



AMPLIFY

Digital Arts Initiative Summary Deck

Introduction

Launched in 2018, AMPLIFY Digital Arts Initiative (D.A.I) is a program of the British Council in partnership with Canada Council for the Arts, and with MUTEK Montréal, MUTEK Buenos Aires and Somerset House Studios in the UK. AMPLIFY D.A.I has gathered 80 women artists and professionals representing 8 different nationalities, across 3 continents, to build an active network of creators working in electronic music, digital arts, sound and immersive storytelling sectors in Canada, Latin America and the UK.

Harnessing different cultures and experiences, AMPLIFY D.A.I fosters a platform for dialogue on gender equity and commits resources to career and capacity building activities, peer exchanges and opportunities for cohort participants to showcase their work in the context of dynamic, contemporary festivals, events and residencies.

Given the low numbers of participation and visibility for women artists and performers across electronic music, digital arts and general music festivals globally, systemic changes and clear objectives were necessary to correct imbalances and bias.

In digital arts festival settings in Argentina, Canada and the UK, where the AMPLIFY D.A.I program is anchored, women are far less likely than men to be seen in leading roles, especially in virtual reality, augmented reality and immersive storytelling.

To bridge this gap, AMPLIFY D.A.I was designed to emphasize international visibility and public showcasing opportunities, network building across borders, professional development, skills training and access to emerging tech and practices, peer to peer exchanges and learning, while also valuing new relationships between senior and early career women.

With the international network of MUTEK festivals and Somerset House Studios in the UK, the main partners of the program were well positioned in their sector to be able to accommodate the wide array of contemporary digital media practices and technological requirements of the program's diverse cohorts of creators. In addition to showcasing AMPLIFY D.A.I artists, presenting partners would also provide the context for networking, workshops, discursive and other activities integral to the program's success, with official itineraries designed specifically to serve the cohort.



Summary of Outcomes

- **Creation** of an international, active and growing network for women working in the digital arts and electronic music sectors.
- **Expansion** of professional networks and international exposure.
- **Internationalisation, connections** and **collaborations** between artists as a result of their shared cohort activities and creation of new works
- **Development** of knowledge and skills of participants in specialized areas of the digital and tech sector
- **Showcase** opportunities result in followup bookings and new professional opportunities
- **Support** partner festivals within electronic and digital arts milieu achieve gender parity in their lineups, creating context for dialogue and global level of accountability

AMPLIFY D.A.I In Numbers

80

artists

8

different nationalities

3

continents

166

cohort showcase activities

104

capacity building activities

1

online platform

3

presenting partners

3

funding partners

5

satellite events

5

instances of gender parity line-ups

11

remote international collaboration projects funded

1465+

attending professionals

164,985+

total attendance/views

Timeline

YEAR	MONTH	ACTIVITY
2018	August	MUTEK Montreal Festival
	September	MUTEK Argentina Festival
	November	MUTEK Mexico Festival
2019	April	Nano MUTEK Argentina, Buenos Aires
	May	Somerset House Studios Residency and Public Program
	August	MUTEK Montreal Festival
	September	MUTEK Argentina Festival, Buenos Aires Espacio Fundación Telefónica, Lima
2020	January	First AMPLIFY D.A.I open call for submissions in AR, UK and CA
	March	AMPLIFY D.A.I Website Launch
	September	MUTEK Montreal Festival, Hybrid Online
	October	Launch of AMPLIFY D.A.I Collaboration Fund in partnership with Canada Council for the Arts
	November	Somerset House Studios, Online Residency and Public Program Noviembre Electrónico Festival, Buenos Aires, Hybrid Online
2021	March	AMPLIFY D.A.I Fund Awards Announced
	April	Symposium MUTEK AR/ES
	May	MUTEK Argentina Festival, Buenos Aires, Hybrid Online with MUTEK Barcelona

Empowering Cohorts

New Connections & New Opportunities

Across all cohort surveys, all artists reported new connections among their fellow cohort members, and positive responses cited examples of activated collaborations.

During the two programs produced online in 2020, care was taken to facilitate sessions and to use online technology to try and provoke and sustain relationships. A Slack channel was established to consolidate all cohorts and provide a destination for messaging, and sharing of information, where 80% of all participants took part.

*AMPLIFY D.A.I was the space in which I professionalized my practice. Today I live from my art thanks to the program :) At the moment, I am working with Marshmallow Laser Feast, a dream multimedia studio, as a technical artist. In the job interview my participation in MUTEK as part of AMPLIFY D.A.I was the highlight. I think they hired me for that. **Joaquina S., AR, 2018***



Network expansion

97%

responded positively to an expansion of their artistic network

New connections

100% 1–10 artists

96% 1–6 independent curators

94% 1–3 funders

68% 1–3 programming directors

71% 1–3 booking agents and industry professionals



New bookings and collaborations

42%

responded positively to new opportunities

Regional Awareness

*The whole experience of getting to know so many artists from Argentina I think has been really beneficial for me. I have lived in the UK for 24 years, and I am originally from Maine which borders Canada, so I have a decent general understanding and familiarity with those two places, but I knew absolutely nothing about Argentina before AMPLIFY D.A.I. And now I feel like I have a vague idea about the energy personality of Argentina. **Heather Lander, UK, 2020***

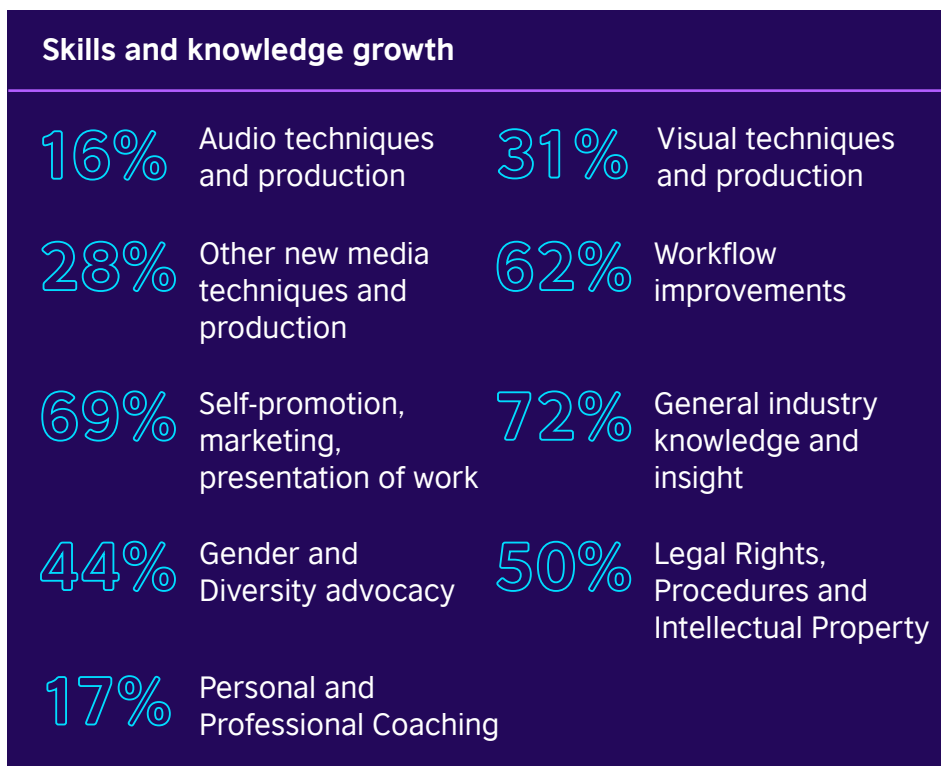
Overall, artists increased their awareness of the UK, Canada and Argentina, while Mexico and Peru received varied responses, largely due to the fact that events only occurred once in 2018 and 2019. The heightened awareness of Argentina on the part of UK and Canada based respondents might be attributed to a general lack of exposure to practices in Latin America and elsewhere in the world generally, as the usual digital arts milieu tends to be dominated by Western, English-speaking contexts.

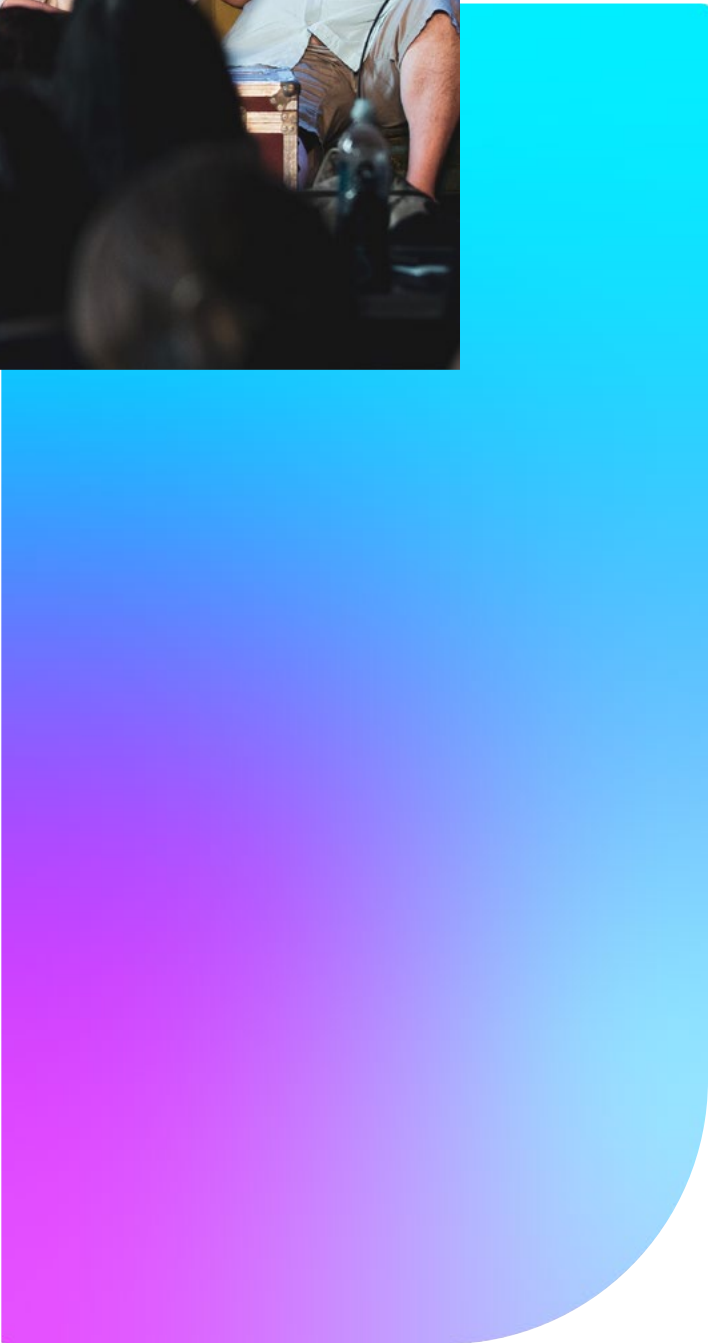


Skills Growth

The AMPLIFY D.A.I program of workshops, masterclasses and presentations aims to provide and bolster skills and professional knowledge.

Personally, I am in a moment of figuring out how I want my own project to exist in the public sphere. I wanted new ways to approach my project but wasn't sure where to start. AMPLIFY D.A.I's workshops help recontextualize my project and that has been enormously helpful in figuring out my next steps! **Rachel Nam, CA, 2020**





Confidence Growth

I will always consider AMPLIFY D.A.I a very important program in solidifying and encouraging confidence, which I have considered the biggest barrier in the progression of my own project, and for that I will be eternally grateful. Honey Pazhutan, CA, 2018

Confidence growth		
	Before	After
Not confident at all	3%	0%
Somewhat confident	19%	0%
Confident	56%	3%
Very confident	9%	34%
Extremely confident	12%	62%



3%

somewhat likely to engage with gender advocacy

12%

very likely

84%

extremely likely

Advocacy Engagement

My participation in AMPLIFY D.A.I is related to the fact that I felt that it was one of the few spaces in which I was welcome and that my work would be valued beyond my gender. But I think there is still a long way to go before the digital arts and electronic music spaces are inclusive. Efe Ce Ele, AR, 2020

Transformations in the Sector

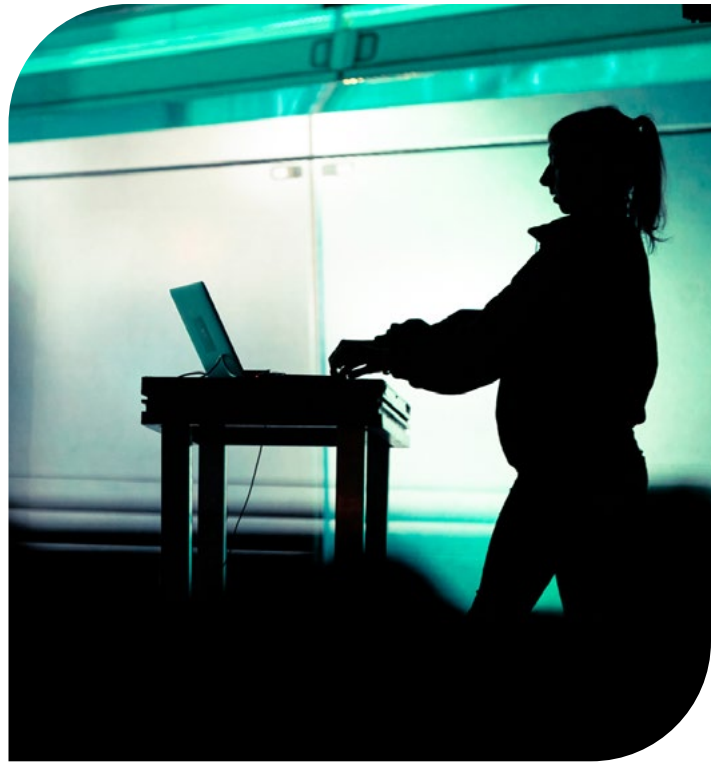
As evidenced below, the **increase in women's visibility** across the MUTEK network coincides with their participation in AMPLIFY D.A.I. Along with the instances of gender parity in Montreal and Argentina, there is also a clear indication that the resources of the program have been fundamental to those achievements. Additionally, the program also had **peripheral impact** as it influenced other festivals in the MUTEK network who were not official partners to the program itself, as they included the booking of AMPLIFY D.A.I artists, and programmed discursive activities related to gender and diversity advocacy, evidencing an overall improvement in their gender statistics.

The legitimizing power of AMPLIFY D.A.I also helped in **leveraging new funding sources and receiving awards** for MUTEK Montreal and Argentina. A highlight is the Grand Prix du Conseil des arts de Montreal award received in 2020 by MUTEK Montreal, which specifically mentioned the important role they played in addressing gender parity in the past years.

New connections were made by the British Council and partner events with **other gender advocacy organizations** such as the National Institute of Music of Argentina (INAMU), MTL Women in Music, Women in Music Canada and Femmes du cinéma, de la télévision et des médias numériques, along with a technology partnership with visual development platform TouchDesigner.

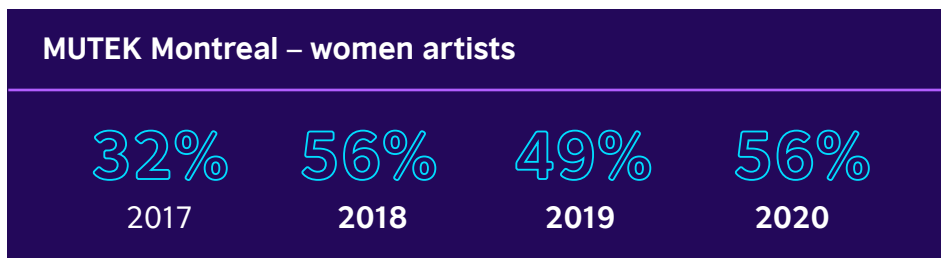
Cultural difference and regional experience enriched both partners and the cohorts. Because the program provides opportunities that transcend the north-south geographic axis, testimonials from artists and partners show there was great value and knowledge gained in exchanges, particularly between Argentina/Latin America and the UK/Canada, where cultural differences could be profound.

Finally, an unforeseen outcome was the **online pivot** made necessary during the global confinement of 2020, and the **invention of new models** for showcasing, cohort curriculum activities and networking. This **resilience and its effectiveness** received positive comments from partners and participating artists alike.

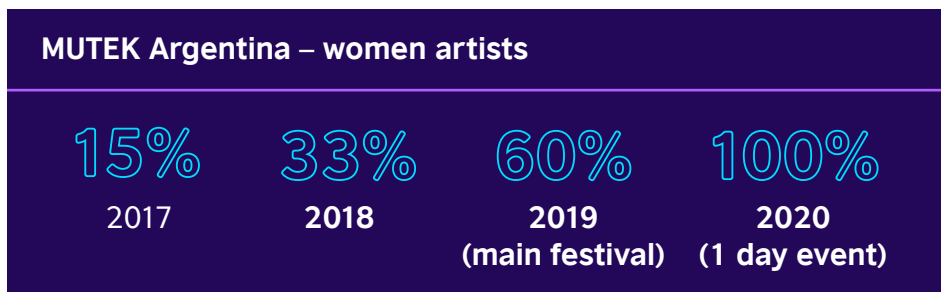


Gender Representation & Parity Achievements

For MUTEK Montreal, data going back 20 years shows that from 2000 until 2012, there were 10% or less women appearing in festival line-ups, not improving to 30% or more until 2016. The partnership and active participation in PRS Foundation's Keychange and AMPLIFY D.A.I clearly marks a new trajectory for gender parity in the festival.



MUTEK Argentina experienced a dramatic change in women's representation on their stages. Given the obstacles faced in Latin America, with not just public representation of women in music and the arts, but also around women's rights and safety in general, this should be noted.



Conclusion

There are now an increasing number of organizations and programs specifically concerned with rebalancing gender and diversity in the music industry at large, or with women in gaming or technology, or in related STEM initiatives. However, very few, if any, focus on this particular expression of contemporary digital art and performance—and with the international breadth, resources and connections that AMPLIFY D.A.I provides.

AMPLIFY D.A.I occupies an important niche in its work to advance women in electronic music and digital arts and affect change in the sectors, specifically in Canada and Latin America. For the UK partners and participants, the program provides an opportunity to increase their international exposure and understanding of different practices and trends, while creating new connections with artists and arts professionals and building capacity in an inclusive space.

With its online pivot in 2020, the program has now the potential to reach and involve more artists by expanding the opportunities in other countries, making the most of the British Council's and the main partners' networks. With this outreach, the program can also look at increasing the diversity and representation in its cohorts, and strengthening its commitment to addressing inequities across the board in the digital arts sector. As we are shaping the program in a responsive way, and considering the cohorts' perspectives and the partners' agendas, the aspirations for AMPLIFY D.A.I are to support the sector and to remain an enabling environment for artists to profile their work, gain professional skills and expand international connections.



Acknowledgements

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And these efforts are to celebrate and profile the work of exceptional artists that have equally enriched and inspired the development of the program in the last three years, and the years to come.

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