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THE HERB ALPERT CENTER

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From Here, You Can Go Anywhere

August 5, 2026

Dear Vidda Foundations Trustees,

On behalf of Harlem School of the Arts, thank you for your partnership and commitment to expanding access to exceptional arts education. We are especially grateful to the Vidda Foundation trustees for taking the time to visit Harlem School of the Arts and see firsthand the students, programs, and creative community your generosity helps make possible. We hope Your visit reaffirmed the meaningful partnership we share and your investment in the future of young artists.

We are pleased to submit the enclosed proposal requesting renewed support from the Vidda Foundation. Thanks to partners like you, Harlem School of the Arts continues to provide transformative arts education and performance opportunities for young people from across New York City, regardless of their financial circumstances.

During the 2025–2026 program year, Harlem School of the Arts served more than 2,000 students through high-quality instruction in music, dance, theater, musical theater, and visual arts. Beyond our classrooms and studios, we reached more than 12,000 New York City community members through performances, exhibitions, master classes, and community events that celebrated artistic excellence while strengthening connections across our neighborhoods. These accomplishments reflect the power of sustained philanthropic investment and the confidence the Vidda Foundation has placed in our mission.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to discover and develop their artistic voice in an inclusive, nurturing, and culturally vibrant environment. Renewed support from the Vidda Foundation will help sustain scholarship assistance, outstanding faculty, innovative programming, and public performances that inspire students and audiences alike. Together, we can continue to remove barriers to participation and ensure that the arts remain accessible to every young person with the passion and potential to create.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and for your steadfast partnership with Harlem School of the Arts. We are honored to continue this work alongside the Vidda Foundation and look forward to building on the impact we have achieved together.

In Service and Gratitude,



James Horton
President & CEO

Harlem School of the Arts
Proposal to
The Vidda Foundation

Date of application: **August 3, 2026**

Name of organization to which grant would be paid: **The Harlem School of the Arts, Inc.**

Purpose of grant: **To provide general operating support for the Harlem School of the Arts**

Address of organization: **The Herb Alpert Center, 645 Saint Nicholas Avenue, New York, NY 10030**

Telephone number: **(212) 926-4100**

Executive director: **James C. Horton, President & CEO**

Contact person and title (if not executive director): **Lois Henry, Director of Institutional Giving**

E-mail: lhenry@hsanyc.org

Is your organization an IRS 501(c) (3) not-for-profit? **Yes**

Grant request: $**15,000 for General support**

Total organizational budget (for current year): **$4,870,657**

Dates covered by this budget (mo/day/year): 07/01/2026 - 06/30/ 2027

Total project budget (if requesting project support): **Not Applicable**

Dates covered by project budget (mo/day/year): **Not Applicable**

Project name (if applicable): **Not Applicable**

I. PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) respectfully requests a grant of $15,000 in general operating support from the Vidda Foundation to sustain and expand access to exceptional arts education for children, youth, and families across Harlem and New York City.

Founded in 1964 by internationally acclaimed soprano Dorothy Maynor, HSA has spent more than six decades advancing the belief that access to outstanding arts education should never be determined by a family's income or zip code. Today, HSA serves approximately 1,500 students annually through comprehensive programs in music, dance, theatre, musical theatre, visual arts, media, and design, while presenting performances, exhibitions, and community programs that enrich the cultural life of Harlem and beyond.

HSA's work extends well beyond artistic instruction. Through high-quality, interdisciplinary arts education, students develop creativity, discipline, confidence, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking—skills that support academic achievement, strengthen social-emotional development, and prepare young people to thrive in school,

careers, and civic life. At a time when equitable access to arts education remains uneven across New York City, HSA continues to provide transformative opportunities for young people who might otherwise be excluded from rigorous artistic training.

General operating support from the Vidda Foundation will provide the flexibility needed to sustain artistic excellence while expanding access for students from historically underserved communities. This investment will help HSA provide financial aid and scholarships, engage distinguished teaching artists, strengthen community partnerships, enhance public performances and exhibitions, and ensure that every student—regardless of financial circumstance—has the opportunity to discover their creative potential and realize it.

II. NARRATIVE

A. HARLEM SCHOOL OF THE ARTS BACKGROUND

1) Harlem School of the Arts: From Here You Can go Anywhere!

Founded in 1964 by internationally acclaimed soprano Dorothy Maynor, the Harlem School of the Arts grew out of a vision she first put into practice in 1947, when she began offering music instruction in the basement of St. James Presbyterian Church. At the time, post-war Harlem was grappling with widespread disinvestment, deteriorating infrastructure, persistent poverty, and a profound lack of cultural and educational opportunities for children and families. Maynor believed that young people in Harlem deserved the same access to outstanding arts education available elsewhere in New York City—and that cost should never prevent talented students from developing their potential.

She founded HSA to make exceptional arts education both accessible and affordable, creating a place where children and young adults could study with accomplished professional artists, experience the highest standards of artistic excellence, and develop the confidence, discipline, and creative skills that enrich every aspect of life. More than sixty years later, that founding vision continues to shape HSA's mission: ensuring that every young person, regardless of financial circumstances, has the opportunity to discover the transformative power of the arts.

HSA's approach extends beyond teaching artistic technique. We believe that sustained engagement in the arts develops creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, resilience, and leadership—skills that prepare young people not only for creative careers, but also for success in higher education, the workforce, and civic life. Every program is intentionally designed to foster artistic excellence while nurturing the confidence, curiosity, and sense of belonging that enable young people to thrive.

During the 2025–2026 program year, HSA served nearly 2,000 children and young adults, ages 4–24, and engaged more than 12,000 community members through performances, exhibitions, workshops, and community events. Nearly all participants in HSA's Youth Arts Enrichment Program received financial aid or attended tuition-free, reflecting the organization's enduring commitment to ensuring that financial circumstances never prevent a young person from accessing outstanding arts education.

Today, HSA serves a richly diverse student population drawn primarily from Harlem and other communities with limited access to arts education. Through collaborations with schools, community organizations, and many of the City's leading cultural institutions, HSA connects students with professional artists, mentors, and real-world opportunities that broaden their horizons and strengthen pathways to college, careers, and lifelong engagement with the arts. As arts education continues to disappear from many public schools, HSA remains a vital cultural anchor—preserving Dorothy Maynor's legacy by ensuring that every young person with talent, determination, and imagination has the opportunity to discover the transformative power of the arts.

2) Need for the Work:

For too many New York City families, access to sustained, high-quality arts education remains out of reach. Professional-caliber instruction—particularly sequential, multi-year training and private lessons—is typically available only at price points that many low- and even middle-income families cannot afford. As a result, thousands of young people are denied opportunities to develop their artistic talents and the confidence, discipline, and sense of belonging that accompany sustained participation in the arts.

The challenge extends beyond access to arts instruction itself. Young people with limited opportunities for enriching after-school and weekend activities often miss out on the broader network of supports these programs provide, including positive adult mentors, supportive peer relationships, social-emotional development, and college and career exploration and preparation. At the Harlem School of the Arts, arts education serves as the foundation for holistic youth development. Through a sequential learning model that supports students over multiple years, HSA combines rigorous artistic training with mentorship, performance opportunities, creative youth development practices, and a vibrant community that nurtures each student's growth as both an artist and a young person.

This work is increasingly urgent. According to the New York City Department of Education's most recent *Annual Arts in Schools* report, the City's public schools lost 425 full-time certified arts teachers—a nearly 15 percent decline—between 2020 and 2023. These losses follow years of declining public investment in arts education and have further limited access to comprehensive instruction in music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. While students across the city have been affected, the impact has fallen disproportionately on historically under-resourced communities such as Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, where many schools lack the resources to provide sequential arts education and instruction taught by practicing professional artists, who are also teaching artists.

The need for sustained arts education is well documented. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in *Art for Art's Sake? The Impact of Arts Education*, found that sustained participation in the arts strengthens creativity, communication, collaboration, motivation, self-confidence, and other social-emotional skills that contribute to academic achievement and lifelong success. Similarly, the National Endowment for the Arts' *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth* found that young people with sustained, high levels of arts participation are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue higher education, engage in their communities, and achieve stronger academic and social outcomes than their peers. These benefits are especially significant for students from low-income communities, where access to consistent, high-quality arts education can be transformative.

For more than six decades, HSA has responded to this need by ensuring that financial circumstances never determine a young person's opportunity to experience artistic excellence. By combining exceptional instruction with scholarships, financial aid, long-term mentorship, and deep community partnerships, HSA equips students with the creative, academic, and personal skills they need not only to succeed in the arts, but to thrive in school, work, and life.

3) Current Programs and Accomplishments

Current Program Departments/Disciplines
Visual Arts, Media & Design; Dance; Instrumental Music; Vocal Music; Theatre; Musical Theatre

Core Programs

- The Youth Arts Enrichment Program: September - June, after school & Saturdays, ages 3–18
- The Summer Arts Experience: Five days/week, all day, July-August, ages 4-12
- Summer Dance Intensive: five days/week, all day, 3 weeks in August, advanced students, ages 12–22
- The Dizzy Gillespie Jazz Academy: September - June, after-school & Saturdays, ages 9-18
- Private, one-on-one lessons across all disciplines, ages 6-24
- HSA Community Outreach and School Partnership Programs
- Harlem School of the Arts Roadshows—new in 2025-2026
- Pre-Professional Preparatory Program, AKA HSA PREP Program (ages 11–18) September–June, afterschool & Saturdays
- Masterclasses and Workshops with professional artists from all creative fields
- Arts and community organization partnerships
- Public/Community Programs, Seminars, Performances, and Exhibitions—approximately 60/year

<u>Recent Achievements & Accomplishments Expanded Access to High-Quality Arts Education</u>.

- During the 2025–2026 program year, HSA served nearly 2,000 children and young adults, ages 4–24, and reached more than 12,000 community members through performances, exhibitions, community events, school partnerships, and public programs. Notably, 99% of students in HSA's Youth Arts Enrichment Program received financial aid, scholarships, or attended tuition-free**, ensuring that cost was not a barrier to participation.

Outstanding Student Achievement.

- HSA's Pre-Professional Preparatory (PREP) Program continued to prepare talented young artists for advanced study and professional careers. In 2025-2026, 115 talented students, ages 11 – 18, were admitted to PREP. The graduating Class of 2026 achieved a 100% placement rate, with graduates accepted to leading colleges, conservatories, and professional arts programs, including Yale University, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the School of Visual Arts, Howard University, the Savanah School of Art and Design, SUNY Binghamton, and the Berklee college of music. The 17 graduates were awarded more than $750,000 in college scholarships.

Expanding Career Pathways.

- HSA launched its *Career Pathways to the Creative Economy Initiative*, a program that prepares young people ages 16–24 for sustainable careers in the creative industries through workshops and seminars in professional development, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, as well as internships, and industry-based learning experiences.

Deepening Community Partnerships.

- HSA expanded partnerships with New York City public schools, charter schools, community organizations, and leading cultural institutions to bring high-quality arts education directly into communities where access remains limited. Collaborations with organizations such as the Apollo Theater, Jazzmobile, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Museum of the City of New York, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and The Juilliard School enriched learning opportunities and connected students with professional artists and creative career pathways. In 2025-2026, we were invited to partner with the Guggenheim Museum to present original HSA student work—visual art, dance performances, instrumental and vocal performances, and Spoken Word—in collaboration with Rashid Johnson's ground-breaking exhibition, *A Poem for Deep Thinkers*.

High-Profile Performance Opportunities.

- Throughout the year, HSA students performed at some of New York City's most respected cultural institutions and community events, including Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular (for the fourth consecutive year), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Museum of the City of New York, and International Jazz Day celebrations. HSA also presented major student productions, including the ground-breaking musical, *In the Heights*, and dozens of recitals, exhibitions, and community performances that showcased student achievement while enriching Harlem's cultural life and the New York City arts ecosystem. HSA student dancers, musicians, and theatre students were also invited to perform for the New York Times Holiday Party, the Seward and Kissel Black History Month Celebration, and the Schomberg Center's Special Centennial Celebration.

Roadshows!

- In 2025–2026, HSA launched *Roadshows!* an outreach initiative that brought the Academy's advanced students into New York City public, private, and charter middle and high schools. Representing every artistic discipline, students presented special performances, exhibitions, and interactive arts experiences for young audiences, their teachers, and family members. Through Roadshows! HSA provided hundreds of local youth with the opportunity to experience live dance, music, theatre, and visual arts firsthand. For many attendees, it was their first exposure to the transformative possibilities of rigorous arts education and professional artistic training, inspiring them to envision new creative pathways for their own futures.

4) Number of paid full-time staff; number of paid part-time staff; number of volunteers.

- Full-time & part-time administrative & support staff—25
- Teaching artists faculty—86
- Volunteers—61

4) Organization Relationships/Partnerships

Collaboration is central to the Harlem School of the Arts' educational model. HSA cultivates strategic partnerships with leading cultural institutions, educational organizations, community-based nonprofits, and professional artists to broaden opportunities for students and strengthen the impact of its programs. These relationships extend learning beyond the classroom by providing masterclasses, artist residencies, mentorship, collaborative performances and exhibitions, career exploration, college and conservatory pathways, and access to professional creative networks.

Through these partnerships, students learn directly from accomplished artists and cultural leaders while gaining meaningful exposure to the artistic standards, expectations, and career possibilities of the professional creative sector. Equally important, HSA's collaborations help ensure that high-quality arts experiences are accessible to young people who might otherwise have limited opportunities to engage with New York City's world-renowned cultural institutions.

HSA's partners include many of the nation's most respected arts and educational organizations, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Opera, the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance, Jazzmobile, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Apollo Theater, Harlem Stage, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Museum of the City of New York, the Harlem Chamber Players, Harlem Opera Theater, the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, Harlem Arts Alliance, Interlochen Center for the Arts, The Juilliard School, Fordham University, Columbia University, and The City University of New York, among many others. These enduring relationships reflect HSA's standing as a trusted community partner and an integral part of New York City's cultural and educational landscape.

B. FUNDING REQUEST - GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

A grant of **$15,000 in general operating support** from the Vidda Foundation will help the Harlem School of the Arts sustain high-quality arts education while ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent young people from participating. This investment will support the following priorities during the 2026–2027 program year.

Objectives:

Goal 1: Expand equitable access to high-quality arts education.

- Provide more scholarships and increased financial aid so that more children and youth from low- and moderate-income families can participate in HSA programs.
- Expand partnerships with schools and community organizations that connect underserved students to HSA's year-round arts education programs.
- Deliver sequential, year-round instruction through after-school, Saturday, summer, and private lesson programs that successfully enable students to build skills over time.

Goal 2: Strengthen student learning, artistic achievement, and youth development.

Objectives:

- Deliver rigorous, interdisciplinary instruction led by professional teaching artists across HSA's core artistic disciplines.
- Provide students with performance, exhibition, and masterclass opportunities that build confidence, showcase artistic growth, and introduce career pathways in the creative industries.
- Continue professional development for faculty in Creative Youth Development practices to support students' artistic, academic, and social-emotional growth.

Goal 3: Sustain organizational excellence and community impact.

Objectives:

- Maintain the personnel, facilities, technology, and administrative infrastructure necessary to deliver safe, high-quality programming.
- Strengthen engagement with families, alumni, and community partners to enhance student support and expand opportunities for collaboration.
- Continue building organizational sustainability through effective fundraising, stewardship, and strategic partnerships that support HSA's long-term mission.

C. EVALUATION

HSA evaluates its programs through a combination of quantitative data collection and qualitative feedback from students, families, teaching artists, and community partners. During the 2026–2027 program year, evaluation efforts will focus on measuring progress toward the goals supported by the Vidda Foundation's general operating grant: expanding access to high-quality arts education, supporting student growth and achievement, and sustaining the organizational capacity required to deliver meaningful community impact.

Goal 1: Expand equitable access to high-quality arts education

Evaluation Measures:

- Student enrollment, attendance, and retention across HSA programs.
- Number of students receiving scholarships or financial aid.
- Participation levels among students from low- and moderate-income families and community partner organizations.

Expected Outcomes:

- HSA will maintain strong enrollment and student engagement across its year-round programs.
- Students who require financial assistance will continue to receive support that enables sustained participation in arts education.
- Community partnerships will continue to connect young people with limited access to arts education to HSA programs and services.

Goal 2: Strengthen student learning, artistic achievement, and youth development

Evaluation Measures:

- Student progress as assessed through instructor observations, class evaluations, portfolios, performances, and exhibitions.
- Student participation in recitals, showcases, exhibitions, masterclasses, and other public presentations.
- Feedback from students, families, and teaching artists regarding artistic growth, confidence, and overall experience.

Expected Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate continued growth in their artistic skills, creativity, and confidence.
- Students will have meaningful opportunities to share their work with audiences and engage with professional artists.
- Families and teaching artists will report positive experiences with HSA's educational environment and student support.

Goal 3: Sustain organizational excellence and community impact

Evaluation Measures:

- Number and quality of partnerships with schools, cultural institutions, and community organizations.
- Attendance and participation at HSA performances, exhibitions, and community events.
- Feedback from community partners, families, and stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes:

- HSA will continue to provide high-quality arts programming supported by strong institutional partnerships and community engagement.
- Public performances, exhibitions, and community programs will expand opportunities for students to share their achievements and contribute to Harlem's cultural vitality.
- HSA will use evaluation findings to inform program improvements, strengthen accountability, and ensure that resources are directed toward the greatest impact for students and the communities we serve.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this proposal to the Vidda Foundation. As HSA celebrates more than six decades of serving New York City youth, we remain financially strong and focused on expanding access to high-quality arts education. Our long-term vision is to make all HSA programs and services available at little or no cost while serving as many young people as possible. We will continue to grow our programs, deepen our commitment to holistic, creative youth development, and strengthen community partnerships. A general operating grant from the Vidda Foundation will help us increase access, broaden our impact, and build a stronger future for the young people we serve.