



Pilot Proposal

Listen Local Detroit: Curated Playlist Pilot

This proposal was written by a multidisciplinary group of students as part of a capstone presentation for “New Music Business Models,” a Winter 2019 Problem Solving Initiative course at the University of Michigan Law School.



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I. Introduction

The *Listen Local Detroit (LLD)* project proposal has identified multiple objectives that will potentially strengthen the Detroit music community and target numerous issues that artists in this community face, including education, promulgation of fair contracting terms, and artist-venue pairing. Considering the complexity of these issues, the proposed first step is to execute a relatively simple, but crucial, part of the *LLD* project: a music streaming campaign.

As Detroit's music scene is known to be highly active and diverse, the pilot aims to promote pride in Detroit music by recruiting six local artists to create Detroit-themed playlists. These playlists will be featured in independent and locally-owned businesses to increase awareness and invest listeners in the local music landscape. The duration of this pilot project is three months with a budget of \$2,971. Granting this opportunity to a handful of artists—each with different experiences and perceptions of Detroit—will spark dialogue amongst Detroiters about the state of their music community and increase pride in local content. As part of the streaming campaign, the *LLD* pilot will initiate community engagement, by hosting a kick-off roundtable discussion. This meeting will bring together local musicians and businesses to choose the musicians that will curate the *LLD* playlists. These meetings will also provide a foundation for *LLD*'s relationship with Detroit.

II. Problem Statement & Approach to Solution

One of the main frustrations expressed by the Detroit musicians we have spoken to is a feeling of a fractured music community and lack of local support for their craft.¹ Detroit musicians find it hard to break genre stereotypes, connect with different venues, and attract new audiences with emerging technologies. This pilot is intended to help Detroit musicians bridge that gap by:

1. Recruiting early and mid-career Detroit musicians to create curated local music playlists that will be distributed to selected local commercial establishments;
2. Playing music in local establishments will benefit local musicians through exposure of their music and opens an opportunity to benefit from emerging revenue streams; and
3. Providing businesses with a chance to market themselves as supporting local music, in a way similar to popular "Shop Local" initiatives, at no additional cost to their business.

III. Implementation

Playlists created and curated by local Detroit artists are a tangible way to advocate engagement between local businesses and musicians and to establish *Listen Local Detroit* in the local music community. The pilot team will enlist six local musicians to create two Detroit-themed playlists each, paying each artist an honorarium of \$200 for their participation. In choosing musician partners for this project, it is important that the pilot team engage with the Detroit music community that these playlists will represent. To this end, the pilot project will host a kick-off roundtable discussion to bring together community stakeholders to guide this project. The pilot team will invite local musicians, business owners, and other Detroit-based music organizations to meet in a public space, like the Detroit Public Library. At this meeting, the pilot team will ask community members to comment on the artists, genres, and styles

¹ Why Can't Detroit Cash In On Its Music Scene? <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103385436>

they would like to see featured on the *LLD* playlists. The team will also ask community members to suggest artists they would like to see curate *LLD* playlists. If the pilot team is unable to find six artists willing to participate from among those recommended at the meeting, the pilot team will use the community's comments on the content of the playlists to guide their search. Involving the community from the outset of this project will help to generate excitement and encourage engagement with *LLD*'s program as well as respond to the needs and wants of Detroiters.

It is important that participating musicians be granted as much creative freedom as possible in crafting their playlists. With this in mind, the playlists should conform with three broad parameters:

- Playlists should consist of approximately 3 hours of music programming and should not be too repetitive or focus on a single, or few musicians.²
- Each playlist should be based on a theme chosen by the playlist creator, for example, a genre or a mood or inspired by a local historical event.
- Playlist music should consist of tracks created by musicians who were born in or currently reside in the Detroit area.

The pilot team will review each playlist, not to censor or exclude music, but to ensure that artists are properly licensed to receive royalties. If an artist featured on the playlists is not registered with either a performing rights organization, mechanical licensing agency or for composition royalties, the pilot team will offer some assistance. The team will either link artists to educational tools or refer them to a pro bono lawyer, specializing in music licensing.

These playlists will be hosted on an *LLD* Spotify Business account. The pilot team will promote these playlists on various digital platforms, through a hosted website, *LLD*'s non-profit partner sites, and social media. The PSI program has already purchased the domain name *listenlocaldetroit.org* to embed the playlists on the pilot's webpage. Having these playlists on a shareable website will allow us to market these playlists more easily. The pilot team will attempt to partner with local organizations that will also feature our playlists on their (more highly-trafficked) sites. One potential partner is the Detroit Sound Conservancy, who already displays Detroit-themed playlists on their site.

Once these playlists are hosted on the web, the pilot team will promote the playlists to local businesses. The pilot team will approach 10 to 20 businesses, such as coffee shops, bars, boutique stores, or bookstores, that might agree to feature *LLD* playlists appropriate to their space. At minimum, the target businesses should meet the following parameters:

- Local to Detroit;
- Express interests to showcase Detroit music in their in-store music;
- Have the means to play music (such as a PA, or speakers); and
- Are registered with a licensed streaming service. (The team will offer businesses without these services reimbursement for up to 3 months of a Spotify Business subscription.)

Ideal early adopters are businesses that leverage Detroit pride or a local focus in their marketing strategy. This pilot offers these businesses a chance to augment their local branding at no cost. Some businesses that are good candidates for early adoption are:

- Urban Bean Co. (Local coffee shop featuring techno DJ sets);

² Starbucks hosted an internal "Starbucks Perfect Summer playlist competition" in 2018. The length of the playlists ranges from 20 to 25 songs. <https://globalassets.starbucks.com/assets/F965E226681648BEBF5E22F9ED8468A0.pdf>

- ASHE Supply Co. (Local coffee shop hosting regular Open Mic nights);
- Detroit Institute of Bagels (Popular bakery and catering company);
- The Bottom Line Coffee House (Local coffee shop that also features a line of “Detroit Pride” merchandise);
- Standby (Bar featuring local produce and links to local art initiatives on its webpage);
- Urban Angelo (Contemporary clothing store in Detroit);
- Batch Brewing Company (Bar that founded the “Feelgood Tap” Program, which donates money to Michigan charities with every beer sold. They are active with Livings Arts Detroit.);
- Detroit Foundation Hotel (Hotel that showcases collaborations with small Detroit businesses.).

The pilot team will ask partner businesses to display flyers promoting the playlists in their establishment. The team will create print promotional materials to display at venues: 4” x 6” flyers with information about the music/artists that comprised the playlists, and a QR code directing consumers to the *LLD* playlist web page. The pilot team is also considering using less traditional print promotional strategies, such as custom printed coffee cup sleeves. Print materials—and supplies for their display—will be provided to business partners free of charge. There is no fee or expense that the pilot team will ask business owners to pay, so as conceived, this project will be free for them. This will allow the pilot team to leverage local pride and interest in Detroit music to encourage these businesses to feature the *LLD* playlists. As the playlist library will feature a variety of options with different genres or moods, businesses will be able to find playlists that are appropriate for their venue.

The pilot team would also like to partner with media outlets focused on local Detroit to actively promote the curated playlists. There is a burgeoning podcast scene in Detroit, which features a wide range of shows on local culture, such [Daily Detroit](#) and [This Detroit Life](#). Another option would be to partner with local public or independently-owned local radio stations, like Wayne State’s *WDET 101.9fm*, which often airs local artists in their *CultureShift* program. The pilot team will develop relationships with these potential affiliates to encourage them to plug the playlists, whether by mentioning them on the air, playing a number of songs, or interviewing the playlist creators.

IV. Assessment

The pilot team will also develop means of evaluating the success of the pilot. These findings will provide a groundwork for the rest of *LLD*’s proposed programming. The pilot team’s assessment plan will monitor engagement between (a) the Detroit music community and *LLD*, and (b) consumers and the *LLD* playlists. The pilot team should use both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis.

Quantitative Methods

Relationship-building can be difficult to measure. That said, the pilot team will set numerical goals for attendance at its roundtable discussions. An appropriate attendance target for the initial meeting is 7 to 12 community members, with the hope attendance will grow to 20+ as the project develops and implements more regular meetings. The pilot team will record attendance as community members enter the meeting with a sign-in sheet. This form should ask attendees for their names, and whether they are an artist or a representative of a local music organization.

Playlist engagement will be much easier to measure quantitatively. Since the *LLD* playlists will be hosted on a Spotify Business account, the pilot team will have access to Spotify analytics on the playlists.³ The pilot team should regularly monitor:

1. Active streams - number of plays, followers, and saves.
2. Sharing - number of times music was shared or liked via social media (by monitoring custom #hashtags and mentions on social media platforms).

Qualitative Methods

One of the most important objectives of this pilot is to establish a trusting relationship between the Detroit music community and *LLD*. The pilot team will talk to people in the Detroit music community to gather their impressions of the program. The pilot team will seek this feedback in two ways: (1) local business site visits, and (2) musician surveys.

The pilot team will gather information about the impact of the *LLD* playlists in local businesses by conducting both unplanned, or “blind,” and planned site visits. The local business site visits should consist of the following:

- *Blind visits*
 - Blind visits should involve visiting the establishment, as unplanned “spot checks.” During these visits, *LLD* volunteers will patronize the business as regular visitors and observers. This is also a way of vetting potential business partners. Volunteers should be reimbursed where possible.
- *Planned visits*
 - These visits will be more conversational than formal, since Spotify analytics can provide streaming specifics. On planned visits, volunteers will talk to staff and managers (if possible) at these participating businesses. The following minimum questions should be asked:
 - Was there a schedule block set for the playlists (e.g., primetime, lunchtime, etc.)?
 - Did the playlist get played? If no, why not? (probe issues).
 - Any noticeable interest or draw to the local music? Any locational promotions?
 - Do patrons or employees express interest if they pay attention to the music playing? Do the employees like the list and therefore play it more than 2 hours or shared it?

The pilot team will survey the musicians recruited to curate playlists and the musicians that are featured on those playlists. The playlist curators survey will ask such questions as:

- Did you find this program artistically valuable? If not, why?
- How did you choose which songs to include in your playlist? (Performed research? Relied on personal connections? Featured classic or new music?)
- Would you participate in a program like this one again, or recommend it to your peers?
- If you could change/add any feature of/to this program, what would it be? (probe ideas).

The survey of musicians featured on the *LLD* playlists will ask such questions as:

- Do you identify as a Detroit musician? If not, do you associate your sound with another place?
- Would you be interested in promoting Detroit music to a wider audience? (probe ideas).

³ Spotify Analytics FAQ: <https://analytics.spotify.com/faq/stats#compare>

V. Estimated Budget

To facilitate discussion, the following budget is based on a pilot project duration of 3 months.

Items	Est. Cost	Sub Total	Remarks
Artists	6 x \$200	\$1,200	Honorariums for each artist
Spotify Business Account	3 months x \$26.99	\$81	For hosting the playlists
Spotify Business Accounts	10 businesses x 3 months x \$26.99	\$810	For businesses
Promotional Materials - Flyers/Poster	1000 x \$0.11	\$108	
Promotional Materials - Hot cup sleeves	1800 x \$0.06	\$102	
Acrylic stand for flyers	10 x \$2.00	\$20	
Volunteer expenses		\$650	Reimburse travel expenses of volunteers, and visits, but no alcoholic beverage reimbursement. A portion will be used for basic webpage development.
Meeting space for roundtables @ Detroit Public Library	\$0.00	\$0	Booking space at the Detroit Public Library, is no cost to the overall project.
Total		\$2,971	

VI. Overall Benefits of Pilot & Listen Local Detroit

By providing a platform for Detroit musicians to showcase and characterize their personal perspective of the Detroit sound, this project will highlight Detroit's music scene. It will spark a dialogue within in the larger community and cultivate pride in local music. By having notable local artists curate these playlists, it will allow these musicians to creatively express their pride for Detroit and increase the prevalence of local music in Detroit businesses. This will invite meaningful conversations amongst Detroit musicians, consumers, and commercial establishments, similar to practices that have been successful in other cities. This will also help establish *LLD* as a partner that Detroit musicians can trust.

This pilot will seed *LLD*'s larger program plans. We believe that *LLD* has a role to play in a healthier Detroit music community. The next phases of *LLD* will use the momentum built by the pilot to further the program. The community engagement that this pilot initiates will ground *LLD*'s future efforts in developing educational resources and fair contracting terms.