



February 22, 2023

Room Tax Commission for the City of Madison  
City-County Building, Room 406 210 Martin  
Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53703-3345

Dear Members of the Room Tax Commission;

We would like to request the re-allocation of funding for the Music Tourism Study/Implementation in the amount of \$25,000 from the 2022 adopted Room Tax Commission budget into the 2023 budget. Due to circumstances beyond our control, the budget amount was not spent by the City of Madison Arts Commission before the end of the 2022 fiscal year. We anticipated using the allocated amount to build a **Cultural Events Calendar** to promote community and artistic events using a user-friendly platform. The following list details the obstacles that interfered with our ability to contract for and complete the work in the 2022 calendar year:

- Commissioning an outside entity for this type of project was unique to the City of Madison. Various City agencies were involved in the process including the City Attorney's Office, Information Technology, Finance and Planning Division. Each agency had questions and concerns that needed to be answered and addressed which delayed the entire process. Therefore, City staff had to:
  - Go through an extended process to secure approval from the City's IT Department for the grant criteria. This delayed the project by months.
  - Explore different approaches for contracting for this type of service that entailed interdepartmental coordination, including the creation of Request for Proposals that was ultimately dismissed in lieu of creating a grant process.
  - Conduct research of best practices around the nation to design the grant application and guidelines. There was a lot of internal consultation to make sure the project met City standards and policies.
- Getting the word out about the grant was vital to get good quality applicants. City staff used various outreach methods to find potential applicants and set realistic goals for the project such as one-on-one meetings with local media companies, interviews with music/calendar app developers, and feedback gathering from Greater Madison Music City members.
- In late 2022, City staff was finally permitted to contract with Isthmus Media, Inc. The selection panel chose Isthmus due to their ample experience curating an events calendar that has been widely recognized as the go-to publication for out of town visitors seeking cultural arts and entertainment options. Contract negotiations that involved several agencies office also took longer than expected.

Isthmus has officially started the first phase of the project. However, Isthmus was unable to conduct any significant work in 2022. After consulting with Finance Department and the Room Tax Commission Chair about best ways to handle the delays, we were advised to request a re-appropriation of the funds in the 2023 budget.

With the re-allocation of these funds, we will be able to honor the Isthmus contract while continuing with the [Tourism Recovery Plan](#) recommendations presented [last August](#) by the Greater Madison Music City (GMMC) team. GMMC is currently in a good position to start forming partnerships among organizations in the tourism sector, local artists, music/festival organizers, and music producers for a marketing campaign to develop a “brand” of our Tourism Music Hub scene. This work will entail a lot of coordination between the music community, Destination Madison, and other marketing experts to define the “brand”. The Tourism Music Hub sub-group has already started this work but funds are needed to strengthen our local music scene from various angles including:

- Building awareness in our community about the importance of fair pay to artists so we can retain good quality musicians.
- Providing financial incentives to local venue owners to hire local artists.
- Getting the word out about permitted outdoor music performance spaces so musicians feel enticed to perform and activate areas of the city like the downtown.
- Working with the community to define the type of “brand” that would reflect our Madison’s music scene.

It is our hope that we can continue to promote our local music scene and therefore, gain a reputation of a music city. The full development of an online user-friendly **Cultural Events Calendar** will contribute to that goal, as well as the development of a music brand.

Respectfully,



Karin Wolf  
Madison Arts Program Administrator



Angela Puerta  
Urban Planner and Music City  
Representative

