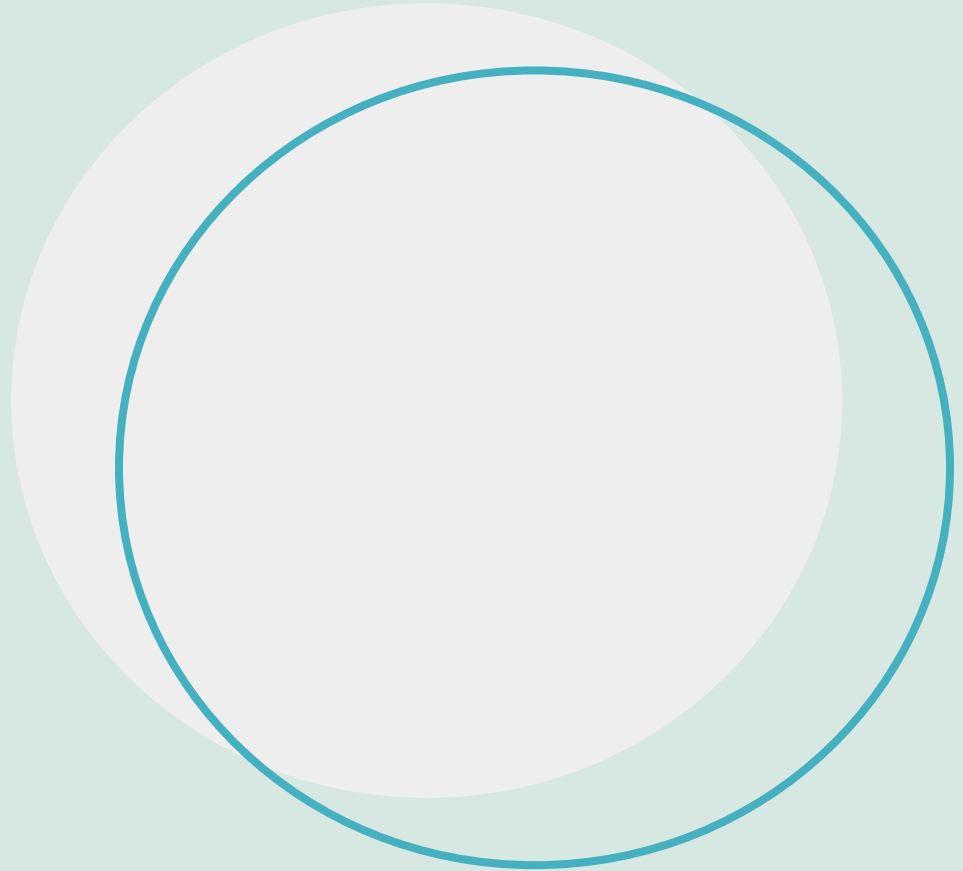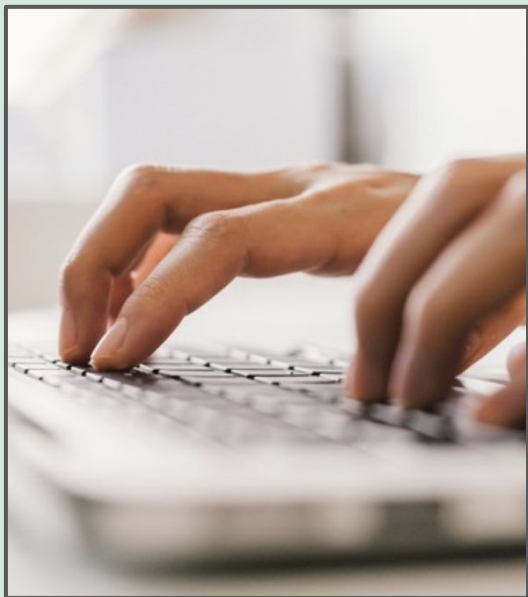# Foundations for Artists

Willow Vass

Background Story

- Last year, I wrote and released a song titled Haze

- I sent the song to a **music blog**, in hopes that they could review it

- After sending it, I anxiously awaited a response

- When they politely declined, I remember distinctly feeling uncertain about what to do next. **How can I get my foot in the door?**

The Issue

- In speaking with other artists, I found that there were commonalities in our experiences

- Starting out is scary. When artists do want to make the jump, the hurdles seem impossibly high

- Venues and online platforms want to see that you have an audience, and audiences want to see that you have a platform

- Artists needed to be prepared to hear a lot of no's

Music blogs and publications want to see an artist with an **audience**, or experience **performing**
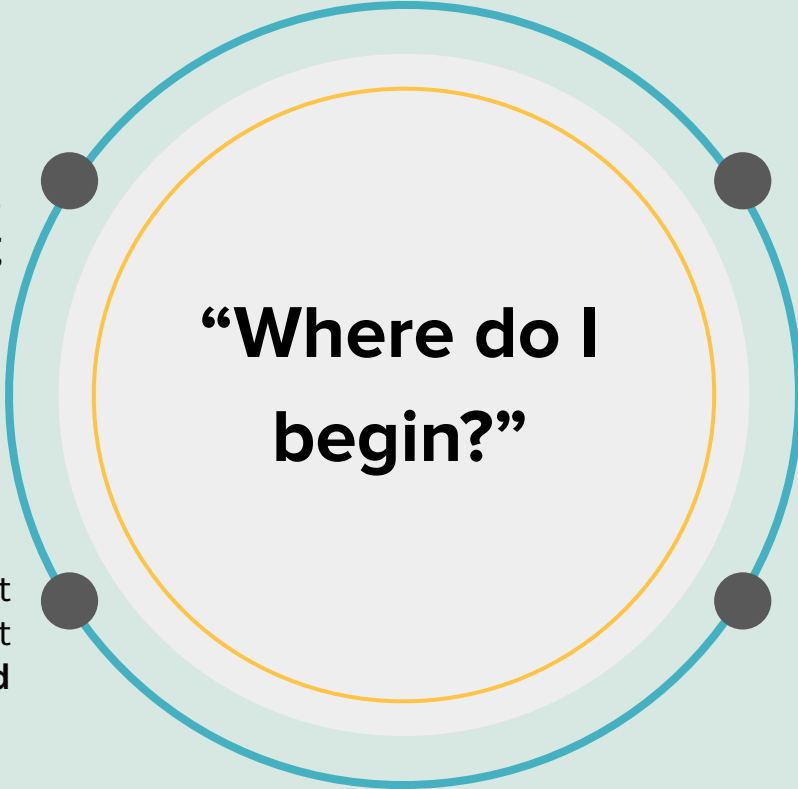
Audience wants to see the artist's music on a platform that they use; Spotify or iTunes

"**Where do I begin?**"

Venues want to see that the artist is somewhat **established**

Music streaming platforms wants to see the artists experience with **live performance**

On a Larger Scale

- Speaking with poets, photographers, visual artists it became clear that this was not an experience unique to music
- Artists across the board were unsure where to start, or had trouble reaching an audience
- Artists across the board also wanted to gain confidence before sharing their art with an audience

What impact does effective collaboration have on a career in the arts?

The Project

- Foundations for Artists was a project which attempted to address this concerns

- I wanted to put on a live event with a lineup of young artists wanting to kick start their careers

- This would give them the opportunity to network, connect with an audience and have experience with live presentation to add to their resume

Addressing the Core Values

- **Research** - a heavy portion of this project was dedicated to understanding artists and the struggles they faced getting their work out their, in addition to learning the important things to know before putting on an event

- **Inquiry** - The process of planning this event turned into a string of **problem solving.**

Constantly **questioning** the process, the obstacles I ran into and the aspects I could improve upon made this project into something I could learn from

Addressing the Core Values

- **Collaboration -** This is a necessary skill for a successful career in the arts. One of the goals of this project was to connect artists with collaborators and mentors

- **Presentation -** At the end, artists would have the opportunity to present their work, gaining valuable experience in their field, and something to look back on

- **Reflection -** Having the opportunity to reflect on this capstone has given me the opportunity to take the lessons I learned into the future, and make those lessons actionable

Process

Process

- In order to organize my process, I divided it into two overarching tasks
- **The first** half of the project included spending time with the artists I connected with, making an effort to understand their art and what they wanted to get out of the project
- **The second** and more technical side entailed planning an event, and marketing that event

Creating a Lineup & Speaking with Artists

- My first step was to send out a survey to interested artists

- This survey was used to get artists' perspectives on their goals and what was in their way

- This step allowed me to let people know about the event early on, and gauge who would be interested

Finding the Right Place

1. Getting Organized The first step in finding a venue was to list and organize their contact information, and their merits

2. Knowing What to Say To make sending the emails easier, I wrote a base email from which I could pull, so I knew what to say when the time came to reach out
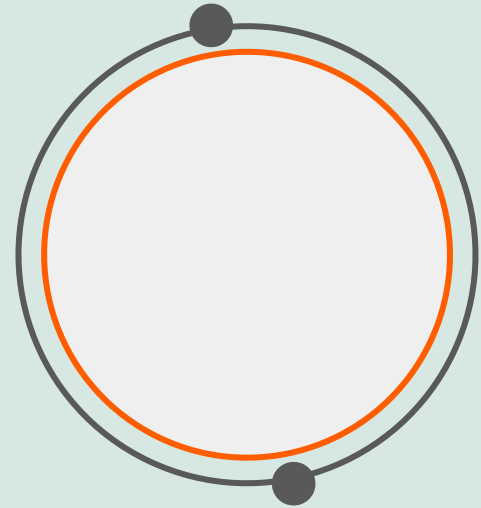
3. Contacting Venues After careful planning, each message was personalized and sent on its way

Creating a Budget

- Outlining a budget is something I was entirely new to

- Even with an idea of what elements were included & their cost, the process seemed entirely arbitrary

- In the end I made a range for my budget

  - A good step towards a final budget; not effective in presentation

I wanted an estimate to inform my budget

Venues wanted a budget before they gave an estimate

Social Media & Other Outreach
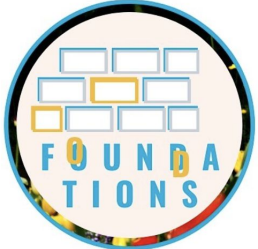
The Result

- I received a promising email from the Philadelphia Ethical Society

- Soon after, quarantine hit

- I reached out to the artists who wanted to participate, but failed to follow up after a minimal response

In the end, there was no event. What went wrong?

Stretching myself Thin

- Planning an event is a massive commitment, especially with little prior experience

- Not only did I plan an event, I set out to help other artists release work and prepare to perform

- Putting on an event for more than just musicians made the right venue harder to find, and it meant that I would not be able to offer the same support universally
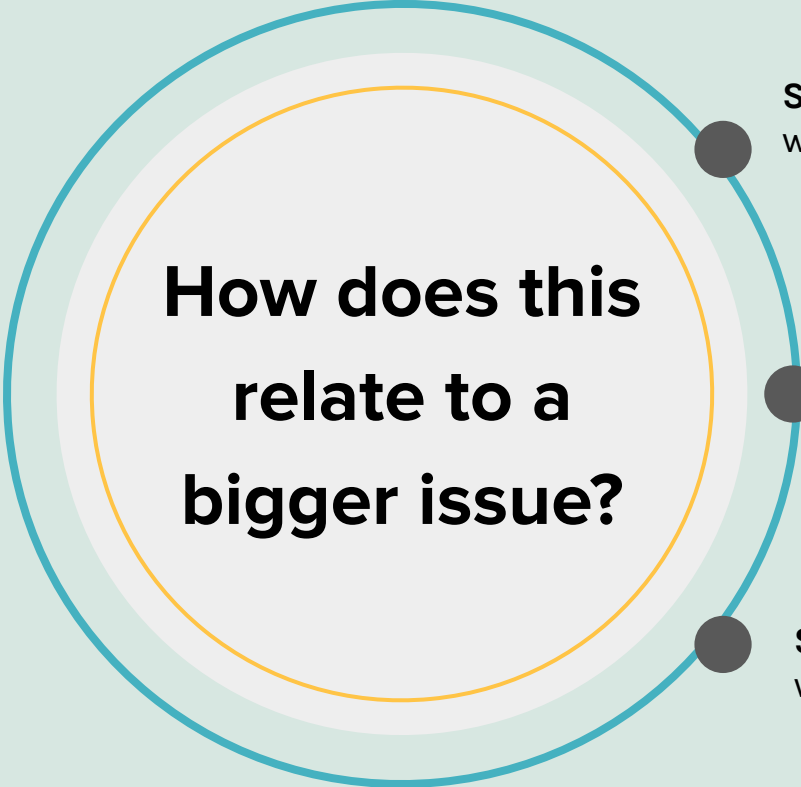
Why was Budgeting a Challenge?

- Designing the budget was not the first challenge of that sort

- When approaching the music blog, and ultimately the project

- Similarly, when designing the budget, or trying to find a venue, I set up mental barriers which made the task impossible to accomplish

This issue found itself in almost every aspect of the project

This made it difficult to motivate

The solution was to **just do it**

How does this relate to a bigger issue?

Step One is impossible without Step Three

Step Two is impossible without Step One

Step Three is impossible without Step Two

What Would Have Made This Project Work?

What Did Not Work	Why & The Solution
Early on I made the decision to extend the event beyond musicians I did not want to limit myself if there was a chance that not many musicians would want to participate	I am a musician, which means that I am not going to be able to support other artists in the same way This decision created more work, and limited the options I had for an adequate venue
Making the success of the project rely on the occurrence of an event Subsequently not consistently planning an event	Even considering the unforeseen circumstances, it would have been beneficial to come up with a Plan B which still accomplished the goals of my project

What I Learned & How I Will Apply It

- The issue from the beginning was my inability to make happen what I wanted to happen

- I often had trouble motivating, and I was often afraid of hearing "no"

- Considering the career I want to go into, this experience was a valuable lesson in getting discouraging responses get in the way

- I have learned that I am easily discouraged, and discovering that will give me a clearer idea of how to approach these situations in the future

Now & Into the Future

- I have dedicated quarantine to working on my music

- In addition to trying to study piano, I have recorded and produced a few pieces

- I have also redesigned a personal website, and hope to use that as a tool to reach my goals more consistently

- In the future, I want to not let hearing one "no" discourage me, and learn from the mistakes I made in this project

Thank You!