Music Pavilion - 569

3) Provide preferred list or description of policies by Venue or Gathering Type (please share your preferred alternative for the size of gatherings, how it might be calculated, social distancing requirements, etc.)

- % capacities guidelines don't always compute if 6' distancing is in place (i.e. a 200 capacity room with a smaller square footage). They also do not take into account distancing issues related to ingress, egress, common areas, F&B service, back stage, and restrooms.
- Music venues and promoters at all capacities do not see reopening being financially working until at least 70% capacity
- Some theatres, film houses and venues in other genres of performance art could be viable to capacity levels closer to 50% due to their typical week (post front-end/heavier openings of productions or films)
- Social distancing could be achieved via pod seating, timed entry (at some venues), expanding entry and exit points to doors not normally utilized for these processes, signage, and stickers on floors.

4) Provide any recommendations for a new or existing regulatory process (approvals by the health department, turnaround time, etc.).

- If a venue expands in an outdoor adjacent space (street, parking lot, sidewalk, etc.) will need permits that are quick, not expensive. The challenge will be portable bathrooms if they exceed over 20% of their usual capacity outside.
- Quick permitting turn-arounds
- No fee permits unless alcohol related
- Re-visit sound ordinance and decibel levels if more programs need to take place outside

5) Provide recommendations for standard practices to ensure public health and safety (guidelines for cleaning, food & beverage, etc.).

- Testing and tracking are primary drivers of how to re-emerge
- Mask wearing at all times
- Temperature testing at the door (not ideal for everyone but willing)
- Reconfigure lobby spaces and pop-up table options outside venue for checkpoint on patrons
- Cleaning protocols for front and back of house, bathrooms, stage, bar - which should all be documented transparently for patrons as well as for liability
- Use of multiple entrances and exits when possible for both traffic flow
- Timed entry when entering spaces or specific rooms (this could take hours if it was a large venue)
- Use of plastic cups and straws again (DANG IT)
- 'Zones' clearly marked for standing in groups or alone (glow in the dark areas, pods, tables)
- Color-coded wristbands for single, couple or group attendees
- Clear pathways and signage for patrons to the bar, seating or floor, bathrooms, food, smoking sections, etc.
- Limited seating
- No backstage passes/meet-and-greet
- No merch tables
- Hand sanitizer stands (e.g. every x feet or in specific spaces)
- Bathroom cleanings every X minutes
- Catering needs new protocols for bands
- Removal of water stations/jugs and cups for self-service
- Avoid hand-off of physical objects between people (unless food and beverage)
- Shortened or extended viewing times
- Clearly marked 6' distancing on ground inside and outside of a venues (consider glow-in-the-dark)
- No-touch transactions (if technology is available)
 - Ticketless entry
 - No-cash transactions
 - Pre-ordering drinks or food

6) What issues do you seek clarity for your venue type or gathering?

- The venues and arts and cultural community are waiting on clear guidelines on capacities and gathering sizes from the State and City before moving forward. It's clear this needs to be provided through the City for protocols on spaces and venues of all types. Guidelines should also translate to performers and for the patrons, alike. We need to also make it clear that we work month to month.
- The financial burdens of reopening with the additional need for safety measures needs to work for the bottom line to even consider reopening. Relief for these safety costs is not in their budget (new emergency planning and training for staff, additional security or staffing measures, cleaning products, Personal Protective Equipment for staff, performers and patrons).
- Push from the City on landlords to ease the costs but without a must for 'paying back later' - help with lease abatement
- No more box offices/walk-ups
- Electronic scanning of tickets only
- New I.D. check protocols for mask wearing
- Pre-screening/liability waiver questionnaire guide (it was suggested the after a waiver is signed, it's a good idea to do follow-up calls 1-2 weeks later with the patron to support tracking)
- If wearing masks, does this alleviate the 6' rules for some things? (e.g. 'passing' someone in the hallway or isle)
- Guidelines for performing, e.g. does social distancing need to apply for performers of all types, how, and space between audience and performers
- Bathroom guidelines (e.g. # of people/bathroom based on size)
- Guidelines for HVAC or other airflow measure that could work well
- If there is any kind of emergency that arises, how would all these new protocols remain activated and not turn chaotic. Staff and patrons would need to be well equipped with an emergency plan
- Liability concerns - clear liability waiver options for patrons
- 'House Rules' - clear guide for patrons to understand no strike rules
- Protocols for deliveries of products (food & beverage)
- Training protocols for staff, security
- Staff security - how does staff remain safe with disgruntled patrons
- Booking performer protocols/liability waiver form guidance
- "Sitting on product" issues from venues that have F&B - can these products be transferred to other venues without penalty (food or beverage options) and help offset costs to places. Current liquor laws do not allow for venues to resell their backstock. A temporary modification to this law could help financial constraints due to venues stocking up prior to the coVID-19 outbreak.
- Bag and/or body security checking is now too difficult to do, what are other options

7) What new or innovative approaches is your industry contemplating in this new era of social distancing (i.e., drive-in concerts, food truck festivals, etc.) that may require new guidelines or approvals?

- Drive-ins in outdoor spaces could be viable for film, not as much for music. The production costs (stage, performers, house crew, sound, etc.) as well as the sightlines and sound quality is not worth the cost for music for most people. Approximate low-end cost would be around \$25-30k. Protocols include windows-up rules, no food or beverage, use of FM transmission, etc. There are concerns around lack of security for checking cars for weapons, posing a potential threat to this option.
- The more adaptable and immersive theatre community can be best positioned to develop programming outside with very small attendance (5-25 people). Control Group Productions is currently working on programs to open up in June that meet the guidelines of the City/State. They have also offered to be a consultant for other theatre companies to help re-invent their brick and mortar spaces or outside areas.
- Permits in parks and other public areas can be avoided as long as it's under 25 people (and always following guidelines on safety)
- Rehearsals for dance and theatre are happening on both Zoom, as well as outside with masks, no hand-off of physical objects and no proximity movements
- Cabaret style shows with solo acts are ideal at this time and can be managed well
- Consider that guidelines can develop even further from venue to venue with site-based inspections (this would take time and staff from the City) to help develop new ways to utilize space.
- Facebook Live is a great and free resource for folks to use. You can also set-up a way to accept donations through it, also free but can take a couple weeks to set-up
- WireCast is \$500/year (% off for non-profits) and can be a great resource for fundraising online
- Encourage organizations to collaborate, e.g. guided tours of museums with small groups with theater companies' staff guiding them (think Buntport in the DAM). Actors can become personal and make it a better experience.
- Consistent online programming works really well and is something the community can rely on, e.g. Swallow Hill Live is now every night at 6pm, available through FaceBook LIVE
- Outdoor spaces will be the best places to start reopening pilot protocols (Levitt, Red Rocks, parks, etc.), however they come with costs for security, production, fencing, PPE, etc.). We recommend piloting a space like Levitt Pavilion for these protocols and forge partnerships with other cultural venues or organizations to make use of space.
- Utilizing a Red Rocks parking lot for drive-in films (Denver Film Society)
- Extended venue hours (daytime) with multiple time offerings for performance
- Having masks available at the door for sale
- Developing good online programming that works (classes, tutoring, etc.) will be useful well into the future for places like Swallow Hill
- Programs like the Denver Film Festival, Five Points Jazz, and the Underground Music Showcase are going virtual this year and looking at all the technology options which can be shared with others looking to do the same

- Nationally, live streaming is a hot topic, although quality is not great and the audience will always want the live version and experience. Some artists are offering to play out of their own space but have venues sell the tickets and do a 50/50 share for the promotion. Pre-produced pieces with quality sound and video are difficult to produce unless you have the equipment, most venues don't.

Community Challenges

- Cash flow and lack of activity is affecting venue staff. A healthy number of the organizations we interviewed have already been laid off or furloughed. Roughly 30% of those furloughs will convert to permanent layoffs in the months ahead.
- 4 venues in the Denver market have closed permanently, 3 venues have roughly 3 - 6 months of cash remaining, the remainder of venues we interviewed believe that they can survive for 10 - 12 months before being forced out of business due to the loss of activity.
- Every venue is different. Outdoor venues offer the greatest ability to reopen due to not being constrained by physical limitations. Indoor venues offer an array of challenges depending on age, square footage, restrooms, and ancillary F&B services.
- Most venues that can survey are planning to not reopen until next year, they are willing to consider outdoor options
- 'Going viral' for content creation or fundraising is not a viable option for most smaller venues with little to no budgets for film, audio, production and outlets
- Venues and promoters who are working with unions are running into challenges regarding union desires vs. City and State guidelines.
- While a staff can be highly motivated to open and comply, patrons need to be compliant and provided clear direction; patron education is a must with no mixed-messages and for it to be enforced by the venues (no strike rules)
- Group music lessons online do not work well at all
- You need to have 1000 subscribers on YouTube to have a 'LIVE' channel
- There is concern about publishing rights, fees and process when putting specific types of content online for film, music and theater (multiplied by Union issues, etc.)
- There are ticket sales floating out there with patrons waiting for what is next, this could mean donation of the \$ or having to spend the time reimbursing and losing more funding

Testimonials

- *We will go above and beyond the mandates*
- *We need our independents to thrive as a cultural ecosystem*
- *We may have all the protocols in place, but the minutes the lights go down in our venue it's out the window*
- *We need tiered knowledge so that we are not sitting on our hands*
- *We are striking the balance of fiscally surviving and being safely responsible*
- *We are in the business of experience, escape and fun and need to decide the tipping point before we reopen*

- *When we decide to reopen we think about our style of music genres too, we host music that typically encourages the audience to dance or pack-in*
- *Production abilities will be different for each State/City and venues, touring will also be challenging for artists*
- *We worry about reputational risk and are a long way from opening doors*
- *Tour buses are like a cruise ship, we need to figure out how protocols work for our back of house with musicians safely*
- *There will be a lot of us that need to decide if we hibernate*
- *The difference in audience age changes so much, younger people are likely to not follow all the protocols while we know our members that may be older or have underlying conditions would follow them (indoor and outdoor)*
- *60% of our clientele won't be coming back quickly as they are high-risk due to age*
- *We do a lot of community outreach to youth, all-ability and elderly and this will suffer the most*
- *We need to see 'equal suffering' with our landlords*
- *These tiered decisions feel like deck chairs on the titanic*
- *Performers have nowhere to perform, no money to make and we will have to ask for even smaller guarantees with % cap down*
- *We still have SCFD!*
- *The sooner we understand what we can plan for over the next several months, the faster we can take action and can help us understand our finances*
- *How can we help A&V and our other community leaders to re-imagine re-emerging*

Additional Advocacy & Agency Recommendations

- Develop a phased and clear plan that is accessible, clear and easy to understand (clarify that shift and change is likely to take place as well)
- Consider a 'phase II' of this research for 'gig economy' workers, creatives, and other creative service providers and any ancillary service providers.
- We have been invited to join 'Reopen Every Venue Safely' (REVS), an international initiative aimed at promoting best practices, work plans and protocols to ensure music venues are able to open as quickly and safely as possible. REVS is a campaign to develop and disseminate action plans and budgets rooted in a hyper-pragmatic understanding of the challenges ahead. [Music Cities Together](#) is supporting eight United States pilot communities with technical assistance and mentorship as they develop their own local reopening plans. New Orleans has been selected as a pilot community in the United States in addition to King County/Seattle, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Chicago, Austin and Portland, Oregon. Working as a national cohort, these pilot communities will share information and resources as they develop their locally based work plans and protocols. Later this year, these pilot plans will be made available to public officials and venues in other communities in an effort to share best practices and learning. Parallel REVS initiatives are operating in Canada and the United Kingdom.
- Utilize any funds available from the Safe Creative Space Fund to help offset getting venues the safety equipment they need to re-open safely.
- Utilize outdoor venues like Levitt Pavilion to 'pilot' new and innovative programming and crowd-control opportunities as we reopen.

- Advocate that our arts and cultural non- and for-profit venues receive CARES Act Funding the city is providing, so they can purchase safety equipment to re-open safely: **Public Health and Safety Needs: \$5 million to support continued public health programs and safety needs, including widespread community testing, sanitizing equipment for businesses, non-profits and nursing homes and personal protective equipment.**
- Launch the Denver Music Advancement Fund in June through A&V (\$80k) and in partnership with Take Note Colorado (\$25k) and Illegal Pete's (\$25k) - this fund acknowledges the vital role music plays as an agent for economic vibrancy, education, community innovations and positive social change. Guidelines will be updated to encourage new and innovative response and recovery programs.
- Support the Colorado Music Relief Fund through marketing, promotion, funding from Red Rocks(??), and guidance for their fundraising events beginning May 30 through July, 2020. Funding will be provided to the music ecosystem including musicians, gig economy workers, and venues.
- Consider a 'sentiment' survey on reopening for the public, see the 'City of Chicago Community Sentiment Survey on Reopening' <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DM3JX35>
- Release Creative Industries data for Denver from 2010-2019, now with projections on losses for 30-120 days out on economic impact of COVID-19 (finalizing with our researcher Michael Seman with CSU in the next two weeks)

SBA PPP Funding

Of the venues and promoters we spoke with 70% applied for and received SBA PPP Loans.

The initial and subsequent round of PPP funding provided many of the venues we spoke with emergency loans with the potential for those loans to become forgivable, if certain conditions are met. However, some of those conditions may further hamper the recovery process for many of our local venues.

PPP loans are intended to keep employees on payroll and divert them from the unemployment system for a period of 8 weeks. In addition, 25% of these loans can be utilized to cover rent, mortgage, healthcare or utility costs. If an organization applied for, and received, PPP funding they must keep their employees on payroll for the entire 10 week period. If an organization furloughed employees prior to receiving PPP funding then they would be required to bring them back on payroll. If they fail to bring them back on payroll then the loans will no longer be forgivable, putting a greater long-term financial debt burden on those organizations.

Prior to the PPP release, the Federal Government announced expanded unemployment benefits totaling an additional \$600 per week per person receiving unemployment benefits. In the following weeks, many organizations facing uncertainty and a lack of working capital began to furlough employees. Once the PPP funding was made available the barrier to entry went far beyond banking relationships. Organizations suddenly were forced to make difficult decisions based on the PPP rules. If an employee was previously furloughed there is a possibility that the expanded unemployment benefits are bringing them more net income per month than when they were working. This is causing issues with

some organizations who took the PPP funding in getting their employees to come back to work so that the PPP guidelines for loan forgiveness can be met thus creating a long term financial burden to organizations struggling to keep the lights on.

Local Surveys

The following groups we spoke to are doing audience surveys on how reopening looks for them:

- Denver Film Society
- Live Nation
- NIVA

Cities' Relief Funding for Venues, Arts & Culture

- 1) King County/Seattle, May 12th approved \$60 million in emergency funding to continue the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. \$28.2 million in the first COVID-19 emergency funding measure in March, and another round of funding is expected later this month.
 - \$2 million to 4Culture to provide relief funds to arts, culture, heritage, and preservation organizations throughout the county
 - \$250,000 for arts, culture or science organizations, that provide education programs
 - \$750,000 for live music venues

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/council/news/2020/May/5-12-jkw-budget-covid-19-release.aspx>

Venues ReOpening Plans Worth Reviewing

- Performing Arts Center Consortium - Guide to Reopening Theatrical Venues:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1li9S0Zo45IF4K0lHa-P9lNne_QG5UcBS/view
- Event Safety Alliance - Reopening Guide (written by Steve Adelman, JD):
<https://www.eventsafetyalliance.org/esa-reopening-guide>
- NOLA READY New Orleans (great phases roll-out and clear about changes, great tracking) -
https://ready.nola.gov/incident/coronavirus/safe-reopening/?utm_campaign=City_of_New_Orleans&utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=
- California's Resilience Roadmap for State Reopening:
<https://covid19.ca.gov/roadmap/>
- AD ASTRA: A Plan to Reopen Kansas
<https://covid.ks.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Reopen-Kansas-Framework-v5-2.pdf>

- Protecting Chicago (plan for stay-at-home, cautiously reopen, gradually resume, protect):
<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/mayor/Press%20Room/Press%20Releases/2020/May/ReopeningFrameworkOutline.pdf>
- National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) has a list of resources for reopening guidelines:
<https://www.natoonline.org/blog/news/coronavirus-resources-for-exhibitors/>

National & Global Advocacy, Leadership and Educational Resources

- [National Independent Venue Association \(NIVA\)](https://www.nivassoc.org/) just formed to protect independent venues and promoters in this time of existential crisis, and includes 1,600+ charter members in all 50 states.
<https://www.nivassoc.org/>
- [Sound Diplomacy](#) has launched the [Music Cities Resilience Handbook](#) this week which provides a great framework for the music economy's inclusion in recovery plans and offers creative revenue strategies for community investment and business engagement.
- [Save Our Venues](#) out of the UK has launched due to 556 grassroots music venues at the imminent risk of being closed permanently.
- [Music Venue Trust](#) out of the UK, calls on the music industry, cultural sector and UK's most successful musicians to come together to create a \$1 million fighting fund to prevent the permanent closure of hundreds of venues.

Personal Protective Equipment and Supply Resources for Venues

Thermometers

- Infrared Thermometer Digital LED Forehead No-Touch Body Adult Temperature:
<https://www.ebay.com/itm/184247224415>

Hand Sanitizer Stations

- Double sided hand free standing hand sanitizer stations:
https://www.medicus-health.com/hand-sanitizer-stand-double-sided.html?gclid=CjwKCAjwqpP2BRBTEiwAfpID-6mWpmCD4xV5OjKOW_oPfrO-KZeMCOeaCKqTF_fYppr1SX4r_gvzaxoCf1sQAvD_BwE

Gloves

- Disposable latex gloves:
https://theoutletshops.com/products/disposable-gloves-latex-universal-multi-use-gloves?variant=33528880201861¤cy=USD&gclid=CjwKCAjwqpP2BRBTEiwAfpID-x1ZX8pOv1R41tZJH0hV5xEKWSBrmtyX8Am-9iNAhE8x-sNgC9s6nRoC9UsQAvD_BwE

Masks

- Disposable masks:

https://eocmart.com/products/mouth-cover-with-elastic-ear-loop-breathable?variant=32142966161505&gclid=CjwKCAjwqpP2BRBTEiwAfpID-xutPJRRJ0LexIC5EvM5-etoRH0Myup4CBq6xNroaknFIF-iro10hBoCbFQQA_vD_BwE