



INTONATION

2021 - 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN FINAL REPORT



Facilitated by:



THE RIGHT SOURCE Inc.



Inside This Report

I.	Opening Letter	3
II.	Introduction	4
III.	Process Overview	5
IV.	Strategic Plan	6
V.	Action Steps in Detail	8
VI.	Concluding Insights	17
VII.	Recommendations	17
VIII.	Strategic Plan Participants	18

Opening Letter

We are very pleased to present Intonation's three-year Strategic Plan for 2021 - 2023. The planning process presented an opportunity for our staff, board, and partners to reflect on the current state of the organization while exploring our future.

Being responsive to the youth that we serve is the driving force of Intonation. This plan clarifies how we will carry out our commitment to the youth as they engage in Intonation music education programming from childhood through adolescence.

The five priorities that emanated from the planning process will provide the focus necessary to realize Intonation's growth, sustainability, and social impact over the next three years. The accompanying goals and actions steps created will be reviewed and updated each year resulting in a plan that is both actionable and measurable.

We would not have completed this plan without the input of our dedicated supporters who graciously agreed to be interviewed; parents and students that participated in focus groups and Board members and staff that completed online surveys. We appreciate you all. The Strategic Planning Committee challenged and encouraged us through the process. They deliberated, envisioned, and reflected on our past, our present, and our future work. We are grateful to our consultants at The Right Source, Inc. and Open Door Advisors for leading us through the process, and to the Arts Work Fund for their generous support.

Irene Fogelson, Committee Chair & Board Vice President
Brian Black, Board President
Michael Simons, Founder and Executive Director

Introduction

Intonation has been practicing Creative Youth Development - a recently coined term - for nearly fifteen years. Back in 2006, the year Intonation Music came to be, founder and Executive Director Mike Simons noted an opportunity in the Chicago youth development landscape to engage and excite young people through the power of playing and performing the music that mattered to them. While many music programs existed at the time, Mike's vision was to offer a culturally relevant and youth-driven alternative, using music's central role in youth culture to demystify notions of potential and success.

As Intonation Music has grown, ensuring that the organization is truly responsive to the interests of the young people it serves has become its highest priority. Intonation is continuously refining its student journey from the bandroom, to a concert stage, to pathways that lead to career exploration in the arts and beyond. Long-term youth participation and retention – elementary school through high school – are indicators that Intonation is meeting the evolving interests of the youth being served.

This Strategic Plan is focused around formalizing the systems, personnel, resources, and curricular intentions needed to achieve growth amidst the shifting needs and interests of the organization and those we serve, regardless of external circumstances. It is intended as a dynamic and specific organizational roadmap for the next three years, providing the flexibility to track progress and adjust strategies on an annual basis to reach our goals. The plan presents our Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Priorities as foundational to our goals and strategies and is explicit in laying out the ways Intonation's proven track record and intentionality around community responsiveness will inform our growth for the next three years.

This Strategic Plan defines our commitment to our community, to our stakeholders, and to our youth, and has aided us in defining where we are; where we need to go; and how to get there.

The Process in Overview

The Intonation strategic planning process was conducted over a 6-month period. Key Intonation documents were reviewed by the consulting team chosen to guide the planning process. A Strategic Planning Committee was formed and tasked with providing feedback and vetting ideas during each phase of the process. They provided direction in the planning of the virtual Board/staff retreat and advanced the final version of the plan to the Intonation Board of Directors. The planning process utilized participatory strategic planning practices and incorporated information and insights from the following activities:

The Strategic Planning Committee was initially comprised of 6 members (the Executive Director, Board President, Board Vice President, Board Member and Bronzeville resident, Operations Director, Program Director, and the Development & Communications Director. The Committee was later expanded to include an Instructor, Site Coordinator and Development Coordinator. The Committee met five times during the planning process. A Board/Staff Virtual Retreat was held in two-part sessions (Part 1 – 2.5 hours; Part 2 – 90 minutes). During the Staff and Board Retreat, Intonation’s mission and vision statements were refined. Retreat participants also provided feedback on its core values. The Directors composed the action steps and aligned them to goals for the next three years.

A SOAR report (Strengths/Opportunities/Aspirations/Results) was prepared from insights gained from the following internal and external sources:

INTERNAL

- Online surveys were completed by (8) Board members and (2) Associate Board members, (7) Administrators and (10) Instructors. Interviews were conducted with (5) Board members and one Administrator.
- (3) focus groups were conducted – (1) student; (2) parent.

EXTERNAL

- Online surveys were completed by (7) program partners.
- Six funders were interviewed.



STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

Intonation works with the youth of Chicago to experience making music on their own terms, leading to personal growth and the enrichment of their communities.

VISION

We envision a world in which the voices of young people are amplified and valued through the power of making music.

CORE VALUES

Power of Music

Equity

Program Innovation

Youth Voice

Relationship-Based

Support Working Musicians

Community Responsive

Teamwork & Collaboration

Experiential Learning

Pathway of Musical Opportunity

Mentorship

Innovation & Adaptability

Accountability

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS

Immerse ourselves in and hold ourselves accountable to the community we serve.

INNOVATION

Lead with creativity, imagination, and resourcefulness in music programming and organizational growth.

COMMUNICATION

Effectively communicate our identity and mission to both internal and external stakeholders.

SUSTAINABILITY

Develop and strengthen systems, policies, and talent to ensure organizational resilience.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Optimize program impact through reflection and refinement of curriculum, student retention, assessment & data collection, and instructor professional development

GOALS

COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS

Immerse ourselves in and hold ourselves accountable to the community.

1. Implement inclusive and culturally relevant systems for ongoing feedback from community stakeholders.

2. Create an accessibility and inclusion plan including cultural competency training for staff and Board.

3. Establish a Community Engagement Department to launch a plan informed by the music and culture of Bronzeville with input from stakeholders.

4. Prioritize youth voice in decision-making to inform program and organizational growth.

INNOVATION

Lead with creativity, imagination, and resourcefulness in music programming and organizational growth.

1. Establish a culture that fosters and rewards continuous learning, creative leadership and professional growth for the organization and our programs.

COMMUNICATION

Effectively communicate identity and mission to stakeholders.

1. Create an organizational messaging and style guide informed by our mission, core values, strategic priorities, and honor the culture and musical interests of the youth we serve.

2. Define channels of external communication for all stakeholders, align accompanying strategies, and track results and progress through clear metrics.

3. Increase awareness in Greater Bronzeville through a strategy responsive to the community's culture and programming interests.

SUSTAINABILITY

Develop and strengthen systems, policies, and talent to ensure resilience.

1. Invest in staff growth and leadership development; and create a succession plan for every level of the organization.

2. Develop and implement systems that foster accountability, role clarity, and maximize impact.

3. Grow, strengthen, and diversify and better economize funding sources to ensure financial stability.

4. Optimize resources, refine financial practices in service of environmental and fiscal responsibility.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Optimize program impact through reflection and refinement of curriculum, student retention, assessment & data collection, and instructor professional development.

1. Design and implement sustainable assessment and registration systems informed by previous tools and processes.

2. Strengthen annual operations planning and goal setting to track ongoing progress and ensure alignment with the strategic plan.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS

IMMERSE OURSELVES IN AND HOLD OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE.

GOAL #1

Prioritize youth voice in decision-making to inform program and organizational growth.

Aligned Core Values = youth voice, equity, community responsive, teamwork and collaboration, innovation and adaptability, and mentorship

Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, innovation, and sustainability

ACTION STEPS

1. Research and set up feedback structures to establish and launch youth leadership and community engagement initiatives in year 2, to include defined and documented goals, parameters, and incentives for participation.

GOAL #2

Create an accessibility and inclusion plan including cultural competency training for staff and Board.

Aligned Core Value = equity

Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, innovation, and sustainability

ACTION STEPS

1. Research best practices and identify practitioners to provide impactful Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for Directors and Board as a first step before identifying training needs for remaining staff.
2. For accountability, revise employee annual review process to include questions regarding individual and organizational DEI strength and needed growth; provide ongoing responsive professional development.
3. Establish hiring and vendor policies that prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion with a particular focus on Greater Bronzeville.

“

I appreciate that our organization has grown in such a way where we place an extreme importance on serving our community, while simultaneously being hyper aware of our presence there.
(Administrator)

”

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS

GOAL #3

Establish a Community Engagement Department to create and launch a plan informed by the music and culture of the Greater Bronzeville community with input from stakeholders.

Aligned Core Values = community responsive, equity, teamwork and collaboration, and relationship based

Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, innovation, and sustainability

ACTION STEPS

1. Formally establish a Community Engagement Manager role, position description, reporting relationships, communication protocols, professional development needs and project management system. This will support the creation and launch of a three-year Community Engagement Plan and annual planning and evaluation process in years 2 and 3.

GOAL #4

Implement inclusive and culturally relevant systems for ongoing feedback from community stakeholders.

Aligned Core Values = relationship based and community responsive

Aligned Strategic Priorities = communication, community responsiveness, sustainability, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

Action Steps to begin in Year Two.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: INNOVATION

LEAD WITH CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION, AND RESOURCEFULNESS IN MUSIC PROGRAMMING AND ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH.

GOAL #1

Establish a culture that fosters and rewards continuous learning, creative leadership, and professional growth for the organization and our programs.

Aligned Core Values = equity, relationship based, community responsive, teamwork and collaboration, experiential learning, innovation, and adaptability

Aligned Strategic Priorities = innovation and sustainability

ACTION STEPS

1. Develop and communicate a policy sharing an organizational commitment to professional development with a robust incentive system for continuous learning and dedicated budget annually for employees; require share-outs of training take-aways in team meetings.
2. Create space for annual assessment of professional growth needs, opportunities, and budget at every level of the organization as part of an annual operating plan. Prioritize consideration for internal talent first before seeking external hires.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COMMUNICATION

EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE OUR IDENTITY AND MISSION TO BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS.

GOAL #1

Create unified organizational messaging and a style guide that is informed by our mission, core values, strategic priorities, and which honor the culture and musical interests of the youth we serve.

Aligned Core Values = community responsive, teamwork and collaboration, and relationship based
 Aligned Strategic Priority = community responsiveness

ACTION STEPS

1. Design and implement a branding strategy, including the development of an organizational style guide that provides concise, clear messaging and style guidelines to promote our organization and work.
2. Establish a committee representative of our community to inform the development of an organizational style guide.

“ I like how thoughtful they are with evaluations, documenting what students are learning, willing and able to make adjustments ... would be intrigued about what [alumni] are doing... ‘we were there and now we are here.’ (Funder)

GOAL #2

Define channels of external communication intentionally for all stakeholder groups, create and align accompanying strategies, and track the resulting communications plan’s progress through clear metrics.

Aligned Core Values = relationship based and community responsive
 Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, communication, sustainability, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Audit past and current practices and communication channels to determine engagement rates; determine best practices, channels, and strategies for effectively reaching all stakeholder groups.
2. Develop and implement a communications plan, PR strategy, and accompanying metrics aligned with the tenets of the Strategic Plan.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COMMUNICATION

GOAL #3

Increase awareness of Intonation in Greater Bronzeville through a communications strategy that is responsive to the community's culture and programming interests.

Aligned Core Values = community responsive and relationship based
 Aligned Strategic Priorities = communication and community responsiveness

ACTION STEPS

1. Create and maintain a master contact list for Greater Bronzeville, accessible for reference and contribution across departments, to include media outlets and contacts, elected officials, civic leaders, schools, and CBOS.
2. Complete community network and resource maps through facilitated activities that critically and meaningfully engage youth and other stakeholders.
3. Define role, goals, responsibilities, and needed supports for Community Engagement Manager communications work.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS, POLICIES, AND TALENT TO ENSURE ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE.

GOAL #1

Invest in staff growth and leadership development and create a succession plan for every level of the organization.

Aligned Core Values = equity, relationship based, community responsive, and teamwork and collaboration

Aligned Strategic Priorities = sustainability, innovation, and communication

ACTION STEPS

1. Develop a cross-departmental plan ensuring all organizational and programmatic policies and procedures are documented. This would be included in the annual operating plan.
2. Research best practices in succession planning and develop a policy, system, and training. Create a leadership succession plan, including staff and Board, with clarity around roles and responsibilities.

GOAL #2

Develop and implement internal systems that foster accountability, role clarity, and maximize impact.

Aligned Core Values = equity, relationship based, community responsive, and teamwork and collaboration

Aligned Strategic Priorities = communication, sustainability, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Strengthen HR systems and collaborate across departments for effective communication of organizational policies and benefits with staff.
2. Evaluate work culture norms for inclusion, accessibility, and current climate; from evaluation, determine growth areas. Establish best practices and course correct with training in an on-going manner.
3. Complete Employee Handbook and disseminate in a way that engages staff with material. Develop follow-up channels to ensure policies are integrated and understood throughout all levels of the organization.
4. Set annual organizational and departmental operating plans to align employee annual review/ goal setting, strategic planning process tracking and review, and budget process.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

GOAL #3

Grow, strengthen, and diversify and better economize funding sources to ensure financial stability.

Aligned Core Values = relationship based, equity, support working musicians, community responsive, and teamwork and collaboration

Aligned Strategic Priorities = sustainability, community responsiveness, communication, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Establish, implement, and monitor a strategy to create a diverse base of Individual and Institutional support in Greater Bronzeville, including leveraging opportunities from organization- wide events and external partnerships.
2. Implement a stewardship plan that sustains and increases existing revenue sources.

GOAL #4

Optimize organizational resources and refine financial practices in service of environmental and fiscal responsibility.

Aligned Core Values = equity, relationship based, teamwork and collaboration, and community responsive

Aligned Strategic Priorities = sustainability and community responsiveness

ACTION STEPS

1. Strengthen internal quarterly financial practices by determining training needs, shared responsibilities, and potential areas for streamlining.
2. Eliminate reliance on school funding as a prerequisite for partnership consideration.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY: PROGRAM IMPACT

OPTIMIZE PROGRAM IMPACT THROUGH REFLECTION AND REFINEMENT OF CURRICULUM, STUDENT RETENTION, ASSESSMENT & DATA COLLECTION, AND INSTRUCTOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

GOAL #1

Design and implement sustainable assessment and registration systems informed by previous tools and processes.

Aligned Core Values = teamwork and collaboration, community responsive, youth voice, and pathway of musical opportunity
 Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, communication, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Complete W4Sight consultation to identify the best tech & tools for both registration and assessment. Have a new platform in place by FY22.
2. Create a formal staffing role to oversee and prioritize assessment system overhaul and implementation, including virtual learning practices and technology.
3. Determine student outcomes and metrics for all programs to be assessed quarterly and annually based on curricular outcome goals; use past assessment to deepen program impact.

GOAL #2

Refine, create, and document situation- and youth-responsive music education curriculum focusing on virtual learning, instrument ownership, digital literacy, artist development, and career exploration.

Aligned Core Values = youth voice, community responsive, teamwork and collaboration, pathway of musical opportunity
 Aligned Strategic Priorities = community responsiveness, communication, and program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Establish a curriculum and assessment committee and meeting calendar, consisting of instructors and program admin staff, to refine and document curriculum, program model, and related technology. Stay responsive to student interests and circumstances and maintain alignment with current state and institutional standards around SEL and Music Learning.
2. Establish individual instructor growth plans with supporting budget for professional development needs and interests, and an annual reflection process for assessing continuing development.
3. Create an annual process and timeline for determining equipment needs and identifying in-kind sources, partnerships and sponsorships; create and document equipment use and return policies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: PROGRAM IMPACT

GOAL #3 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Establish benchmarks and systems to set and track goals around student retention, to be integrated with new registration system and informed by ongoing program delivery model and recruitment strategy refinement.

Aligned Core Values = accountability and pathway of musical opportunity
 Aligned Strategic Priority = program impact

ACTION STEPS

1. Define functionalities needed in new registration platform to effectively track retention over years.
2. Define practices among program leadership to track attendance and respond to challenges in real time, informed by ongoing instructor workgroups feedback.
3. Formalize recruitment strategy, process and timeline for each program type (Schools, Parks, ASM, All-City, Direct Enrollment, etc.)

“

Document the correlation between music education and social emotional learning, academic achievement, career progression. (Board Member)

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Concluding Insights

Intonation Music has grown from a start-up to a maturing organization. The leadership is fully committed to the organization's mission, impact, integrity, and sustainability. This was evident throughout the process. It was effortless to get both internal and external partners engaged in the planning – even during the pandemic, no one begged off – all made themselves available (funders, Board, staff, community partners, parents & students). If this level of commitment to the organization can be sustained, it will allow Intonation Music to face whatever challenges that may be forthcoming.

The leadership team displayed a consistency of effort that deserves high praise. Reaching consensus was not easy. Making their voices heard – in a respectful manner, was a true testament to the caring culture that exists at Intonation Music. The core values were demonstrated at each stage of the strategic planning process.

Now that the foundational pillars are in place, Intonation is poised to move forward – organization-wide, to make social impact in its chosen community.

Recommendations

Intonation Music is in a good place. The intent from the beginning was to have students engaged and excited. Well done! The following recommendations provide inward facing and outward facing perspectives:

INWARD FACING

- No one person is larger than the mission of the organization. Ensure that collective leadership exists throughout the organization. Make succession planning from the Board level to the leadership team a priority.
- Commitment to the team is evident. The strategic plan will touch every aspect of the organization. Each team member will know how their commitment can be demonstrated. Effective strategic plan monitoring will be invaluable.
- Giving voice to all – parents, students, staff, Board – is part of the Intonation Music culture. Finding a way to do so efficiently will be needed.
- On-going diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment, planning and implementation - not a one and done. Consider outside experts & resources.

OUTWARD FACING

- The Bronzeville community has changed, is changing. Devote time and resources to a comprehensive community mapping process to determine where to show up and how.
- Continue to demonstrate to funders that the Intonation Music model deserves priority attention even during challenging circumstances. The Intonation Music model can reduce trauma, increase confidence, improve social-emotional skill development, and academic growth.
- Highlight alumni success stories – share with community influencers & funders. Intonation Music has good stories to tell.
- Establish strategic programming partnerships that will increase capacity.

Concluding Insights and Recommendations were authored by The Right Source, Inc. and Open Door Advisors, Inc. All other information came directly from participants in Intonation's Strategic Planning Process.

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INTERVIEWS

FUNDERS

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Kathi and Jim Willett – Andrew Family Foundation
Mary Go – Individual Donor (Wife of Lionel Go)
Lionel Go – Individual Donor (Husband of Mary Go)
JC Aevaliotis – Program Officer Polk Bros. Foundation

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