



# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028



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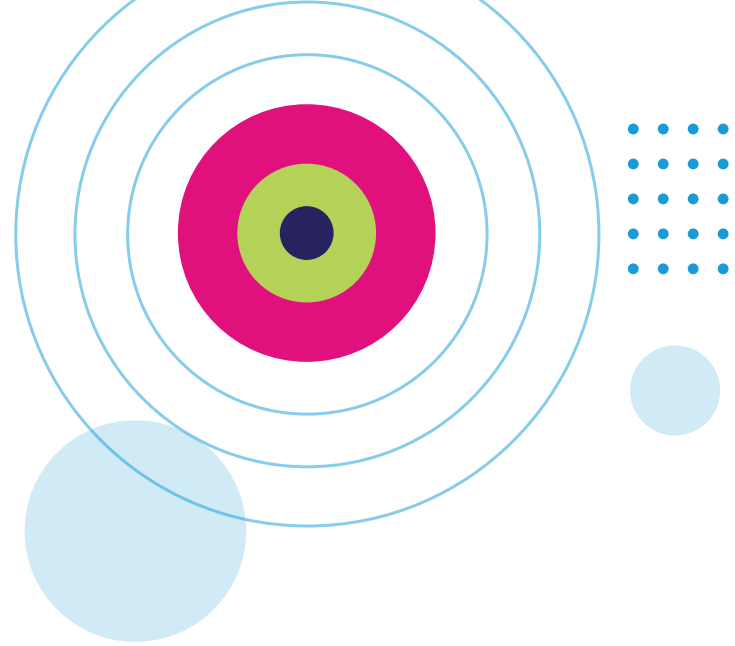
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# MESSAGE

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## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM

Armstrong Community Music School (ACMS) is a place where people fall in love with music. Our mission is to *teach, explore, perform, and celebrate music by supporting and engaging our entire community with nurturing and transformational musical experiences.*

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, ACMS suspended in-person lessons and classes in 2020 and made major adjustments based on pandemic restrictions. Operating in emergency mode for the past three years, we now have an opportunity to embrace a new path forward to allow us to further serve our students and the Austin community.

The need for a new path has been the impetus for our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. Developed with guidance from the ACMS faculty and staff, our board of directors, students, and community partners, we have identified four goals that will guide our growth and direction for the next five years. These goals are as follows:



**INVEST  
IN  
OUR TEAM**



**IMPROVE  
OUR  
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**EXPAND  
OUR  
IMPACT**



**ENSURE FINANCIAL  
GROWTH  
AND STABILITY**

## INVEST IN OUR TEAM

To improve the capacity of ACMS, we will invest in our team by developing a more comprehensive approach to faculty and staff personal and professional development, by reviewing and improving our compensation and benefits, and by looking for innovative ways to recognize and retain our people.

## IMPROVE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

To position ACMS for growth, we will evaluate our processes and systems and make changes where needed. We will develop a more comprehensive communication plan that reaches all of Austin. And we will restructure our board by adding member spots that support the growing reach of ACMS.

## EXPAND OUR IMPACT

We plan to expand our impact by leveraging our expertise in Early Childhood music (ECM) to increase our outreach and instruction. Our plans call for establishing ACMS as a center of excellence in ECM and sharing our expertise with a broad range of early childhood educators. We will evaluate and expand the ways in which we meet people of all ages with music education that supports their creative expression, connection, and enriched quality of life.

## ENSURE FINANCIAL GROWTH AND STABILITY

We will develop and secure financial stability by expanding our revenue streams. We plan to diversify our fundraising and focus on major and recurring gifts as well as corporate giving. We will employ more effective marketing and communications plans to attract and enroll additional students, and we will increase our donor base and our cash reserves by seeking major funding partners.

We're very excited and optimistic about our plans, and we encourage you to learn more in the pages that follow. At ACMS, we are passionate about sharing the transformative power of music. We look forward to discussing with you ways in which you can be part of our future as a student, volunteer, or donor, and as always, we are grateful for your past and future support.



**Liz Cass**  
Executive Director



**Sarah Beth Gooding**  
Director of Programs



**Heather Arnos**  
Director of  
Development



**Dr. Rachel McInturff**  
Director of Finance  
and Administration



who  
we are



## OUR MISSION

We teach, explore, perform, and celebrate music by supporting and engaging our entire community with nurturing and transformational musical experiences.

## OUR VISION

We envision a music-rich community, where all people, regardless of skill, identity, or income, have access to quality music education from birth through all stages of life.

## OUR VALUES

We value creating a safe and open environment for ALL to learn, create, connect, bond, discover, and collaborate. We value our diverse community and embrace equitable and inclusive access to music. We value YOU and your joyful lifelong journey of creative expression.





# WHAT WE OFFER

## AS A NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION, WE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

**Early Childhood Music (ECM)** programs provide group instruction for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and their caregivers. Group piano lessons are also offered for children ages 4-6. Building on over 20 years of experience, ACMS has developed deep expertise in ECM program design and delivery.

**Individual Music Instruction** in virtually every music style including classical, jazz, blues, and folk as well as musical styles from around the world. Instruction is available to all ages and skill levels in piano, voice, violin, viola, cello, bass, guitar, flute, percussion, composition, recording engineering and more.

Our **Community Outreach Programs** aim to make Austin a stronger, healthier, and more musical city. Offered at no cost, we partner with many organizations offering several high-quality programs to some of the city's most vulnerable communities including immigrants, people with disabilities, veterans, teenage parents and their children, and survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

With our **Open Door Policy**, we provide free or low-cost access to our facility to many organizations in the performing arts community. This has become vital as affordable space has become scarcer in Austin.

## OUR PARTNERS

BELMONT *Village*  
SENIOR LIVING

AUSTIN  
CHAMBER  
MUSIC  
CENTER

DS  
act  
Down Syndrome Association  
of Central Texas

AUSTIN  
OPERA

LOLA  
LOCAL OPERA LOCAL ARTISTS

SAFE | stop abuse for  
everyone

WE ARE THE  
Chorus

★ KMFA 89.5

TEXAS EARLY  
MUSIC PROJECT



ANDY RODDICK  
FOUNDATION

acg:  
austin  
classical  
guitar

AUSTIN  
Independent School District

todos  
juntos  
LEARNING CENTER

waterloo  
greenway

For more detailed information about ACMS, you can visit our website at [acmsaustin.org](https://acmsaustin.org).

# OUR FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



To develop a focused and impactful five-year plan, we assembled an eleven-member Strategic Planning Team made up of ACMS faculty and staff, our Executive Team, and members of our Board of Directors and Advisory Board. In developing this plan, the team sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the strengths of the ACMS organization and how can we continue to capitalize on these strengths throughout the five-year planning period?
- Where does ACMS need to improve? What initiatives and projects can we identify to address these improvement areas and make ACMS more effective and efficient?
- What feedback do we get from our students, community partners, and the broader ACMS team? How can we use that feedback in the development of our plan?
- Is the existing scope of individual instruction, group classes, and community outreach still relevant? What would we add, enhance, or discontinue? What can ACMS do to have a broader impact in our increasingly diverse and changing city?

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Through a process of brainstorming and prioritization, the team identified four overarching goals with supporting initiatives for each.





# GOAL #1

## INVEST IN OUR TEAM



Our future success will be led by the talent and commitment of our faculty and staff. We will implement plans to more systematically develop, motivate, and retain our team members and to build on the strength of our mission and culture.

1.1

Utilize third party compensation and benefits survey data to establish market benchmarks for competitive pay and benefits for similar non-profit organizations in the Austin area.

1.2

Develop an approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion that embraces the diverse communities served by ACMS.

1.3

Review the current ACMS staffing model with the goal of adding more full-time faculty and staff positions.

1.4

Increase our investment in professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

“

Two of the best investments you can make are in people and the arts. The skill, talent and commitment of our faculty and staff have inspired me daily since I came on board in 2004. A great joy in my life is working alongside and supporting our team to create a culture of kindness, creativity, and inclusion.

**LIZ CASS** • ACMS Executive Director

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## GOAL #2

### IMPROVE OUR INFRASTRUCTURE



Our ability to grow into the future will rely on a solid organizational infrastructure. We will identify areas to improve and enhance our ability to better serve our students and community.

2.1

Develop a consistent, clear, and compelling message to spread the word about ACMS and its mission, programs, and community impact.

2.2

Strategically grow the ACMS Board of Directors to add additional skills, capacity, and diversity.

2.3

Restructure the Advisory Board to provide focus and resources in areas that will help achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

“

It was my dream in college to open a music school where EVERYONE would have access to incredible teachers and incredible music, at any stage of their lives. That's exactly what ACMS does!

**DR. RACHEL MCINTURFF** • Director of Finance and Administration

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## GOAL #3

### EXPANDING OUR IMPACT



We will pursue opportunities to reach more students and communities across our increasingly diverse and unique city. We will continue to leverage our expertise to make music more accessible to all people. We will refresh our instruction methodologies to keep them relevant and engaging.

**3.1**

Expand the reach of Early Childhood Music programming.

**3.2**

Develop an Early Childhood teacher training program designed to bring best practices in Early Childhood Music to child development centers throughout the city. Establish ACMS as a center of excellence to guide other organizations that are establishing Early Childhood Music programs.

**3.3**

Evaluate current programs and pedagogical approaches to keep our high-quality programming fresh and relevant.

**3.4**

Establish firm roots in additional satellite campuses across the Austin area in an effort to minimize barriers to music accessibility.

“

When I taught ACMS music classes at SAFE Alliance, I saw firsthand how music encouraged the youngest survivors in the shelter to process and express their emotions. Now, as a mother with 20 years of experience teaching music, I am more convinced than ever that music is essential for every childhood.

**SARAH BETH GOODING** • Director of Programs

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## GOAL #4

### ENSURE FINANCIAL GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

We will grow our revenue and look for innovative ways to fund a successful ACMS future.

4.1

Diversify fundraising revenue by increasing focus on major and recurring gifts and corporate giving.

4.2

Grow our tuition-based revenue programs to surpass pre-pandemic levels of enrollment.

4.3

Create a new endowment that will sustain faculty and staff positions into the future.



“

I have been connected, mentored, entertained, learned and loved by ACMS since 2005 and deeply believe the school's financial success will make Austin a better city.

**HEATHER ARNOS** • Director of Development

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# KEY outcomes

Over the next five years, we will be tracking our progress towards achieving the following outcomes:

- Increase revenue streams by 50% over five years.
- Add additional campuses in the Austin area.
- Increase the number of people served by programs and events by 50%.
- Establish ACMS as an Early Childhood Music consulting organization.
- Improve the diversity of the ACMS team and our Board of Directors.







# SPECIAL THANKS

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We would like to thank Andy Esparza for his dedicated support, leadership and time guiding the executive team and the strategic planning team through this process. His excitement for supporting the community with his unique set of skills will have a lasting effect on ACMS and all of Central Texas.

We are grateful and would like to recognize our strategic planning team for their energy, vision and thoughtful participation in the creation of our five-year plan. Their commitment to ACMS was evident throughout the entire process, and resulted in a plan that will be vital to our future success.

We would also like to thank the community partners, board members, and ACMS team members for reviewing and providing feedback. Their input was critical to ensuring our plan reflects the needs of our students and the communities that we serve.

It is also with immense gratitude that we honor the memory and thank James C. Armstrong for his generosity and for the role he played in the creation of ACMS. His love of music and commitment to philanthropy inspires us to continue to fulfill our mission by providing high quality musical experiences to our community.

And finally, we thank and honor the memory of our founding director, Margaret Perry. Her vision for what our school could become and her passion for music in all its forms set an amazing foundation for us to build upon. Her legacy fuels our culture and keeps us striving for excellence in all that we do.



**Margaret Perry**



**James C. Armstrong**



**ACMS Strategic Planning Team led by Andrew Esparza:**

ACMS Executive Team • Robyn Coleman • Becky Fliss • Terry Muir  
Phil Pollack • James Rader • Martha Rochelle • Nicole Taylor