RIVERVIEW JAZZ

Rolling Five-Year Strategic Plan

2026 – 2030

Bringing Music to the People!

45,000+	350+	$2.6M	2013
Annual Attendees	Musicians / Year	Economic Impact	Founded

Our Mission

Riverview Jazz is committed to building a self-sustaining audience for the arts by presenting various forms of Jazz to the community in a combination of traditional and non-traditional spaces.

Where We Stand

Since 2013, Riverview Jazz has built something rare: a world-class jazz festival ecosystem that is genuinely free, genuinely diverse, and genuinely rooted in the fabric of Jersey City and Hudson County. Our festival draws tens of thousands of people each year to the waterfront and throughout the city, featuring hundreds of musicians and generating millions of dollars in local economic activity.

This plan reflects a pivotal moment. After more than a decade of building the organization, we enter 2026 with new grant resources, a strengthened board, and a clear picture of what it takes to grow sustainably. The next five years are about moving from scrappy and mission-driven to a structured, sustainable organization able to expand carefully and intentionally without losing what makes us who we are.

Strategic Framework: Six Pillars

Our strategy is organized around six interconnected pillars, each essential to our growth and long-term health as an organization.

COMMUNITY	**ARTISTRY**	**SUSTAINABILITY**
GOVERNANCE	**COLLABORATION**	**BRAND & VISIBILITY**

Community

Deepen our roots. Widen our reach.

Riverview Jazz exists because great music should be available to everyone, not just people who can afford a ticket. Over the next five years, we will expand the geographic and cultural footprint of our programming while deepening our relationships with the neighborhoods that make Hudson County remarkable.

Expand Programming	• Extend events beyond our flagship festivals to reach neighborhoods across Jersey City and Hoboken year-round • Explore a school-based outreach initiative to bring live music to school students in Jersey City public schools • Develop a smaller, curated winter programming series to maintain community presence between festivals
Diversify Audience	• Grow regional marketing to reach the broader NYC tri-state area audience • Strengthen intentional programming reflecting the full cultural diversity of the communities we serve • Increase local community partnerships to drive attendance and mutual awareness
Education & Access	• Position Riverview Jazz as a platform for music advocacy and community enrichment, not just event production • Prioritize free and accessible programming as a non-negotiable organizational value

Artistry

World-class performance. Local investment.

Our reputation is built on artistic excellence. We have featured over 2,000 musicians since our founding and we take seriously our role in showcasing jazz and Latin jazz at the highest level. Over the next five years, we will deepen our investment in the musicians themselves — locally and regionally — while maintaining the programming quality our audiences expect.

Artist Investment	• Grow paid performance fees to reflect fair market rates for musicians at all levels • Develop a re-gifting grant program that channels organizational resources back to featured artists • Expand marketing support and career-building resources for emerging local talent
Programming Quality	• Maintain artistic curation standards that distinguish RJO programming across the region • Build longer-term booking relationships with premier artists to reduce last-minute talent acquisition costs • Explore themed or headliner programming that drives broader media coverage and audience growth
Local Artist Pipeline	• Intentionally develop and feature emerging Jersey City and Hudson County jazz talent • Build mentorship connections between headliner artists and local musicians at our events

Sustainability

Build the infrastructure our mission requires.

For more than a decade, Riverview Jazz has done extraordinary things with limited resources. That will not change. But growth requires building infrastructure (revenue, staffing, and operational systems) that matches our ambitions. We enter this planning period with new grant resources and a board committed to doing this right.

Revenue Diversification	• Increase individual major donor cultivation through board network activation and a formal annual giving program • Develop corporate sponsorship relationships with local and regional companies with a focus on multi-year agreements • Grow foundation funding through proactive grant identification and relationship development • Maximize earned revenue opportunities (merchandise, premium experiences, ancillary events)
Staffing & Operations	• Build toward a full-time development staff role to professionalize fundraising and donor relations • Add marketing capacity to support growth in audience development and sponsorship sales • Establish competitive compensation that attracts and retains exceptional talent across the organization

Festival Infrastructure	• Secure a consistent, long-term festival location that eliminates annual venue uncertainty • Develop a contingency fund to protect against weather, cancellations, and unexpected costs • Build a repeat sponsor framework that creates predictable, renewable revenue each cycle

Governance

A board that leads. An organization that lasts.

Strong governance is what allows a mission-driven organization to weather challenges and seize opportunities. Our board will become an active partner in strategy, fundraising, and community engagement, with clear expectations and the structures to support them.

Board Development	• Recruit board members who bring lived experience, professional networks, and giving capacity aligned with organizational goals • Pursue targeted board recruitment in financial services, healthcare, and legal sectors where corporate tie-in fundraising potential is highest • Explore a two-tier board structure with appointed seats linked to corporate partnerships
Accountability Culture	• Codify and consistently apply board expectations: annual giving, meeting attendance, and active community engagement • Implement a board scorecard to track contributions and participation against organizational benchmarks • Normalize transparent reporting on board performance as a governance best practice
Governance Systems	• Maintain current conflict of interest, data governance, and volunteer management policies in active use • Establish standing committees for finance, development, and programming to distribute board labor effectively • Develop organizational policies that professionalize operations without stifling the creative culture that defines RJO

Collaboration

Partnerships that multiply impact.

No arts organization operates in isolation. Riverview Jazz's most meaningful growth will come through intentional partnerships, with government, other arts organizations, academic institutions, and the business community. We are a connector by nature. This pillar formalizes that instinct.

Community Partners	• Expand local business and neighborhood organization partnerships to increase community rootedness and mutual support • Maintain strong formal relationships with Jersey City government and Hudson County cultural infrastructure • Build arts organization partnerships that create programming synergies and shared resources
Regional Arts Network	• Develop national arts organization partnerships that elevate RJO's profile and create talent pipeline opportunities • Pursue tourism and destination partnerships that position Hudson County's waterfront festivals as a regional draw • Engage the NYC tri-state jazz community through cross-promotion and joint programming
Data & Knowledge	• Leverage data partnerships to demonstrate community impact and economic footprint to funders and sponsors • Build audience insight capability that informs programming, marketing, and grant narrative

Brand & Visibility

Tell the story only we can tell.

Riverview Jazz has a story that resonates: world-class music, free and accessible, on the Hudson waterfront, in one of the most ethnically diverse cities in America. That story needs to be told more boldly and more broadly. Over the next five years, we will invest in our brand presence in ways that support fundraising, audience growth, and organizational pride.

Marketing Growth	• Expand digital and paid advertising to reach regional audiences in the NYC tri-state market • Build a consistent content cadence that keeps RJO visible year-round, not just during festival season • Hire or retain dedicated marketing capacity capable of supporting sponsorship sales alongside audience development
Media & PR	• Develop earned media strategy targeting regional press, music publications, and cultural lifestyle outlets • Build a press and communications infrastructure that responds quickly to programming announcements and milestones
Community Identity	• Strengthen RJO's identity as Hudson County's jazz institution, not just a festival producer • Invest in brand materials and visual identity that reflect the quality and ambition of our programming

Five-Year Roadmap

Our strategy unfolds across three phases designed to build on each other.

PHASE	Phase 1 Years 1–2: Consolidate	Phase 2 Years 3–4: Build	Phase 3 Year 5: Scale
Community	Expand neighborhood presence; develop school outreach pilot	Launch year-round smaller-scale programming series	Establish RJO as Hudson County's year-round cultural institution
Artistry	Formalize artist payment framework; grow local artist development	Launch grant re-gifting program; expand headliner partnerships	RJO recognized regionally as premier jazz platform for artists
Sustainability	Activate board giving; secure multi-year sponsors; build contingency fund	Hire development staff; launch major donor campaign	Diversified budget conforming to mid-size org best practices
Governance	Implement scorecard; adopt all governance policies	Recruit strategic board members; stand up committees	Governance serves as sector model for local arts nonprofits
Collaboration	Map and activate key government and community partnerships	Build regional arts network presence; leverage data partnerships	RJO leads coalitions and co-produces cross-organizational events
Brand	Expand digital presence; build year-round content cadence	Launch regional marketing campaign; develop PR strategy	RJO recognized nationally as a premier free jazz festival brand

A Word on What Guides Us

Riverview Jazz was built on a belief that extraordinary music belongs to everyone. Not just to the people who can afford a premium ticket, or who live near a concert hall, or who already consider themselves jazz fans. To everyone.

What makes that belief actionable is the infrastructure we are building together: a board that leads, a team that executes at the highest level, funders and partners who share our values, and a community that shows up year after year. This plan is a commitment to that infrastructure. It is also a commitment to the musicians, the volunteers, the attendees, and the neighborhoods that have made Riverview Jazz what it is.