

NGWB Grant Final Report (FY24-25)

Contract Number #18-13-333 - NWGGA – TOAST Nebraska

Grant Amount \$101,250

Contact Information

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Issue of Interest

The Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association (NWGGA) continues to focus on the critical need to promote Nebraska wines and grape varietals directly to consumers within the state. With global wine consumption seeing a downturn, cultivating local interest and loyalty is more important than ever. Events like TOAST Nebraska and Holiday TOAST Nebraska have become increasingly vital in attracting new wine consumers and maintaining engagement with current ones. These events serve as immersive opportunities to highlight Nebraska's growing wine industry and create meaningful connections between consumers and wineries.

Approach to Problem

To address these challenges, NWGGA leverages large-scale, consumer-facing events to showcase Nebraska wine as both a product and a tourism experience. Through comprehensive marketing efforts and event execution, the organization elevates the visibility of Nebraska wines and vineyards.

The grant supported two cornerstone events:

- Holiday TOAST Nebraska Wine Festival (Fall 2024) in Grand Island, NE
- TOAST Nebraska Wine Festival (Spring 2025) in Omaha, NE

These events allowed participating wineries to uniquely brand their own spaces and offer personalized tasting experiences, simulating a winery visit for attendees. This strategy promotes both individual winery identity and collective industry awareness. Through live music, games, food, educational programming, and wine tastings, these festivals introduce attendees to Nebraska wine varietals in an accessible and engaging way.

Goals/Achievement of Goals

The project's goal was to create high-quality, educational wine festivals that expand consumer awareness and appreciation of Nebraska wines and grape varietals.

Holiday TOAST Nebraska 2024 was held on November 9 at Fonner Park in Grand Island, the event welcomed:

- 1,319 attendees
- 16 participating wineries
- 29 artisan and food vendors
- 221 winery staff, vendors, and volunteers

Attendees sampled wine, purchased bottles, participated in wine bingo and watched charcuterie demonstrations and football games, and enjoyed live music. Feedback was especially positive regarding the event’s central location, which made Nebraska wine more accessible to a broader audience. Ticket sales were slightly lower for this event than in 2023.

TOAST Nebraska 2025 was held on May 9-10 at Stinson Park in Omaha, the event welcomed:

- 2,182 attendees
- 15 participating wineries
- 50 artisan and food vendors
- 325 winery staff, vendors, and volunteers

The venue provided strong visibility, nearby amenities, and ample parking. Marketing efforts began in November and continued through May. The 2025 festival again struggled with ticket sales due to the current downturn in the economy and global wine markets, but it was able to maintain sales relatively close to last year by exploring additional marketing opportunities as the event came closer. Fifty food and artisan vendors were on-site, and entertainment included live bands, educational wine sessions, wine bingo, and yard games.

Results, Conclusions, Lessons Learned

Although Spring TOAST 2025 saw a dip in attendance compared to prior years, likely due to broader economic trends and reduced wine consumption, both events achieved strong engagement and impact. The festivals remain powerful tools for promoting Nebraska wines and offer significant value in consumer education and brand exposure for wineries.

One key highlight is that TOAST Nebraska has been named Best Festival by Omaha’s Choice Awards for five consecutive years (2021–2025).

These accolades reflect the events’ quality and contribution to Nebraska’s tourism and wine sectors. Moving forward, NWGGA will make strategic adjustments to maintain and grow attendance, further cementing these events as flagship marketing tools for Nebraska’s wine industry.

Progress Achieved According to Outcome Measures

In comparison to the most recent 2025 festival at Stinson Park in Omaha:

Tickets Sold	2021: 3,233	2022: 4,908	2023: 4,526	2024: 2,977
Average Ticket Price Sold	2021: \$39.07	2022: \$39.52	2023: \$41.89	2024: 49.19 offered VIP
Wineries and Vendors Attended	2021: 45	2022: 60	2023: 66	2024: 67

Tickets Sold	2025: 2,507
Average Ticket Price Sold	2025: \$49.38 offered VIP
Wineries and Vendors Attended	2025: 65

These metrics were based on the most available data from the 2025 festival.

In comparison to the most recent 2024 Holiday TOAST Festival at Fonner Park in Grand Island.

Tickets Sold	2021: 1,099	2022: 1,435	2023: 1,667	2024: 1,540
Average Ticket Price Sold	2021: \$38.81	2022: \$41.58	2023: \$44.00	2024: \$41.38
Wineries and Vendors Attended	2021: 45	2022: 41	2023: 43	2024: 48

Financial Report

Toast	Description
\$101,250.00	<i>Grant Total</i>
\$740.00	Hillcrest/SDL – Inv. #422
\$5,506.72	402 INK/Roses 4 You – Inv. #423
\$27,403.20	Winery Reimbursements – Inv. #428
\$8,000.00	Rental City-Spring TOAST – Inv. #426
\$14,734.12	Pens, Insurance, Palisade, Square, Mileage, Travel, U-haul, Totes – Inv. #430
\$26,757.14	Booth Upgrade; Umbrella Permi; Wine Glasses; Wine Writer Grant; Park Reservation – Inv. #434
NDA Pending Payments	
\$2,087.38	VISA, T-shirts & Winery Competition – Inv. #439
\$23,191.62	Tent Rental – Inv. #439
\$108,420.18	<i>Total Submitted for reimbursement as of 6.5.25</i>
-7,170.18	<i>Submitted Expenses Left Over After Grant Funds</i>

Toast Post Show Feedback Attached on Next Pages.

2025 Spring TOAST Nebraska Review

Tickets Attended/Purchased	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Designated Driver Ticket	62/72	99/109	156/180	130/147	159/172
Friday Ticket Only	934/978	1294/1370	1,196/1,313	754/777	538/563
Friday VIP	N/A	N/A	N/A	63/68	73/78
Saturday Ticket Only	1796/1909	2678/2864	2,388/2,513	1,346/1,403	1,140/1,224
Saturday VIP	N/A	N/A	N/A	126/135	93/97
2 Two-Day Ticket	39/68	85/140	91/106	53/61	21/26
Volunteers & Vendors	65/206	295/425	351/414	340/386	268/347
	<u>2,896/3,233</u>	<u>4,451/4,908</u>	<u>4,182/4,526</u>	<u>2,812/2,977</u>	<u>2,292/2,507</u>
WALKUPS:	151 Fri./213 Sat.	192 Fri./ 243 Sat.	9 Fri./ 7 Sat.	144 Fri./ 223 Sat.	143 Fri./ 175 Sat.
Attendees from Out of State:	11.72% out of state	9.94% out of state	9.72% out of state	8.7% out of state	7.66% out of state

237 Surveys Taken: 220 Attendees, 10 Wineries/Volunteers, 5 Vendors & 2 Unmarked

92.3% would purchase a ticket in the future to TOAST Nebraska

13 “Unsure” – No comments

4 “No’s” – 1. Personally would not return. It was fine for one time to see what wineries we would like to visit. However, it was not the type of wine experience we love. Would prefer visiting one or two wineries over a weekend and having a chance to sit and enjoy them. This was very rushed and although I understood the need for the volunteers and thought all of them were very lovely, they were not very knowledgeable about the wines. 2. Food Truck Comment: Not enough Business

TICKETING

- According to the 233 attendee survey responses that were completed for Ticketing – Purchasing and Event Check in: 193 – 5 votes and 32 – 4 votes. 96.5% rated 4 or higher.

INFO DESK/FREEBIES

- According to the 233 attendee survey responses that were completed for Freebies - tasting glass, guide, wine tote: 187 – 5 votes and 29 – 4 votes. 92.7% rated 4 or higher. This is a .5% increase from last year.

2025 Spring TOAST Nebraska Review

WINERIES

- According to the 234 attendee survey responses that were completed for Wineries - wine tasting & purchasing: 194 – 5 votes and 29 – 4 votes. 95.3% rated 4 or higher. This is a .6% decrease from last year. Attendees commented that there were less wineries and some vendors were moody.

BANDS

- According to the 232 attendee survey responses that were completed for Bands - music and bands each day: 152 – 5 votes and 52 – 4 votes. 88% rated 4 or higher. This is a 13.2% increase from last year. There were no sound issues this year due to a new sound company. A little too loud on Saturday.

ACTIVITIES

- According to the 196 attendee survey responses that were completed for Activities - wine bingo & education sessions: 110 – 5 votes, 47 – 4 votes. 80% rated 4 or higher. This is a 6% decrease from last year. Would like more education sessions throughout the day, need more seating and more shade, liked trivia & bingo, appreciated extra waters at bingo.

FOOD

- According to the 226 attendee survey responses that were completed for Food - food options and overall dining experience: 102 – 5 votes, 62 – 4 votes. 72.5% rated 4 or higher. This is a .5% decrease from last year. Attendees wanted a larger selection of food trucks and lighter options. Food trucks were too expensive.

VENDORS

- According to the 230 attendee survey responses that were completed for Handmade Goods - artisans and boutiques: 144 – 5 votes, 58 – 4 votes. 87.8% rated 4 or higher. This is a 2.5% increase from last year. Too many vendors compared to wineries, some comments from attendees and vendors were that some vendors were not a good fit for the event and too pushy, most came for wine not vendors.

LOCATION

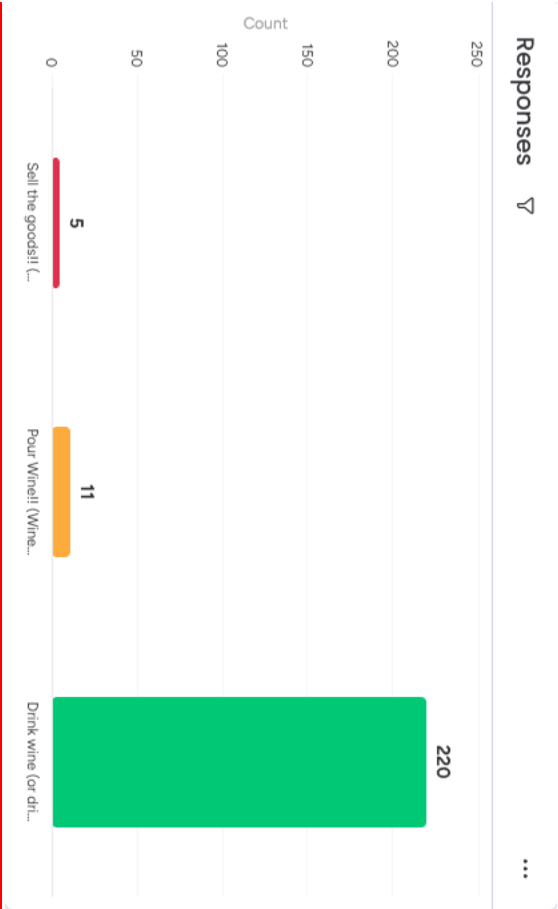
- According to the 236 attendee survey responses that were completed for Location - Stinson Park and surrounding area: 202 – 5 votes, 25 – 4 votes. 96.2% rated 4 or higher. This is a 1.8% decrease from last year. Great location but bathroom issues every year, need more shade.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

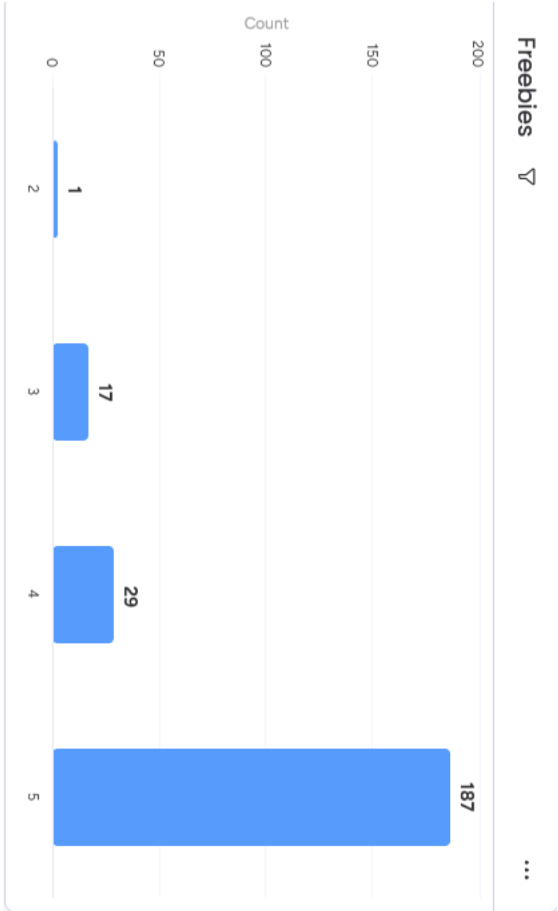
- According to the 232 attendee survey responses that were completed for Overall event experience: 182 – 5 votes, 40 – 4 votes. 95.7% rated 4 or higher. This is a 1.6% decrease from last year.

2025 TOAST Attendee Survey Results

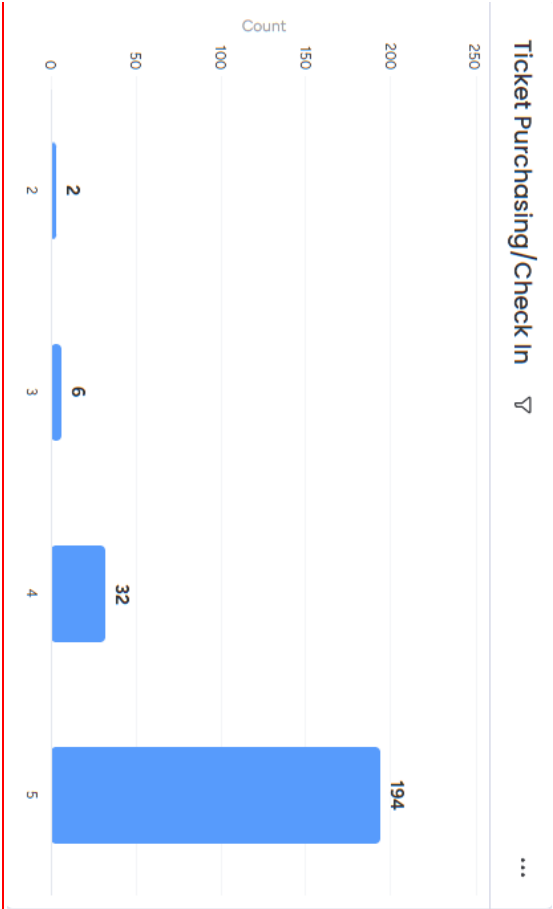
Responses - 236



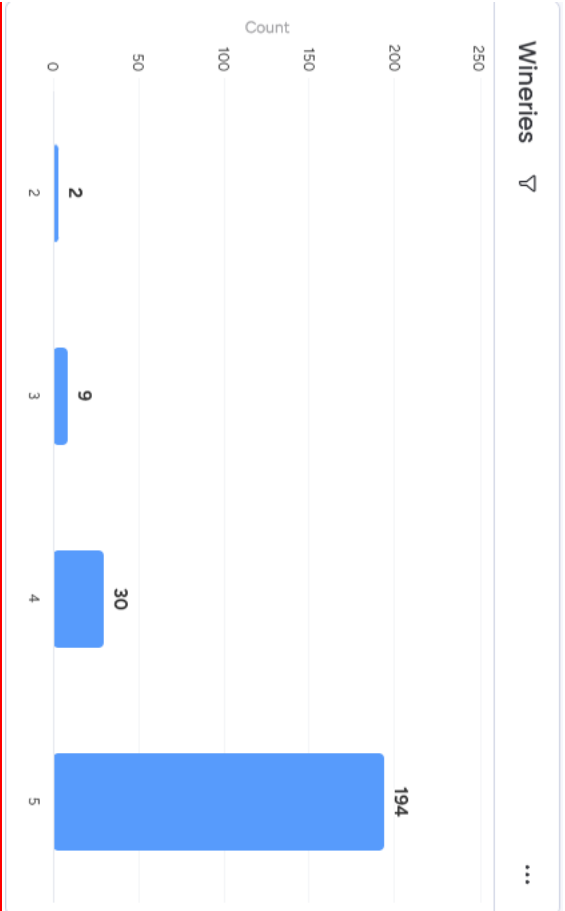
Freebies



Ticket Purchasing/Check In



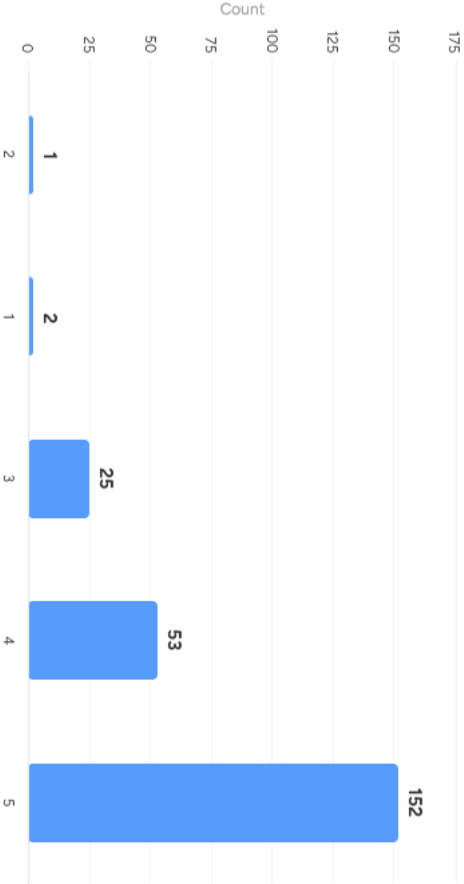
Wineries



Bands

Bands ▾

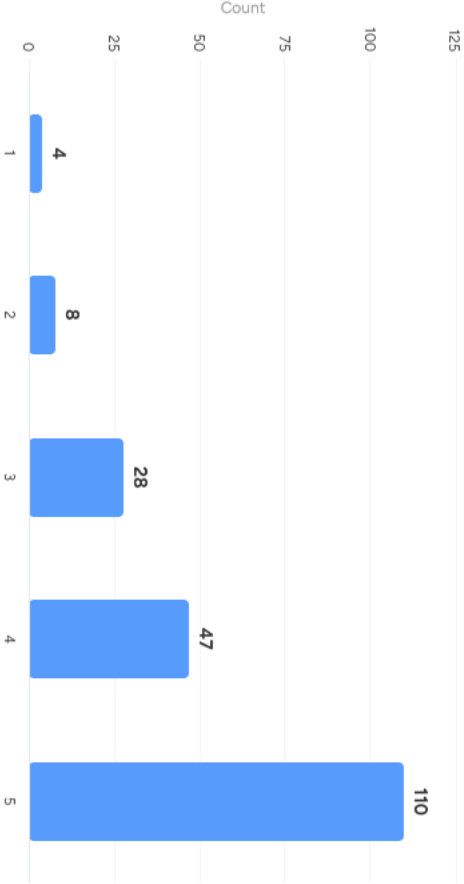
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Activities

Activities ▾

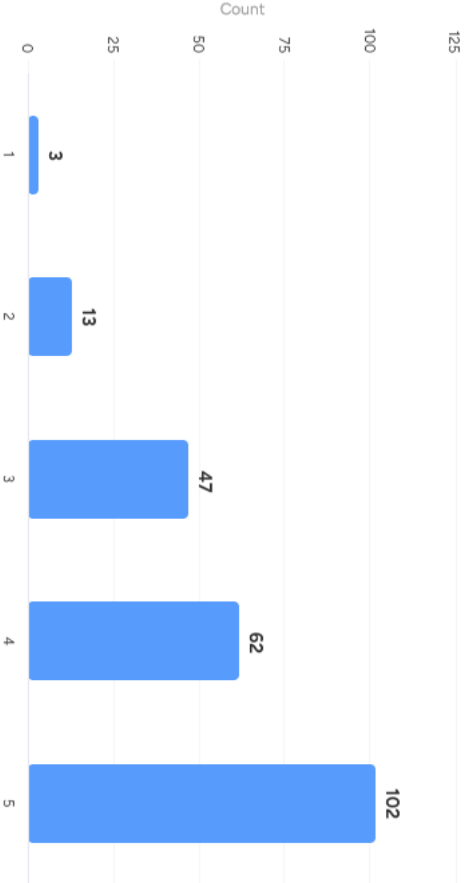
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Food

Food ▾

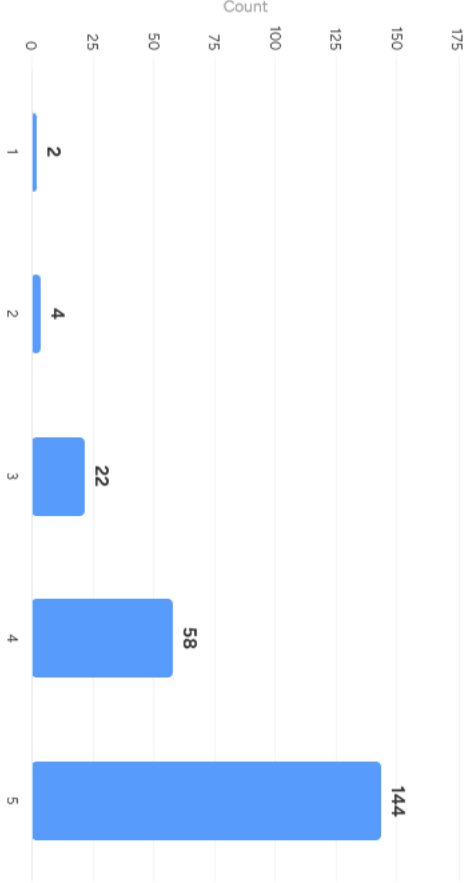
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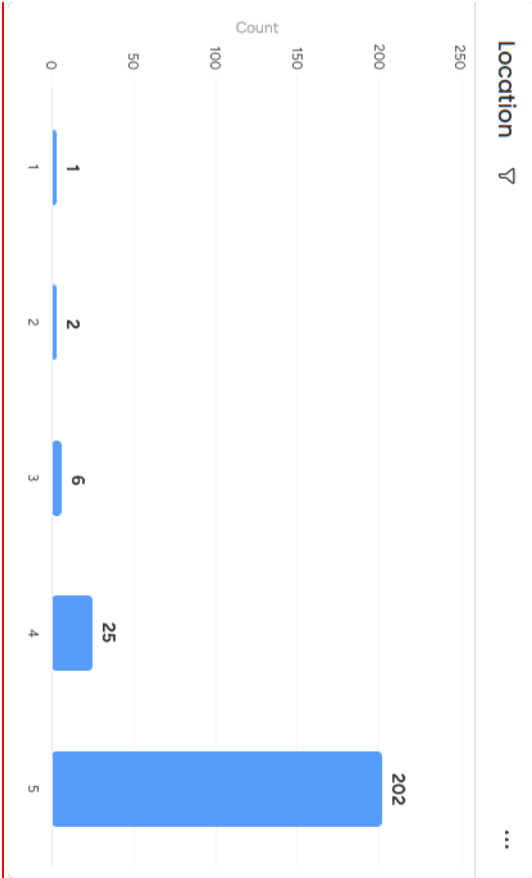
Vendors

Vendors ▾

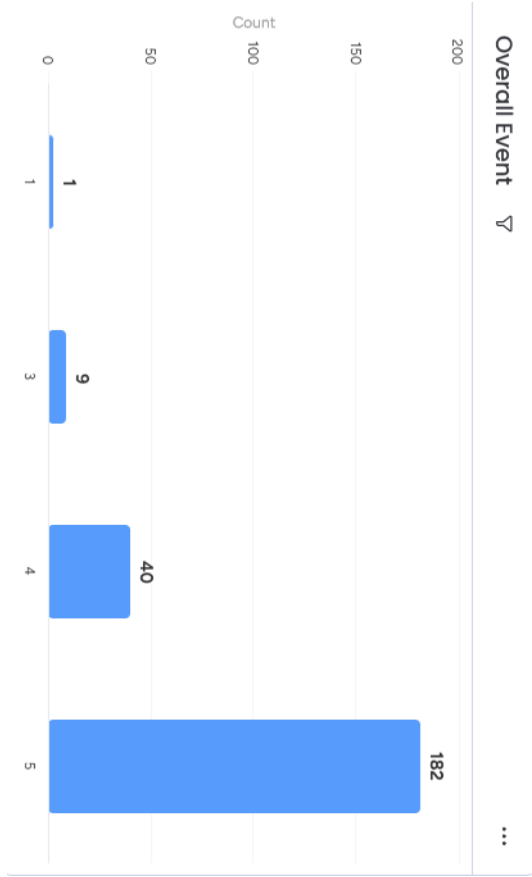
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Location



Overall Event



Would you purchase a ticket again?

