The idea for the Hyde Park Jazz Festival was born in 2006, when the Hyde Park Jazz Society decided to complement its successful Sunday night jazz series with an annual event that would draw new people to the community, showcase its many arts and culture venues, and celebrate the South Side’s rich jazz legacy. Every September since, upwards of 10,000 people make their way to the Midway Plaisance, Logan Center, or one of a dozen other venues on and around the University of Chicago campus to hear a diverse array of jazz music genres. The University has been a major sponsor of the Jazz Festival since its inception.

What began in 2007 as a one-day event was extended in 2011 to more than 18 hours over an entire weekend. Kate Dumbleton, the Festival’s artistic and executive director, said this year’s festival featured 39 concerts and programs and included approximately 150 musicians. As is the tradition, the Saturday events concluded with a late night performance at Rockefeller Chapel; this time by critically acclaimed pianist Craig Taborn, one of the visiting artists in the Festival. Dumbleton noted, “This year we started an initiative that will support local artists collaborating with national and international artists to develop projects specifically for the Festival.” For the second consecutive year, the 2014 Festival featured a Story Share Booth, an oral history project, where festivalgoers were encouraged to record memories and stories about their experiences with jazz.

As a new 501(c)3, with a strong track record for producing a popular, critically acclaimed convening of culture and community, the Hyde Park Jazz Festival hopes the Community Programs Accelerator will help determine a sustainable financial model that will keep the event going for many years to come. The organization will receive technical assistance and other benefits, but no additional funding through the Accelerator.

One of the group’s top priorities is to provide opportunities for Chicago and visiting artists to create new work to share with the community. Organizers also plan to develop a year-round platform for cross-cultural collaboration, while continuing to advance opportunities to activate the South Side's cultural history and contemporary life through arts programming. Dumbleton looks forward to collaborating with the other organizations selected for the Community Programs Accelerator.