

MEM

MUSIC EXPORT

MEMPHIS

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026-2028

Dear Music Export Memphis supporters and partners:

We are thrilled to share our 2026–2028 Strategic Plan—a roadmap that builds on a decade of work supporting Memphis musicians and elevating our city's culture on the world stage.

This plan ushers in Phase 2.0 of our organization's evolution: a period of deeper investment, more sustainable infrastructure and expanded impact for the artists who continue to make Memphis their home. This strategic plan is the result of a thorough, collaborative process with our community and stakeholders. During our discovery phase, we conducted stakeholder interviews, completed a Board of Directors survey, and gathered feedback from both our Music Industry Council (industry professionals outside of Memphis who advise on national/global trends) and our Artist Advisory Council (Memphis-based artists and industry who guide our programming). A fundraising recommendations report was also produced, providing invaluable insights that will help resource our work in the years ahead. This collective data helped our Board of Directors understand our strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and challenges that exist. Ultimately, these define the strategic direction that will guide MEM over the next three years.

Our new plan focuses on four key strategic goals, laid out across the next two pages. The theme you'll see carry through all of them is our vision for building a stronger organization: maturing our operations, growing our fundraising, and thoughtfully expanding programming to continue to deliver on our promise that Memphis can be a city of choice for musicians.

We are deeply grateful to each stakeholder who contributed to the development of this plan, and to the Assisi and Hyde Family Foundations, whose generous support made the work possible.

With gratitude and excitement,
Elizabeth Cawein, Founder & Executive Director
Leah Gafni, Board Chair
Music Export Memphis



Elizabeth Cawein
Founder
Executive Director
Music Export
Memphis



Leah Gfani
Chirperson
Board of Directors
2026-2027



STRATEGIC GOAL
ONE

Align fund development with program priorities: Strengthening and diversifying our funding ensures that MEM can grow our programs sustainably and strengthen Memphis artists.

OBJECTIVES

1. Mature development operations
2. Build a robust corporate and sponsorship engagement strategy
3. Build individual donor relationships
4. Identify funding opportunities outside of Memphis

MEM has had an incredible base of individual donors since we began actively fundraising in 2017. This plan calls for us to formalize our approach, creating or improving giving circles/tiers, stewarding larger donors and corporate sponsors, and ensure that our community of supporters grows to meet our programming needs - including identifying national funding opportunities. First up: hire our first-ever dedicated development role in 2026.

STRATEGIC GOAL
TWO

Mature our organizational infrastructure and internal operations: Building more robust systems and policies provides MEM the stability and capacity required for long-term organizational sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure financial stability
2. Improve governance structures
3. Formalize organizational operations

Our impact often belies our size: as a team of just two full-time employees, MEM relies heavily on the expertise and engagement of its board of directors. This goal is about strengthening board governance and catching up behind the scenes with where we are on stage: creating financial policies and procedures, succession planning, and business continuity.



STRATEGIC GOAL THREE

Scale and strengthen brand awareness in Memphis and beyond: Sharpening our storytelling will deepen local community engagement, broaden our supporter base and elevate Memphis musicians nationally - and even internationally.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create a marketing and communications strategy
2. Redesign the Music Export Memphis website
3. Evaluate, strengthen and streamline messaging around impact

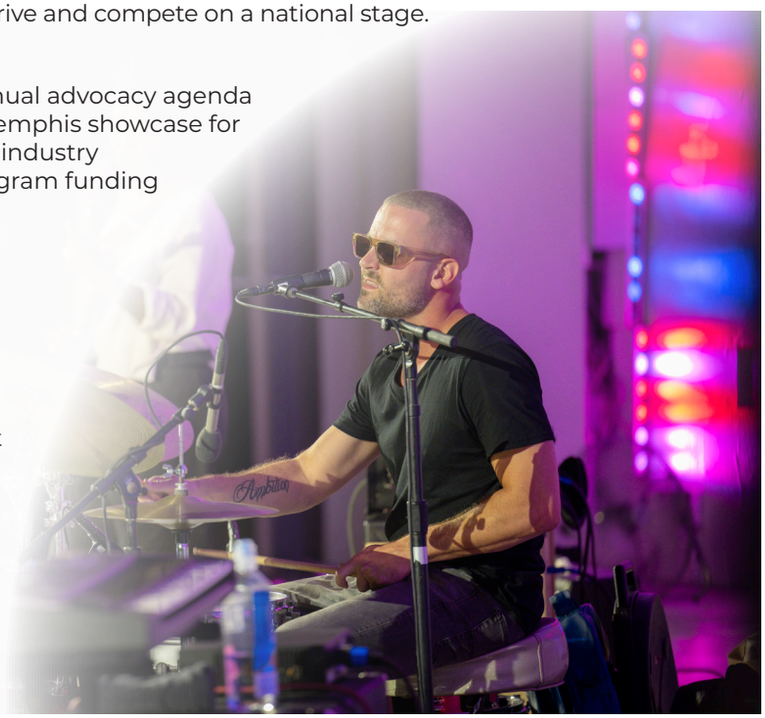
It's time for a glow-up. The actions undergirding this goal are around telling our story better and more effectively, marketing our work to Memphians and across the country, and improving how artists and donors access information about MEM on our website. We'll evaluate messaging, build annual strategies as well as event-specific campaigns, and pull out some stops to celebrate our 10th anniversary in 2026.

STRATEGIC GOAL FOUR

Enhance programming to drive impact for artists: Growing and refining our programs ensures that our Memphis artists receive the resources and opportunities they need to thrive and compete on a national stage.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create an annual advocacy agenda
2. Produce a Memphis showcase for national music industry
3. Prioritize program funding



Did we save the best for last? In the next three years, MEM will continue its proven, effective programs and grow its advocacy work by engaging our Music Industry Council and Artist Advisory Council annually on an updated advocacy agenda. We'll also work toward our first-ever Memphis-based showcase targeting national and international music industry. Slated for fall of 2027, this event will highlight our city's top tier musical talent across a multi-day showcase designed to remove pretense and get business done. A key focus for our new development role, this event also connects deeply to other nodes of the plan, including growing awareness outside of Memphis, building funding relationships in and out of the city, and delivering on the promise we make that musicians can choose to live in Memphis because Music Export Memphis exists.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Leah Gafni (committee chairperson)
Chris Duncan
Cameron Mann
Jack Torregrossa
Baylee Less-Eiseman
Weetie Whittemore

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025 | Presided over the strategic planning process

Chris Duncan
Exceptional Artists
Chairperson

Leah Gafni
Orion Financial
Vice Chairperson

Cameron Mann
UTHSC
Secretary

James Huang
HHM CPAs
Treasurer

Baylee Less-Eiseman
Memphis Jewish Home
Development Chair

James Dukes
UNAPOLOGETIC.

Hemant Gupta
Epstein Becker Green

Anna Traverse Fogle
Contemporary Media

Shelby Smith
Overton Park Shell

Jack Torregrossa
ALSAC

Lizzie Hornor
The Daily Memphian

Tucker Carr
Diversified Trust

Dorcas Young Griffin
Shelby County Government

Corliss Shaw
The Shaw Firm PLLC

Jay Hoffman
Sol Creations LLC

Weetie Whittemore