



# 2021 FALL HOUSING BUREAU INFORMATION



Music for All (MFA) is committed to providing thorough and equitable housing support to participants in Bands of America Grand Nationals and Fall Super Regional Championships. Creating, operating and ensuring the success of large-scale destination events is complex and complicated. Music for All is committed to maintaining and operating a transparent and supportive housing system.

We are also committed to include and keep our participants informed. Your input is valued and requested. As part of this housing system review and overhaul, and encourage your consideration and input, we believe you are entitled to know “the how *and why*” of our Grand Nationals and Super Regional policies and operations.

## What is the Policy?

All competing and exhibition bands and their booster groups utilizing hotel accommodations for their stay during Bands of America Grand Nationals and Super Regional Championships are **REQUIRED** to make their hotel reservations through the Bands of America (BOA) Housing Bureau. The BOA Housing Bureau has been set up to allow MFA to:

- Secure and assure the availability of hotel rooms;
- Secure lowest, best available large group/event pricing; and
- Sufficiently accommodate *all* the needs of participating bands.

Bands that violate this policy will not be permitted to perform and forfeit all enrollment fees. For policy purposes a “booster group” is defined as a group of parent/boosters who consolidate and make collective hotel sleeping room arrangements.

## Why a Housing Bureau?

Bands of America Grand Nationals is a large scale, “city wide” event that occupies almost half the inventory of suitable Indianapolis hotel accommodations, including *more than half* of downtown Indianapolis’ “premium” properties. Bands of America Super Regionals are held in large and popular convention and destination communities. Grand Nationals and Super Regional championships utilize valued community assets (i.e. high quality, indoor stadiums) that exist, in part, for the purpose of attracting visitors (and their spending) in large numbers. As such, Music for All must:

Make the case for and continuously justify our “value” to local communities by:

- Making a compelling case for committing to BOA events over and above other potential and competing meetings and events;
- Providing a measurable and proven track record of housing bookings to sustain our case; and
- Leveraging the value of proven and sustainable multi-year commitments.<sup>1</sup>

Plan and make commitments years in advance to:

- Secure local community support to commit performance venues;
- Hold and guarantee sufficient and adequate housing accommodations for participants;
- Have local (convention & visitor association and hotelier) support to secure and guarantee best available and most competitive group rates; and
- Protect against higher pricing and hotel room holdbacks for business travel bookings.

Maintain a fair, equitable and transparent system that:

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Music for All has made multi-year event commitments for Grand Nationals and a Super Regional in Indianapolis (through 2023), and for Super Regionals in St. Louis (through 2023) and San Antonio (through 2021).

- Is consistent with our mission, vision and core values;
- Considers and meets the needs of a spectrum of participants (For example, our system must, as equitably as possible, support the planning needs of bands from Alaska or Hawaii that are making a trip of a lifetime, once every 4 year bands from the West Coast or Texas, as well as semi-annual or annual participants whose decisions are made year to year.);
- Allocates finite resources (that meet the many and varying needs and preferences of large traveling student groups);
- Avoids providing, or the appearance of providing, unintended bias or preference to regular or experienced past participants; and
- Avoids unmanageable, unsustainable or organizationally threatening fiscal consequences for Music for All.

Music for All must work and project years in advance to secure venue commitments and to assure the adequacy of supporting (housing) infrastructure. This requires MFA to make “best (informed by experience) guesses” concerning Championship enrollment, the dynamics of enrollment (where groups will come from and their related housing needs); and general considerations of group preferences, the state of our national economy and our comparative position with other potentially competing large (group) meetings and events.

The commitments we make are firm contracts with monetary guarantees for use of and payment for contracted venue space and sleeping rooms (called attrition clauses). In essence, our 2021 Fall participants are filling guest rooms contracted as early as 2018.

Our commitments ensure availability of adequate rooms necessary to sustain an event the size of a Super Regional or Grand Nationals. It helps to secure and lock in hotel commitments to offer a city’s best available and discounted group-housing options for bands and booster organizations. It also demonstrates a measurable component to maintain and prove the value for local communities where our Super Regionals and Grand Nationals take place. Showing the value of hotel business in these locations allows the local community to feel confident in their commitment to lease stadium and convention facilities to Music for All.

**Does Music for All benefit financially from operating a housing bureau? Yes.**

Music for All’s operation of a Housing Bureau does provide direct financial support to the related events and generally to the organization and its mission. MFA is a 501(c)(3) authorized “not for profit” organization. As such, all revenues, be they earned or contributed *must* be used to support our mission and in compliance with Federal and state laws and regulations governing non-profit organizations.

MFA’s negotiated hotel rates include modest financial support and commissions from participating hotels intended to support the overall operations, administrative investment, and assumed contractual risks.

In many ways, Music for All’s operating model is similar to that of the athletic operations typical of America’s colleges and universities. In that setting, revenues from football and basketball operations fund and support the other important athletic teams, organizations and commitments. For MFA, our Fall Championship schedule (especially Grand Nationals and Super Regionals) helps support administrative overhead and other programs and events. While revenues from most of our events exceed direct operating costs, they do not cover their full share on a fully allocated basis (that includes MFA salaries, benefits, office space, etc.).

Revenues gained from events, sponsorships, grants and gifts also support and help to fund our “vision” related programs that advocate for music education. They make it possible to support programs and projects that offer teacher, future music teacher, parent/booster, and student development and access to underrepresented and underserved communities (including small, rural, core urban, and ethnic and other minority communities) and to advance generally the “cause” of scholastic music education. Without the necessary resources, we cannot advance our mission and vision. Without these resources, our commitments to national and regional spring festivals, summer camp, honor ensembles and many other activities would not exist or only be offered at substantially higher fees.

**Do group travel planners receive priority? No!**

## THE PROCESS

### How does MFA assign participating band group housing?

Before any group is assigned a hotel, all participating bands are REQUIRED to fill out a Housing Preference Form including groups choosing to not stay at a hotel (i.e. staying at a school or are local/driving in and out for the event).

The process of placing bands in hotels is, in essence, a jigsaw puzzle. Elements such as hotel availability and existing contracts are the main factors in meeting participant needs and satisfying hotel obligations. When information is received from bands or parent/booster groups, the following criteria are taken into consideration when assigning hotels:

- Number of rooms needed & room type (king rooms or double/double rooms)
- Length of stay (how many nights are being utilized)
- Group's preferred amenities (some examples include: breakfast included or available, parking included or available, location – suburban or downtown)

Please refer to the Housing Guide and carefully read and consider the following as you fill out the form.

### Housing Considerations

**Length of Stay:** The most difficult groups to place are those only staying one-night. If you are only staying for one night, it may require more time to place you and pair your accommodations with other participants and MFA contractual obligations.

**Location:** Downtown versus Suburban Hotels (see Hotel Reference Guide attachment for further classification of hotels)

- Downtown hotels: The price-point is higher and the availability is influenced by higher demand between bands and other group and individual business demand at downtown hotels.
- Suburban hotels: They will have a lower price-point but limited room-type availability (larger groups may need to be separated between multiple (but neighboring) hotels or may be asked to be flexible with room types).
- NOTE: There is no performance “flow” advantage to choosing a downtown hotel. All bands *must* enter the show flow the same way, regardless of weather, and as outlined in the Important Event Procedures for the event. In regards to Indianapolis (Super Regional Championship and Grand Nationals), the connector tunnel is not open as a point of entry for performance flow.

**Full-Service versus Select-Service Hotels** (see Hotel Reference Guide attachment for further detail and what is included at each hotel)

- Full-service hotels (i.e. JW Marriott, Westin, Hilton, Hyatt, Omni, Marriott) offer on-site restaurants, room service and generally have higher room rates.
- Select-service hotels (i.e. Hampton Inn, Courtyard by Marriott, et al) have limited amenities and generally have a lower or complimentary parking charge. Their room rates are generally lower as they offer fewer amenities.
- NOTE: ALL downtown hotels, regardless of full-service or select-service, charge for parking.

### One property versus multiple/neighboring properties

- The number of available rooms at each hotel cannot always accommodate an entire group. As bands grow in size, it is becoming more and more common for groups to be split between two neighboring hotels. This is especially common in suburban hotels where room availability is less.

**Other decision-making factors**

- If breakfast being included in your room rate is a decision-making priority, there are a few hotels that will offer breakfast downtown. If you require breakfast to be included in your stay, it will be an additional cost – BOA’s Housing Bureau Administrator, cmcglobal (Laura Jackson – [housing@musicforall.org](mailto:housing@musicforall.org) or 317-635-4755) can assist in setting up options for you.
- Consider parking and bus parking as you fill out the housing preference form. Suburban properties will generally have room to accommodate buses and trucks at little to no additional cost. Downtown hotels will not be able to accommodate buses and will charge for overnight vehicle parking. Parking may be a greater distance from your hotel than suburban choices.
- Hotel room rate taxes can be referenced on the Housing Guide.

Now that you’ve been introduced to the “what, why and how” regarding Bands of America’s Housing Bureau, our hope in this second year of transition will continue to result in a better housing experience and success to your group. In keeping total transparency throughout this progression, we openly accept feedback, both positive and constructive. Feel free to reach out to Music for All or cmcglobal as often as you’d like regarding your experience as you continue through the process. Thank you for your continued effort, time and partnership in helping us provide positively life-changing experiences through music for all.