Stage Time Strategic Plan 2027–2029

Nov 6, 2026 · @Scot

Over 2027–2029, Stage Time will raise its Sunday house band to fair professional pay, launch a clinic series led by veteran professionals, and pilot new stages and school visits, all to help young musicians become working professionals.

Mission and the problem we address

Stage Time gives aspiring musicians in the Bellingham area the chance to perform alongside veteran professionals in front of live audiences. We hire the best veteran players we can find for the house band, and young musicians sit in with them.

Talented young musicians can get excellent training in lessons and school programs, but very few get to learn the working side of music: how to play a gig, lead a band, connect with an audience, and build the reputation that turns playing into a career. Those skills have always been learned on the bandstand, next to experienced professionals, and today those opportunities are rare for young players. Stage Time closes that gap.

Where we are now

Stage Time runs one program and runs it every week: an all-ages, free jazz jam every Sunday at The Hotel Leo in Bellingham.

Measure	Today (Nov 2026)
Jam schedule	Every Sunday, all-ages, free to attend
House band	Trio of veteran professionals, paid for every gig
How the house band is paid	The venue covers most of the current pay; Stage Time donations cover the rest
Young musicians sitting in	5–9 on an average night, middle school through college
Nights with no one sitting in	None so far

At 5–9 players a night, that adds up to roughly 250–450 sit-in appearances a year. The jam is also a weekly community gathering: 80–100 people come through over a typical Sunday evening, the room is usually full by 6:20 pm, and it sometimes overflows onto the outdoor tables. We believe musicians should be paid real money for their work, and we want young players to see that standard from the first time they step on stage.

Goals for 2027–2029

1. **Pay the house band what they're worth.** Raise house band pay in three steps to $150 per musician per night by the end of 2029, and keep the jam running every Sunday.
2. **Launch clinics and master classes.** Bring in well-known regional players to give a clinic before the jam, then play in the house band that night. Start in 2027.
3. **Add stages.** Pilot an additional jam or student showcase at another Bellingham-area venue, built around a paid house band of veteran players.
4. **Bring professionals into schools.** Pilot visits to local school music programs for workshops and performances, complementing the work music teachers already do, and invite students to the jam.
5. **Build lasting support.** Grow the donor base, grant funding, and newsletter audience so the program doesn't depend on any single source.

Strategies

- **Hire the best mentors and pay them fairly.** The quality of the mentorship depends on the quality of the mentors.
- **Learn by doing, in front of a real audience.** Young musicians sit in with the house band at a public venue, where the working side of music is learned.
- **Show up every week.** A reliable Sunday schedule lets young players return, build skills over time, and become part of the scene.
- **Keep it welcoming.** All-ages, free, and safe to try new things, for nervous first-timers and advanced players alike.
- **Create a path forward.** Players start by sitting in for a tune or two and can grow into playing in the house band.
- **Partner with music teachers.** Teachers prepare students on a tune in lessons, then bring them to the jam to perform it.
- **Grow step by step.** Do one program well before adding the next, and add programs only as funding allows.
- **Build community support.** Grow audience and donors through the website, a monthly newsletter, and outreach at the jam.

Milestones by year



milestones · 2027 to 2029

Each year raises house band pay one step and adds clinic nights. The new-stage and school pilots come last, once the Sunday jam is fully funded.

Funding plan

Stage Time's annual funding need grows from about $4,900 in 2027 to about $13,700 in 2029, covering house band pay raises and clinic nights.

Year	What the funding adds	Stage Time funding need
2027	First house band pay raise; 2 clinic nights	About $4,900
2028	Second pay raise; 4 clinic nights	About $9,800
2029	Fair-pay goal of $150 per musician reached; 4 clinic nights	About $13,700

The new-stage and school pilots are not costed yet and will be budgeted before launch. Funding sources: individual donations (including QR cards at the jam and the newsletter), local grants, and business sponsors.

Operating costs

Operating costs come to about $585 a year plus payment fees, all donated as in-kind support by founder Scot Ranney and Scot's Scripts. Scot also volunteers about 6 hours a week (roughly 300 hours a year) running Stage Time.

Item	Annual cost	Covered by
Website hosting	About $360	Scot's Scripts (in-kind)
SSL certificate	About $150	Scot Ranney (in-kind)
QR card printing for the jam	About $60	Scot Ranney (in-kind)

Item	Annual cost	Covered by
Domain renewal	About $15	Scot Ranney (in-kind)
Washington and IRS annual filings	Prepared by the founder	Scot Ranney (in-kind)
Program management: booking, website, newsletter, filings	About 6 hours a week	Scot Ranney (volunteer)
PayPal donation fees	About 2.5% of each gift	Deducted from donations

Measuring progress

We'll track simple counts every year and report them to the board and funders.

Measure	Baseline (2026)	2029 target
Sundays the jam ran	Every Sunday	Every Sunday
House band pay per musician	Current rate	$150 per night
Young musicians sitting in per night	5–9	Track; aim to keep or grow
Returning young players	Not tracked yet	Track from 2027
Young players moving up to the house band	At least 1	Track from 2027
Clinic nights per year	0	4
Newsletter subscribers	0 (launching)	Track from launch
Individual donors per year	Not tracked yet	Track from 2027

Starting in 2027, we'll log a weekly tally of the young musicians who sit in, with first-timers and returning players counted separately, alongside each week's set list.

Governance and approval

Stage Time was founded in December 2024 and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit governed by its board of directors. Founder Scot Ranney, a Bellingham jazz pianist with more than 40 years of performing experience, leads the program and books the house band. Progress against this plan is reviewed once a year, and the plan is updated as funding and programs grow.

Approved by founder Scot Ranney, under authority delegated by the Stage Time board of directors, on: *(date)*