Harlem School of the Arts

Suggested by: Harriet Gerard Clark

Current Request	$10,000	**Organizational Budget**	$4,870,657
Previous Grant Amount	$10,000	**Last Site Visit**	2026
Grants Since 1998	1	**Project Budget (if applicable)**	n/a
Total Grants Awarded	$10,000	**Purpose**	General operating support

Mission

To empower youth to reach their full potential in the arts, education, and life, through interdisciplinary arts training that celebrates the rich complexity of their community.

Organization History

The Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) was founded in 1964 by internationally acclaimed concert soprano Dorothy Maynor, inspired by her fervent belief that world-class training in the arts stimulates the child, strengthens the family, and gives pride of ownership to the community. She opened Harlem School of the Arts in the basement of the St. James Presbyterian Church in Harlem at a time when the community suffered severe physical blight and high levels of poverty and offered few cultural resources for its young people. Serving approximately 1,500 students annually, primarily from Harlem and other communities with limited access to arts education, HSA provides access to high-quality programs in music, dance, theatre, musical theatre, visual arts, and design that would otherwise be out of reach for many families.

Current Request

During the 2025–2026 program year, Vidda's funding helped HSA serve nearly 2,000 students ages 4–24 and reached more than 12,000 community members through performances, exhibitions, school partnerships, and community events. Nearly all students in its Youth Arts Enrichment Program received financial aid, scholarships, or attended tuition-free. Highlights of the year include:

- **Year-Round Arts Education**: HSA continued afterschool, Saturday, summer, and private instruction across its core artistic disciplines. It also launched Roadshows!, bringing advanced HSA students into NYC schools to provide performances, exhibitions, and interactive arts experiences for hundreds of students.

- **Community Engagement & Partnerships**: HSA expanded partnerships with schools and cultural institutions and provided students with performance opportunities at venues including the Guggenheim Museum, Radio City Music Hall, and the Schomburg Center.

- **Pre-Professional Training & Mentorship**: HSA PREP served 115 students ages 11–18. All 17 graduating seniors were accepted to college, conservatory, or professional arts programs and collectively received more than $750,000 in scholarships. HSA also launched its Career Pathways to the Creative Economy initiative for ages 16–24, providing professional development, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, internships, and industry-based learning experiences.

HSA currently requests an increased renewal of $15,000 in general operating support to sustain and expand its role as a leading provider of interdisciplinary arts education, training, and youth development. Funding would support scholarships and financial aid, teaching artists, year-round instruction, school and community partnerships, performances and exhibitions, and the personnel, facilities, and technology needed to deliver programming. HSA plans to continue expanding access for low- and moderate-income students while strengthening pre-professional training, youth development, and pathways to creative careers.

Notes

The increased request comes as HSA seeks to expand access while managing a challenging financial environment. The FY 2025 audit shows a $1.3 million operating deficit, approximately $1.2 million in cash used for operations, limited liquidity, and a fully drawn $550,000 line of credit. The auditors initially identified conditions raising substantial doubt about HSA's ability to continue as a going concern; however, management's cost reductions, fundraising efforts, increased rental revenue, and plans to monetize certain property/development rights led management to conclude that the concern had been alleviated. HSA's FY 2027 budget is essentially balanced, projecting $4.87 million in revenue and expenses.