



FACT SHEET: HOW AUSTRALIAN MUSICIANS FIND OR CREATE WORK

The Australian study *Making Music Work: Sustainable Portfolio Careers for Australian Musicians* (2016–2019) explored the conditions and strategies needed for musicians to sustain successful portfolio careers. It mapped the creative, social, cultural and economic realities of the portfolio music career and delivered recommendations to address the realities this presents for Australian musicians. The study employed a national survey of 592 musicians and 11 in-depth interviews with a diverse group of musicians. This fact sheet examines how musicians find or create work.

The *Making Music Work* study asked musicians to identify the strategies they had used to find, acquire or create music or music-related work over the past 12 months, and to rate the effectiveness of these strategies. Effectiveness was measured on a 1–5 scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all effective' to 5 = 'very effective'. Musicians selected from a list of strategies:

- **formal strategies** such as using a job search agency, job boards, agents / managers, and attending an open call to audition
- **informal strategies** such as through work experience and social networks
- **work creation strategies** such as establishing or continuing an enterprise, band or ensemble.

On average, participants had used 2.9 different kinds of strategies over the preceding 12 months.

Musicians typically used a combination of all three kinds of strategies, although work-creation and informal strategies were more commonly used than formal strategies.

Musicians largely build their careers through informal strategies (particularly through their social networks) and by creating their own work.

The three most common ways for Australian musicians to find or create work were found to be:

1. **running their own band, ensemble, or collective**
(79% in the last 12 months)
2. **informal social networking face-to-face**
(70% in the last 12 months)
3. **informal social networking online**
(65% in the last 12 months)

The four most effective strategies were:

- answering a call for work (3.94/5)
- using an agent/manager (3.85/5)
- establishing/continuing an enterprise, band or ensemble (3.83/5)
- using informal social networks (3.62/5)

**This is based on a 1–5 scale.*

As explained by Australian singer-songwriter and musician Emily Smart (South Australia),

Without connections, you're on your own. There's no-one really thinking about hiring you or getting you involved in their projects, so it's pretty pivotal to expand your creative reach. If you're not actively getting involved with the industry, or getting out there and talking to people, then most people won't know about what you do or how you do it, and it's less likely that you're going to get the opportunities that you need to help you generate more work and sustain what you're doing.

The musicians reported that the least successful strategies for finding or creating work had been:

- using a job search agency (1.27/5)
- advertising on job boards (1.67/5)
- searching job boards (music-specific – 1.71/5, general – 1.78/5)
- establishing or continuing an online enterprise (2.86/5)
- applying for grants (2.71/5)

**This is based on a 1–5 scale.*



To read more about these findings, you can download the full report, summary brochure, and musician profiles at www.makingmusicwork.com.au

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