FREE PLAYBOOK FOR LABEL MANAGERS

Built from our 2026 calls with independent label teams

# The Statement Season Playbook.



**Run your half-year statements with fewer questions and no last-minute scramble.**

Qlero

FREE PLAYBOOK FOR LABEL MANAGERS

# Make statement season the easy part of the year.

Twice a year, most label teams lose a month to statements: the run itself, then a week of artist questions, then invoices and payouts. This playbook shows how to spread the work across the period, send statements artists can read, and pay out without chasing anyone.

WHAT'S INSIDE


**01** The royalty run in plain language
The eight steps of every run, and the terms that matter.

**02** The statement season timeline
What to do every month, six weeks out, and the week after.

**03** Statements artists can read
What to include, plus a cover email that heads off questions.

**04** The ten questions artists ask most
Short answers you can adapt and paste.

**05** Payouts without chasing
Payee details, thresholds, self-billing and batch payments.

**06** Switching systems between runs
When to move, what to export, and how to test safely.

**07** What your royalty run really costs
A simple calculation with a worked example.


### Who it's for

Label managers and royalty teams at independent labels, from a handful of artists to a large catalog.

### Start here this week

1. Put your statement dates in the calendar. SECTION 02
2. Paste the ten answers into a shared doc. SECTION 04
3. Request missing VAT numbers and tax forms. SECTION 05

SECTION KNOW THE BASICS? SKIP TO 02

# 01

# The royalty run in plain language.

Every royalty run, in any system, follows the same eight steps. Knowing which one takes longest is where improvement starts.

1. **Catalog.** Every track and release you account for, with ISRC and UPC.
2. **Contracts.** Who gets paid on each track, at what rate, and on what basis.
3. **Sales import.** Load the period's files from distributors, direct deals and licences.
4. **Costs.** Add recoupable costs and advances to the right contract, track or release.
5. **Calculate.** Apply each contract to the sales and costs to produce every payee's earnings.
6. **Review.** Check the results before anything goes out.
7. **Publish.** Send statements to artists and payees.
8. **Pay.** Collect invoices or self-bill, then pay what is due.

## The terms that come up in every run

| TERM | WHAT IT MEANS |
|---|---|
| **PPD** | Published price to dealer. Many artist deals pay a percentage of PPD rather than of what the label received. |
| **Net receipts** | What the label actually received after distribution fees. Profit-share deals usually split net receipts. |
| **Recoupment** | Recovering advances and recoupable costs from an artist's royalties before anything is paid out. |
| **Cross-collateralisation** | Using earnings from one release or contract to recoup costs on another. Only allowed if the contract says so. |
| **Reserves** | A share of royalties held back against returns and released later. Mostly relevant for physical sales. |
| **Escalation** | A higher royalty rate once a release passes an agreed threshold of sales, streams or revenue. |
| **Unreported sales** | Sales lines that can't be matched to a contract this period. They should roll forward, not disappear. |

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Write down which of the eight steps took the longest last time. That is where to start improving.**

SECTION

# 02

# The statement season timeline.

The last week only turns into a scramble when everything waits until then. Count back from the day statements are due and spread the work across the period.

### EVERY MONTH, DURING THE PERIOD

- [ ] Import each month's sales files as they arrive, instead of six at once.
- [ ] Link new releases to their contracts the week they come out.
- [ ] Log costs and advances as they are paid, with the receipt attached.

### SIX WEEKS BEFORE STATEMENTS ARE DUE

- [ ] Find tracks without a contract, and contracts without tracks.
- [ ] Confirm rate changes, escalations and new side deals.
- [ ] List every income source for the period and note which files are still missing.

### FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] Chase missing sales files from distributors, licensees and direct deals.
- [ ] Reconcile each file's total against what actually reached your bank.

### TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] Run the calculation in draft and compare every payee against last period.
- [ ] Look into big swings, negative balances and unmatched sales lines.

### ONE WEEK BEFORE, AND STATEMENT DAY

- [ ] Lock costs and advances. Spot-check a sample of statements against the contracts.
- [ ] Publish with a cover email, answer from a shared list of replies, and log every question for next time.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Put the six-week, four-week and two-week dates in your calendar now.**

# Your H2 2026 statement calendar.

Fill in your own dates. The example assumes statements for July to December 2026 are due on 31 March 2027.

| MILESTONE | WHAT HAPPENS | EXAMPLE | YOUR DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Period ends** | The last sales month of the period closes | 31 Dec 2026 | |
| **Every month** | Sales files loaded as they arrive | By the 15th | |
| **Six weeks out** | Catalog and contract checks, missing-file list | 17 Feb 2027 | |
| **Four weeks out** | Chase missing files, reconcile to the bank | 3 Mar 2027 | |
| **Two weeks out** | Draft run and variance review | 17 Mar 2027 | |
| **One week out** | Lock costs, spot-check, prepare the cover email | 24 Mar 2027 | |
| **Statement day** | Publish statements and send the cover email | 31 Mar 2027 | |
| **Payout run** | Approve requests and pay in one batch | 14 Apr 2027 | |

**Late files and unreported sales.** Lines that arrive late or match no contract should roll into next period as unreported, not be re-imported later. Re-imports are where duplicates come from.

**Running quarterly periods too?** Copy the table once per quarter. The milestones stay the same; only the dates move.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Fill in your own dates and share the calendar with everyone involved in the run.**

SECTION

# 03

# Statements artists can read.

Most artist questions are not complaints. They are the artist trying to fill a gap the statement left open. A statement that answers the obvious questions up front cuts the week of emails that follows every run.

PAGE ONE

### A one-page summary

- Opening balance from the last statement
- Royalties earned this period
- Costs and advances charged, each with a short description
- Payments made
- Closing balance, and whether it is payable now
- Recoupment status in one sentence

BEHIND IT

### A breakdown

- Earnings by platform, so a TikTok-heavy artist sees why views earned less than streams
- Earnings by territory
- Earnings by track and release
- Units and streams, not only money

EMAIL TEMPLATE · COVER EMAIL

**Subject: Your royalty statement for [period]**

Hi **[Name]**,

Your statement for **[period]** is attached. In short: you earned **[amount]** this period and your balance is now **[amount]**.

A few things that often come up:

- Platforms pay different rates, so a big number on one can mean less money than a smaller number on another.
- Income reaches us two to three months after the streams happen, so this statement covers streams from **[months]**.
- **[Recoupment status in one sentence.]**

To get paid, **[how to request a payout or send an invoice]**. If anything is unclear, reply to this email.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Add a one-sentence recoupment status to every statement, for example "€1,240 left to recoup".**

SECTION

# 04

# The ten questions artists ask most.

Keep these answers in a shared document. Adapt them to your deals, then paste instead of writing every reply from scratch.

01

### Why is this statement lower than the last one?

Usually timing, not lost money: a release peaked last period, a one-off sync or bonus landed then, or more of this period's income went to recouping costs.

02

### Why don't my streams match Spotify for Artists?

Your dashboard shows streams as they happen. Statements show what platforms reported and paid, two to three months later, for a set period.

03

### Why did millions of views earn so little?

Video and short-form platforms pay far less per play than subscription streaming. The platform breakdown on your statement shows the split.

04

### Why am I not being paid?

Your balance is still recouping advances or costs, or it is below the payout threshold of **[amount]**. It rolls into the next period.

05

### What costs were charged to me?

Only costs your contract makes recoupable, at the share it sets. Each one is listed on the statement with a description. Ask us for receipts any time.

06

### When will the money arrive?

Once you request a payout or send an invoice, we pay in our next payment run on **[date or rhythm]**.

07

### Why is there income from a country I've never been to?

Territory is where the listener's account is registered. Playlists and algorithms send music to places artists never toured.

08

### Can I see the data per track and platform?

Yes. The breakdown behind the summary shows track, platform, territory, units and earnings. Tell us if you want it as a spreadsheet.

09

### Why does this cover streams from months ago?

Platforms report to distributors with a delay, and distributors report to us after that. This period covers streams from **[months]**.

10

### What's the difference between gross and net?

Gross is what the platform paid. Net is after distribution fees. Your contract says which one your share is calculated on: **[basis]**.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Collect the questions you were asked most last time and add your own answers to this list.**

SECTION

# 05

# Payouts without chasing.

After the statements comes the second job: invoices and payments. Wrong amounts, wrong VAT numbers and missing invoices can drag on for weeks. Most of it can be prevented before the run starts.

- [ ] **Collect payee details before the run.** Legal name, address, bank details, VAT number if registered, and any tax forms needed for cross-border payments. Note when each form expires.
- [ ] **Set a payout threshold.** For example, only pay balances above €50 and roll smaller amounts into the next period. It cuts tiny payments without delaying anyone meaningfully.
- [ ] **Consider self-billing.** You issue the invoice on the payee's behalf, matched to the statement. It needs a written agreement with each payee, and the rules differ by country, so agree the setup with your accountant first.
- [ ] **Let payees request their payout.** A request with confirmed details is easier to approve than an invoice you have to check line by line.
- [ ] **Pay in one batch.** Approve all payouts for the period together and send them as one payment run, not one bank transfer at a time.
- [ ] **Close the loop on the next statement.** Every payment should appear on the payee's next statement, so their balance always matches what they received.

**Watch for this.** Most payout delays come from three things: a missing or expired VAT number, bank details that changed without anyone telling you, and invoices that don't match the statement total. Check all three before payout day.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**List every payee with a missing or expired VAT number or tax form, and request them now.**

SECTION

# 06

# Switching systems between runs.

Many labels stay on a system they have outgrown because switching feels risky. It is manageable if you time it right and test before you go live.

### Time it right

The best moment is straight after a run has closed and payouts are done. You then have a full period to migrate and test. Avoid starting in the last six weeks before a run.

### Tell artists once, clearly

Explain what changes (a new portal, a new statement layout) and what stays the same (their balance, their deal). Send it before the first statement from the new system.

## Export everything before you start

- [ ] Catalog: tracks and releases with ISRC and UPC
- [ ] Contracts and deal terms, including escalations and reserves
- [ ] Payees with their details and tax information
- [ ] Closing balances per payee and per contract
- [ ] Unrecouped costs and advances
- [ ] Statement history, so artists keep their past periods

## Run both systems side by side once

Rerun your last completed period in the new system and compare it to the statements you actually sent. When balances match payee by payee, the contracts were moved correctly. This is called a shadow run. Don't switch off the old system, or pay for the new one, until it matches.

## Four questions to ask any new system before you sign

- Who does the migration, and what do you need from us?
- When does billing start, and do we pay twice while both run?
- Will you rerun our last period and show the differences, payee by payee?
- How is the price calculated as our back catalog grows?

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Find out when your current software contract can be ended, and work backwards from that date.**

SECTION

# 07

# What your royalty run really costs.

The software licence is usually the smallest part of a royalty run's cost. Most of it is people's time, and the week of questions afterwards is rarely counted at all.

**Cost per run = software for the period + (hours spent × hourly cost) + external help**
**Cost per statement = cost per run ÷ statements sent**

A worked example for a label sending 300 statements every six months, with staff time at €45 an hour. The figures are illustrative, so replace them with your own.

| COST ITEM | HOW IT'S CALCULATED | COST PER RUN |
|---|---|---|
| **Royalty software** | €400 a month × 6 months | €2,400 |
| **Preparing and running statements** | 60 hours × €45 | €2,700 |
| **Answering artist questions** | 40 hours × €45 | €1,800 |
| **Invoices and payouts** | 20 hours × €45 | €900 |
| **External help** | Freelance royalty accountant, fixed fee | €1,000 |
| **Total per run** | **About €29 per statement** | **€8,800** |

In this example, the time spent on questions and payouts costs more than the software. Cutting the questions in half (Sections 03 and 04) saves €900 a run on its own.

## Three ways to bring the number down

QUESTIONS

Answer the top ten questions in the statement and cover email, not one by one in replies.

IMPORTS

Load sales files monthly. Six months of files in one week is where the overtime comes from.

PAYOUTS

Payee self-service and one payment run replace weeks of invoice checking and single transfers.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT RUN

**Track the hours your team spends on each line during the run, then fill in the table with your own numbers.**

YOUR ACTION PLAN

# Everything to do, on one page.

Every action step from this guide in one list. Add an owner and a date, print it, and work down the list.

| | ACTION | WHERE | OWNER | DONE BY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Write down which of the eight steps took longest last time. | Section 01 | | |
| ☐ | Put the six-, four- and two-week dates in your calendar. | Section 02 | | |
| ☐ | Fill in the H2 2026 calendar and share it. | Section 02 | | |
| ☐ | Add a one-sentence recoupment status to every statement. | Section 03 | | |
| ☐ | Collect last run's top questions and add your answers. | Section 04 | | |
| ☐ | Request every missing or expired VAT number and tax form. | Section 05 | | |
| ☐ | Find out when your current software contract can end. | Section 06 | | |
| ☐ | Track your team's hours per cost line during the run. | Section 07 | | |

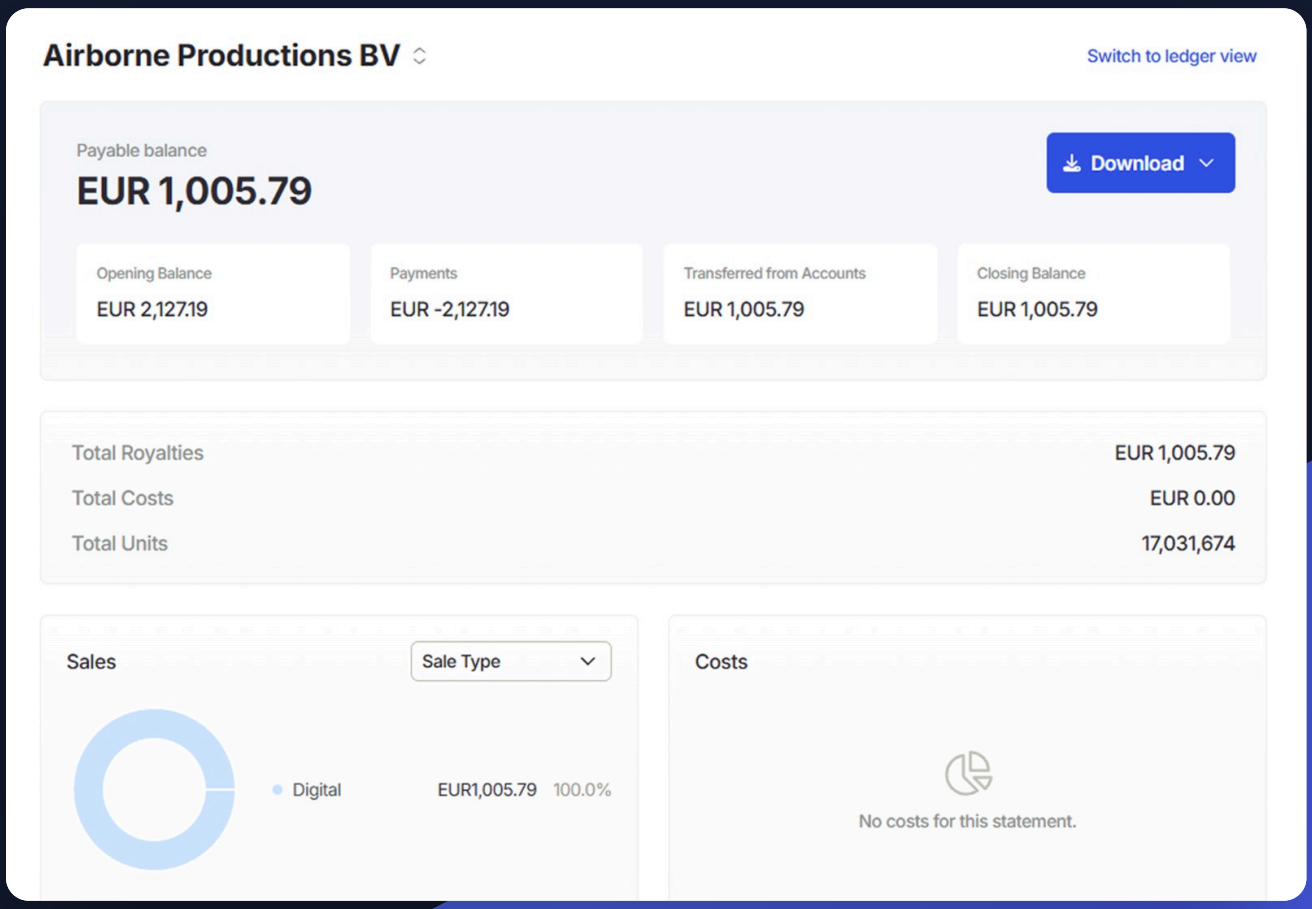
NOTES

MAKE THE NEXT RUN THE EASY ONE

# Take the week of questions out of statement season.

Everything in this playbook works with any royalty system. Qlero is built to make each step faster.

- **Fast imports.** Templates for the major distributors, mapped once and reused every period.
- **Check before you publish.** Calculate the period, review it, then generate statements.
- **Statements artists can read.** Units, platforms, territories and a clear balance, with your logo, plus a portal for each artist.
- **Payouts in one flow.** Artists request a payout, you approve, and the self-billing invoice is created for you.
- **A safe switch.** We migrate your data and run a shadow period before you go live. You pay nothing until it matches.




Qlero

This guide is general information, not legal, tax or accounting advice.