

Kalamazoo Poetry Collective

**Strategic Plan
2026-2031**



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Kalamazoo Poetry Collective North Star

What began as a biennial poetry festival has grown into a year-round organization serving poets and community members across Kalamazoo. Poetry remains at the heart of our work. As we grow, our name and identity will clearly reflect who we are today.

Mission Statement

The Kalamazoo Poetry Collective connects people through the power of poetry. Through free and accessible programming, we create spaces where creativity flourishes, equity is practiced, and individuals of all ages can experience the transformative power of poetry.

Vision Statement

Our vision is a community where every voice is heard. The Kalamazoo Poetry Collective strives to celebrate poetry as a vital art form that builds community, fosters healing, and amplifies diverse voices.

Core Values

Poetry as Possibility: *No one is too far from poetry. Poetry is not reserved for stages or classrooms. It is something people reach for when they need to process, celebrate, speak their truth, or simply enjoy. Not every poem needs a purpose beyond the pleasure of it. At its best, poetry helps us imagine a different world and create inclusive spaces.*

Authenticity: *We show up as we are. That authenticity lives in our programming, our relationships, and our commitments.*

Centered on People: *Our work exists because of people: the poets, the first-timers, the volunteers, the partners, and the community members who keep showing up. People are not the backdrop to our mission. They are the reason for it.*

Space for Creativity: *Poetry opens doors. We make space for creative risk, artistic growth, and the kind of expression that may even surprise the person doing it.*

Genuine Connection: *We build with our community, not just for it. Community buy-in shapes what we create, our partnerships, and how we do this work.*

Sustainability: *We care for our financial, creative, and community resources so this work can last. That means making thoughtful decisions today that protect what we are building for the long term.*

About This Plan

The Kalamazoo Poetry Collective engaged Liggins Abrams Consulting to facilitate its strategic planning process and to author this plan. The plan reflects an environmental scan, organizational and financial data, and input gathered from board members and staff over several working sessions, and was refined collaboratively based on their feedback.

Kalamazoo Poetry Collective Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Funding Our Future

Build a strong and stable financial base to sustain our work over time while keeping programs accessible and honoring the time of our contributors.

Priority Area 2: Strengthening Our Foundation

Strengthen the people, roles, and systems that keep the organization running day to day and prepare us for thoughtful growth. As financial stability grows, we will periodically assess the long-term sustainability of our physical space.

Priority Area 3: Programming with Purpose

Be clear and thoughtful about what we offer so our programs align with our mission and capacity. Poetry remains at the center of our work, with interdisciplinary collaborations considered only when they strengthen creative expression and community impact.

Priority Area 4: Sharing Our Full Story

Clearly communicate who we are and what we do so more people and funders understand and support our work.

Priority Area 5: Community Connection & Impact

Build strong relationships in the community and show clearly how our work is making a difference.

Note: This plan reflects thoughtful decisions about what to focus on now and what to phase in over time. Priority Areas 1–3 build stability and capacity; Areas 4–5 expand as the organization grows; all five remain active, with emphasis shifting over time. Some opportunities are intentionally deferred to a future planning cycle, once full-time staffing and the current foundation are stable: a future capital campaign, a more active connector-and-convener or flagship role among area poetry organizations, and a national or international presence.

Kalamazoo Poetry Collective Strategic Plan Goals

Priority Area 1: Funding Our Future

Build a strong and stable financial base to sustain our work over time while keeping programs accessible and honoring the time of our contributors.

Goals:

- 1.1: Expand and diversify the grant portfolio to reduce reliance on any single funding source.
- 1.2: Increase individual giving by strengthening relationships with current donors and identifying mid-level donors to build a reliable base of support.
- 1.3: Develop corporate sponsorships and community partnerships that provide financial support aligned with the organization's mission and values.
- 1.4: Begin generating earned income through select workshop fees designed to honor contributor time, improve participant accountability, and maintain accessibility.
- 1.5: Establish modest financial reserves that provide stability and protect the organization through funding shifts and uncertainty.
- 1.6: Grow total annual revenue in alignment with staffing and programmatic needs so the organization can fulfill its mission sustainably.

Priority Area 2: Strengthening Our Foundation

Strengthen the people, roles, and systems that keep the organization running day to day and prepare us for thoughtful growth. As financial stability grows, we will periodically assess the long-term sustainability of our physical space.

Goals:

- 2.1: Establish a phased plan to increase the Executive Director role from part-time toward sustainable full-time compensation and benefits aligned with organizational growth.
- 2.2: Establish documented operational processes and a protected annual administrative period to support planning, reflection, and organizational maintenance.
- 2.3: Put simple systems in place to track attendance, participation, and impact to support reporting, grant writing, and fundraising.
- 2.4: Strengthen board composition by recruiting members with expertise in areas critical to organizational growth, such as finance, legal, human resources, and fund development.
- 2.5: Add part-time support staff to reduce operational burden on the Executive Director and board volunteers.

Priority Area 3: Programming with Purpose

Be clear and thoughtful about what we offer so our programs align with our mission and capacity. Poetry remains at the center of our work, with interdisciplinary collaborations considered only when they strengthen creative expression and community impact.

Goals:

- 3.1: Define program pillars, scope boundaries, and a strategic calendar that guide what the organization pursues, pauses, or releases.
- 3.2: Align the program portfolio with the decisions made through the mission and resource review process.
- 3.3: Strengthen accountability and clarity in collaborative programming.

Priority Area 4: Sharing Our Full Story

Clearly communicate who we are and what we do so more people and funders understand and support our work.

Goals:

- 4.1: Complete the name transition and establish a cohesive public identity, including messaging and visual branding, that reflects the full scope of the organization's year-round work.
- 4.2: Sustain and strengthen outreach across key platforms and community channels, and grow marketing capacity over time to reach audiences and funders not yet aware of the organization.
- 4.3: Share clear impact stories that connect creative work with real outcomes.

Priority Area 5: Community Connection & Impact

Build strong relationships in the community and show clearly how our work is making a difference.

Goals:

- 5.1: Deepen existing partnerships with mission-aligned organizations rooted in shared values and accountability.
- 5.2: Extend programming presence into additional neighborhoods in alignment with infrastructure readiness and partnership capacity.
- 5.3: Increase access and engagement opportunities for youth, seniors, unhoused, and formerly incarcerated community members through phased expansion aligned with organizational capacity.
- 5.4: Create simple tools to track community participation and use what we learn to improve programs.
- 5.5: Explore opportunities to support poets as community leaders and cultural contributors, as capacity and funding allow.