More than 130 members have joined the Tipitina's Music Office Co-Op in Lafayette since it opened last November, and more than $400,000 has streamed into the Lafayette economy as a result of their participation.

The Lafayette office on Johnston Street is one of five in Louisiana that teach musicians and artists workforce and job skills. For a small fee, the co-ops provide access to both basic and specialized technology, classes, mentoring, networking and legal assistance.

"The point of this project is to help musicians make or keep more money," said Co-Op Director Todd Souvignier, who noted that the average income for participants across the state is just under $21,000 per year: "These are very hardworking people of very modest means."

The co-op began in New Orleans in 2003, and other offices are in Shreveport, Alexandria, and Baton Rouge. Souvignier said what has set the Lafayette office apart is a high adoption rate among local artists, including high-profile names including David Egan, Cupid, Cedric Watson and feu Follet, among others.

"Lafayette has a great nexus of excellent professional musicians," Souvignier said. "There's a history and tradition of family and neighborhood music that you just don't find in other cities."

In its first year, the co-op has created $404,000 in new or increased revenue for artists, much of which is in turn used in the local economy. In addition, more than $1.1 million in total member earnings is directly attributed to co-op participation.

From Jan. 1 to June 30, a total of 793 member-use sessions were held at the Lafayette office, and it has more than 60 unique users per month.

Lafayette City-Parish President Joey Durel said the impacts, both culturally and economically, can't be underestimated.

"We have a lot of artists and musicians, and there's also a business side to it for them," Durel said. "This helps them with every aspect."