



EVERYCHILD  
FOUNDATION

## **Proposal Snapshot**

**Project: *Expansion of Music Education and Social Support Services in the San Fernando Valley***  
**Agency: Harmony Project**

### **Executive Summary**

Harmony Project is requesting \$1mm over two years to expand its music programming in the San Fernando Valley. Harmony Project harnesses the power of music to increase access to higher education for underserved students by removing the systemic barriers to achievement through academic and social support. The music curriculum combines both classical and culturally relevant training including instruments and instruction for K-12 students of all skill levels at no cost to students or their families. With an average participation tenure of 8.4 years, the program uses the scientifically verified effects of music on brain development to help students achieve academic goals in all areas. In addition to musical training the program also provides social service support. The Community and Relational Engagement (CARE) staff are trained to recognize the presence of trauma-induced behavioral symptoms, provide one-on-one support to students and their families, and refer them to outside mental health services. CAST (College, Alumni, Success Team) helps the student participants stay on track to graduate from high school, meet college entrance qualifications, and provide the guidance needed to navigate college applications and financial aid processes.

For the past 23 years, The Harmony Project (“Harmony”) has used the study, practice, and performance of music as a catalyst to enhance the futures of children and youth in historically underserved communities in LA County. Harmony combines rigorous, year-round music instruction with a robust social support network to empower children between the ages of 5 through 18 to become creative thinkers and successful students who stay on track to graduate high school and enter/complete college.

### **Capital or Program**

This is an expansion program project. Harmony Project is requesting \$1 million to fund 73% of projected costs over a two-year period to expand their music and social-services programming.

### **Children/Youth Served**

Harmony currently serves 4,000 students with a waiting list of 2,500. Funding will be used to support an additional 500 students at two high school program sites and three “feeder” elementary and middle schools in Pacoima, Panaroma City, Northridge, Sun Valley, and Van Nuys.

## **I. Agency Information**

***Mission Statement*** - Harmony Project harnesses the transformative power of music to increase access to higher education for underserved students by removing the systemic barriers to achievement through academic and social support.

***Organization History*** - Founded in 2001 with a cohort of only 36 children, Harmony Project began as a public health initiative that seeks to nurture the development of students by providing tuition-free music instruction delivered by skilled teaching artists. We've since grown to engage 3,842 underserved K-12 students during the 2023-2024 academic year. Harmony Project now implements music education programming at 48 partner sites located across 18 communities within Los Angeles County, including Altadena, Boyle Heights, Compton, Crenshaw, Hawthorne, Hollywood, Koreatown, Lawndale, Leimert Park, Lennox, Lynwood, Paramount, Pasadena, San Fernando Valley, South Bay, South Los Angeles, Watts, and West Athens.

***Programs and Services*** - From Billie Holiday's harrowing classic "Strange Fruit" to Sam Cooke's anthemic ballad "A Change Is Gonna Come," artists have utilized music as a catalyst for personal reflection and social transformation. Harmony Project has continued this proud tradition by empowering the vibrant voices of children through music education programming that channels their boundless creativity to help forge a better future for themselves and their peers. In 2008, we launched our College, Alumni, and Success Team (CAST) initiative to ensure program participants remain on track to graduate from high school, meet college entrance qualifications, and receive the guidance needed to navigate the college application process. Our Community and Relational Engagement (CARE) department was established in 2009 to provide social support services such as one-on-one counseling, mental health referrals, and other critical resources to families in our music learning community. This holistic approach ensures that students remain enrolled at Harmony Project for an average of 8.4 years and have access to a life-changing creative outlet that inspires individual growth, peer collaboration, and academic success.

***Population Served*** - Our target demographic consists of students from economically impacted households whose combined family income falls 185% below the federal poverty level and/or attend Title 1 schools in which at least 75% of the student population qualifies for free/reduced lunches. In addition, Harmony Project serves a diverse population of K-12 students between the ages of five and 18 years old, of whom 54% self-identify as female, 43% as male, and 3% as Non-Binary/Unspecified. When broken down by ethnicity/race, 7% self-identify as African American, 5% as Asian, 2% as Caucasian, 82% as Latine, and 4% as Biracial/Multiracial.

***Significant Accomplishments*** - Harmony Project has become a leader in the music education field and earned several prominent distinctions for our work, including a Coming Up Taller Award (2009), Presidential Citizens Medal (2011), and U.S. Department of Education's Bright Spot in Hispanic Education (2015). Our organization has also established a strong track record of success as evidenced by the following measurable outcomes: 99% of program participants graduated from high school; 98% of graduating seniors were accepted to a college or university; 72% of graduates are first-generation college students; 57% of graduates are pursuing degrees in STEM-related fields; and 54% of our alumni have earned a bachelor's degree by age 24 (surpassing the national average for African American (14%) and Latine (13%) students).

## **II. Project Description**

### **A. Summary**

Harmony Project aims to nurture the development of underserved K-12 students within Los Angeles County through the study, practice, and performance of music. Our organization believes that combining rigorous music instruction with a robust social support network empowers children and youth (between the ages of five and 18 years old) to become creative thinkers and confident learners capable of realizing their full potential. Requested funding from the Everychild Foundation will enable us to expand our presence within the San Fernando Valley during the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 academic years for the benefit of more than 500 new unduplicated program participants from the neighboring communities of Pacoima, Panorama City, Northridge, Sun Valley, and Van Nuys.

### **B. Critical Unmet Need**

Between 2011-2013, Harmony Project partnered with Northwestern University to research the neurological developments associated with long-term music learning, including tracking neural responses to speech and brain measures linked to literacy. The three-year study concluded that our program participants became better listeners and readers due to their ability to isolate sound and focus within an otherwise noisy classroom environment. Lead Researcher Nina Kraus stated, “We are finding that musical training can alter the nervous system to create a better learner and help offset [the] academic gap...if [music] is an ongoing part of children’s education, it can have a major impact on their lives of listening and learning.” A sentiment echoed by the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, which published a peer-reviewed study in the Journal of Youth Development in 2022. They tracked Harmony Project program participants enrolled in five high-poverty elementary schools located in Long Beach, California. Students who received four hours per week of music lessons and mentoring demonstrated significantly improved reading and math scores when compared with students who didn’t participate. The long-term impact of music education is further reflected in the students we serve, like Rigoberto Sanchez-Mejia, who first joined Harmony Project when he was five years old. “Once I found the violin, that was it. It’s a big part of me,” he said. “It was love at first sight.” The COVID-19 pandemic impacted many families in our music-learning community, including Rigoberto, who found a respite from the storm while performing music. “I feel like it calms me down,” he said. “The best way I can explain it is sort of when everything is going a bit crazy in my head, there’s a bit too much going on, the violin is just able to calm those down a bit, so I can focus. I’m not worrying about 10 things at once.” Rigoberto graduated from Leuzinger High School during the 2023-2024 academic year and plans to pursue a degree in Biochemistry at UC San Diego. “The Harmony Project has changed my life,” he said. “It introduced me to the world of music, and through that, I made so many connections and met so many people that really helped set the path I take now, going to college, having the escape of music, and being able to get opportunities others may not.”

### **C. Description of Project**

#### **1. Activities to be Undertaken**

Harmony Project launched music education programming at San Fernando Senior High School (25 Vocal Track Students Enrolled) and Sylmar Charter High School (18 Vocal Track Students Enrolled) during the 2023-2024 academic year. Requested funding from the Everychild Foundation will be used to build up the human infrastructure of program sites located within the

San Fernando Valley. This includes increasing the capacity of our Community and Relational Engagement (CARE) department, which our students and their families rely on to help them navigate life-changing circumstances outside of their control. Your generous support will also enable us to grow our presence at San Fernando Senior High School and Sylmar Charter High School by providing students access to the three remaining musicianship tracks (Instrumental, Music Production, and Percussion) traditionally offered at program sites operating within our network. Both locations will serve as centralized hubs for future program expansion within the neighboring communities of Pacoima, Panorama City, Northridge, Sun Valley, and Van Nuys. These efforts will allow Harmony Project to provide desperately needed music instruction, academic resources, and social support services to more than 500 new unduplicated program participants. We will utilize the following project timeline to track our progress during Year 1 (2025-2026) and Year 2 (2026-2027) of expansion efforts within the San Fernando Valley:

- Hire staff to grow our presence at San Fernando Senior High School and Sylmar Charter High School. (June 2025 - August 2025)
- Select three new expansion sites within the San Fernando Valley. Our staff has identified Olive Vista Middle School, O'Melveny Elementary School, Pacoima Middle School, and San Fernando Elementary School as potential candidates. Their historical standing as feeder schools for San Fernando Senior High School and Sylmar Charter High School would enable us to establish a K-12 music education pipeline. (January 2026)
- Meet with the Principal and other school administrators at each prospective program site to determine need for services, negotiate fee-for-service contract terms, and calculate reimbursement rate. (March 2026)
- Provide each Principal a contract and proposal to be reviewed and actualized. (May 2026)
- Hire staff to launch programming at new expansion sites. (June 2026 - August 2026)

## **2. How Will Grant Funds Be Used?**

The typical staffing structure for a Harmony Project operated program site serving approximately 100 students is 15 full-time/part-time employees, which will include hiring/reassigning the following personnel: Program Director (.5 FTE); Program Manager (2 FTE); Site Coordinator (2 FTE); Instrument Manager (.5 FTE); Teaching Artists (5 PTE); Teaching Artist Trainer (.5 FTE); Social Support Personnel (2.5 FTE); and Homework Assistants (2 PTE). Requested funding will help our organization grow our presence at San Fernando Senior High School and Sylmar Charter High School, while also supporting our expansion to three new program sites within the neighboring communities of Pacoima, Panorama City, Northridge, Sun Valley, and Van Nuys.

### **D. Goal and Objectives – What Will Be Achieved?**

**Goal #1** - Harmony Project will nurture a supportive environment where students will develop a love of music and competency as musicians. During the 2023-2024 academic year, Harmony Project administered progress check-ins that revealed the following music-related outcomes: 94% of students demonstrated intonation; 93% of students demonstrated musicianship; 89% of students understood notes and reading; 93% of students demonstrated proper technique; 92% of students demonstrated rhythm and tempo; and 96% of students progressed musically.

**Goal #2** - Students will develop 21st Century and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) knowledge and skills that prepare them for success after high school graduation. During the 2023-2024 academic year, Harmony Project administered end-of-year student surveys that revealed the

following Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) outcomes: 74% said they felt more “Confident” or “Sure Of Myself”; 74% said they improved their ability to “Focus” on tasks; 80% said they improved their ability to “Keep Going” when faced with difficulties; 93% said they knew an adult at Harmony Project who “Believes In Me”; 82% said they felt a sense of “Belonging” while at Harmony Project; 86% said they enjoyed “Helping Others” while at Harmony Project; and 81% said they have “Friends” at Harmony Project.

**Goal #3** - Harmony Project will ensure students remain on track to graduate from high school, meet college entrance qualifications, and receive the guidance needed to navigate the college application and financial aid process. During the 2023-2024 academic year, Harmony Project achieved the following academic-related outcomes: 99% of participating 12th-grade students graduated from high school; 98% of graduating seniors were accepted to college; and 72% of high school graduates were first-generation college students.

### **E. Evaluation**

Harmony Project evaluates the musical growth and social-emotional development of our students through end-of-year surveys and teaching artist-administered evaluations that track quantitative (practice habits, musicianship, responsibility, etc.) and qualitative (musical performance) results. We also host end-of-year focus groups with parents, students, and teaching artists. All data/information is processed through PowerSchool by our Data & Technology department and utilized internally to measure our annual impact and inform decision-making at every organizational level. Day-to-day programmatic data (attendance, active status, dismissals, etc.) are monitored by leadership, staff, and teaching artists to measure program continuity and determine the need for additional social support interventions. In addition, our organization continues to track the long-term success of alumni through regularly scheduled check-ins that coincide with the dispersal of direct payments from our scholarship fund. Alumni also frequently reconnect with our organization to provide volunteer support for fundraising events, onsite programming, and student/parent workshops. These thoughtfully considered touchpoints provide us with additional opportunities to solicit feedback and gather information from former students.

### **F. Replication**

Harmony Project has established a proven track record in nurturing the academic success and social-emotional development of K-12 students through music education. Our staff and teaching artists have worked in partnership with parents/guardians and students to transform us into a culturally responsive nonprofit organization that not only reflects the diversity of the communities we serve but also regularly collaborates with community stakeholders to develop music-aligned activities that help ensure program participants continue to thrive both in the classroom and at home. Harmony Project recently celebrated our 23rd anniversary and believes our organization is poised for accelerated growth over the next five years. We currently operate across 48 program sites located within 18 Los Angeles County-based communities.

### **G. Recognition**

Harmony Project will acknowledge the Everychild Foundation’s generous contribution by renaming our CARE department to “CARE for Everychild” or “Everychild CAREs” for a period of three years. We will recognize your foundation in printed programs associated with student concert performances, our annual report, and materials that feature our network of supporters.

## Music Programming



Harmony Project nurtures a supportive environment where K-12 students develop a love of music and competency as musicians.

- **Inclusive Framework** - Designed for program participants of all ages and skill levels.
- **Learning Tracks** - Instrumental, Music Production, Percussion, and Vocal.
- **Community Performances** - Over 50 concerts and recitals throughout Los Angeles County.

## Impact

**43,197**

STUDENTS SERVED  
SINCE 2001

**82%**

STUDENTS FELT A  
"SENSE OF BELONGING"

**80%**

STUDENTS IMPROVED THEIR  
ABILITY TO "KEEP GOING"

*"My story is found in the times my creativity and curiosity was let loose. If it wasn't for Harmony Project, the spark in my eye, that creative and curious spark, would've dimmed." – Willy, Alumni*

## Community and Relational Engagement (CARE)



CARE functions as a safety net for children and youth experiencing challenging issues at home or school, ensuring they receive the support needed to remain a part of our music learning community.

- **Support Services** - Counseling, Mental Health Referrals, and Wellness Visits.
- **Critical Needs** - Essential Household Items, Food Assistance, and Rent/Utility Support.
- **Case Management** - Anxiety, Depression, Human Trafficking, Suicidal Ideation, etc.

## Impact

**\$34K**

DISTRIBUTED TO FAMILIES AS  
COVID-19 RELIEF

**7,998**

ORGANIZATION TOUCHPOINTS  
WITH FAMILIES

*"This [program] is such a blessing. I promise that when I'm able to, I will be a blessing to someone else, like you are to so many families right now." – Jen, Parent*

## College Alumni Success Team (CAST)



CAST ensures students remain on track to graduate from high school, meet college entrance qualifications, and receive the guidance needed to navigate the college application process.

- **College Counseling** - Assistance with College Application, Financial Aid, and Personal Statement.
- **Workforce Development** - Access to Internship, Job Placement, and Resume Building.
- **College Scholarship Fund** - Since 2008, we have awarded \$3.765 million to 735 alumni.

## Impact

**98%** COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE  
RATE FOR STUDENTS

**72%** FIRST-GENERATION  
COLLEGE STUDENTS

**90%** OF GRADUATES EARNED  
A BACHELOR'S DEGREE  
BY AGE 24

*"The same discipline and time management skills I developed at Harmony Project were crucial as I navigated undergrad, law school, and the California Bar Exam." - Jamilah, Alumni*