



Title: The Buford Highway Orchestra Program Narrative Proposal, Request for Support

Cadence: August – May; June and July (Summer Workshops and Camps)

Expense Period: 10/1/2025 – 09/29/2026

Executive Director: Lily Pabian

Lead Director: Juana Alzaga

Other Support: Maria Rampaly (Instructional); Linda Cherniavsky (Instructional); Delia Mendez (Communications); Gabriela Juarez (Communications)

Total Number of Students: 58

Request for Funding:

- i. **Programmatic Budget Amount:** \$ 50,000.00
- ii. **Supplemental Budget Amount:** \$ 10,000.00

We Love Buford Highway is a 501(c)3 nonprofit preserving the multicultural identity of Atlanta's Buford Highway. We see its people as the epicenter for advocacy and impact where immigrant communities thrive for generations. WLBH was incorporated in 2017 and has been widely recognized for its influence (amassing over 20,000 followers on its social presence) and impacts through three areas: Economic Mobility, Youth Empowerment, and Humanities (storytelling, arts & culture). In its young history, the agency has an oral history collaboration with Georgia State University, has collected 70 immigrant stories, built a children's youth orchestra, helped to commission eight urban murals throughout the corridor, has fed over 100,000 people through 30 mobile events, ensured that 2000 people received the Covid-19 vaccine in six local languages, and developed a directory representing over 500 locally owned, immigrant businesses.

The Buford Highway Orchestra Program officially launched in the middle of the pandemic, April 2021 with 10 founding members. In August of the same year, 14 new students launched the BHOP Beginning Orchestra. On November 13th, 2021, The Buford Highway Orchestra Project had its inaugural community concert. Under the direction of its orchestra director, the students are trained in accordance with the guidelines of The **Georgia Music Educators Association**, with a mission to promote the advancement of music education in Georgia and its direct impact into community development. BHOP participants, through the day-to-day engagement and communication with parents, are expected to have a high level of performance and commitment to the program that currently **serves 58 students representing 14 local Dekalb County Schools**.

The Buford Highway Orchestra Project (BHOP) is an afterschool and weekend enrichment program targeting disadvantaged students that reside within the Buford Highway Corridor, an area recognized for its sizeable immigrant communities. The program aims to impact children in the 3rd – 8th grades of the Dekalb County District School, Region I, that are federally designated as Title I, where at least 40% of students qualify for free and reduced meals. The pilot program began on February 2021 due to rising



concerns over the overall well-being of children who were recovering over the previous year of distance learning. What started as virtual instruction through zoom, where students were given the fundamental skills and building blocks towards playing string instruments, within a short few months, blossomed into a face-to-face program which cultivated 10 students as its founding members (Level 1 cohort). B-HOP provides children with a unique opportunity that simply does not exist anywhere else within the district. It provides a set of skillsets that would otherwise be unaffordable, thus inaccessible for most of the corridor's children whose families are largely made up of low-income homes. The program seeks to serve at minimum, 35-40 students per year, with various levels of orchestras as students become more prolific. B-HOP aims in the next four years to develop a program where students are skillful, able to audition and perform for state-level competitions. The program not only gives an opportunity for elementary school children to learn how to play a string instrument but also fosters early work ethics, parent involvement, teamwork, academic performance, and discipline, all while activating community-wide engagement through bi-annual, orchestral performances. BHOP was conceived during the pandemic, which highlighted the inequities and lack of resources to underserved and high-poverty communities in which nearly 20% of the corridor lives in poverty (2020 Census), immigrant families who do not have access to learning a string instrument at an early age.

The performance skills in string playing take years to develop. Starting early in third, fourth, and fifth grade sets the basis of success once students can join their local school orchestra in Middle Schools (6th grade). Students not only will be ahead of their beginning peers but also will have a foundation for other performance opportunities. Our students will begin to have a level playing field and be able to audition to honor groups, state-level orchestras (GMEA - All-State Orchestra) and Metro Atlanta Youth Orchestras (Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Orchestra (MYSO), Emory Youth Symphony Orchestras (EYSO), and The Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra (ASO). Although students are not able to access private lessons, our program offers clinics and workshops on Saturdays once a month, starting July 2022. Additionally, we want to prepare students to audition for the ASO, Development Program aimed at Afro-American and Latino students. The program not only will open much-needed opportunities, and experiences, but open doors in the future for scholarships, but also expose the students to experiences (teamwork, self-confidence, work ethics, cooperation, goal setting, personal connectivity, etc.).

Program Goals

BHOP seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Provide a direct service program through the Arts that directly impacts elementary students (3rd-8th grades) in Dekalb County Public School's Region I, an area where over 50% of its students are on free and reduced lunch.
- Raising awareness around the whole child lens as a vital approach to supporting education and academic achievements.
- Create a friendly and safe parent-student community through an orchestra, where parents play an integral role in student success.



Measuring Success and Evaluation Tools

The measure of progress and success will include the following:

- Individual student evaluation: Audition (written assessment)
- Individual evaluation December, and April (rubric like Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE) standards as set forth by the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA).
- Returning Students -- Ongoing participation from students.
- End of year evaluation to continue to next level orchestra. (BHOP Beginning Orchestra to BHOP Children Orchestra.
- Performances -- two performances a year: November and May. Performances will be taped to measure different levels of performance.
- Student Self-Evaluation: After each performance, students will use a rubric to evaluate their performance. There will be short answer questions (evaluation) on self-performance and group performance. Students will give examples of self/group work towards improvement. Performances will be taped and archived to measure progress.
- Parent Survey: Questions/rubric for parents to evaluate progress as students continue in the program.
- Parent Engagement: a key factor for success and striving for 100% parent participation.
- Measure growth: Projected yearly growth of 10-15 students.
- Projected retention: 85-90%.
- Once students join their local Beginning Orchestra program in 6th grade, they will be 1-2 years advanced in skills and performance.
- Follow up/monitor students' success in their local public school orchestra program.

Define the Community Served

A majority of Dekalb County Public School's Region I schools along the corridor fall within the Title I designation, a key indicator of affordability and means to opportunities and resources. Buford Highway's population is approximately 100,504 people (2020 census reports): 44% identify as being Hispanic, 27% foreign-born, while an estimated 20% are of mixed-status families. Immigrant households along Buford Highway are often multi-generational, with many mouths to feed, and parents tend to be essential workers who must juggle three or more jobs during their seven-day week. These parents understand the importance of education, however, are stuck between making ends meet to build the toolbox of resources for their children's academic needs. They seek affordable, consistent after-school programming that provides enrichment for their kids while being English learners.

Target Student Audience

BHOP will largely benefit students in 3rd- 8th grades in Dekalb County Schools, Region I district. Students are selected to the program through an audition, individual and family interview, by being part of the program, students and families sign a contract acknowledging their commitment to the program. Our orchestra director explains in-language (Spanish) and through their choice in communication



vehicle/platform (What'sApp, text, and paper) to parents and students the importance of home preparation and class attendance as an important success metric. Holding high standards and expectations, children and parents learn the importance of incremental learning through in-language communication and engagements. Although the children in the program come from low socioeconomic households, the children and their families rise to the commitments and begin learning about allyships and networks of trusted relationships. Our orchestra director holds the same standards as expected by the guidance of public schools in the first year of study.

Partner Schools, Organizations, and Agencies:

Our orchestra director partners with guest clinicians and orchestra conductors in the Atlanta area such as Westminster's orchestra conductor, monthly, which not only exposes the children to various teaching styles but will also enhance and develop their playing skills according to their chosen instrument. Our director's vast experience in the community highlights colleagues and musicians eager to work with our children. We have received instruments in kind from William Harris Lee Fine String instruments which were vital to getting the program off the ground. Other than The Atlanta Music Project, led by Dante Rameau, there is no other program in the state of Georgia that serves children from low-income and immigrant communities. In a year's time, we are seeing rapid and successful results in our children's musical performance. One vital piece of our program, and very much sought after by many public institutions, is parent engagement. Our program has 100% parent engagement. It takes a village to give the opportunities, success, and experiences that only art education brings in developing the whole child. Additionally, we partner with the Latin American Association, the Center for Pan-Asian Community Services, Latino Community Fund Georgia, Reach for Excellence program at Marist School, DCSD leaders, and local consulates in outreach and awareness efforts.

Engaging Underserved Students

The Buford Highway Orchestra Project (BHOP) brings to underserved children an opportunity of learning violin, viola cello, and bass otherwise inaccessible to these children due to access (cost, awareness, language, and education). Learning to play a musical instrument at this young age is unaffordable to the "Free and Reduced Lunch" children of the Buford Highway Corridor. Learning a string instrument can only be done through private lessons for elementary school-age children, there are no local elementary schools that provide this as a class or afterschool program. There is no public access for this type of program. B-HOP opens so many doors and opportunities for children that otherwise would not be exposed to arts education. The students learn discipline, collaboration, teamwork, music theory, skills unique to the instruments, and the magic of performance. Music/Arts Education is vital in underserved communities, it gives a sense of accomplishment and opens many doors in the development of the whole child.

Facility and Program Accessibility

BHOP's afterschool instruction and performance location are at the Latin American Association, a 501 c3, legacy organization that has been serving local communities for nearly 50 years. The building offers rampways and elevator services for our students with physical disabilities.



Description and Qualifications of Personnel

Juana P. Alzaga, BHOP's Program Director and lead instructor, is a trained violinist and orchestra conductor, who began her teaching career in 1978, where she established the orchestra programs at Miami Edison MS and HS in Miami, Florida. In 1985, she joined the Gwinnett County Schools orchestra faculty, developing the orchestra programs at Pinckneyville MS, Summerour MS, and Norcross HS. From 1988-1994, Alzaga conducted the Gwinnett County Festival Orchestra (Kendall Orchestra). She further developed in 1992 the first distance learning class and Spanish for Spanish Speakers in Gwinnett County Schools. During the 2012- 2019 school year, Alzaga was Associate Conductor for Emory Junior Chamber Orchestra and a visiting Orchestra Director at the Paideia School 2012-2013. Mrs. Alzaga was selected to the North Carolina Conductor's institute Discovery Program and furthered her conducting studies at the Julliard Conductor's Institute in New York during the summer of 2013. After her retirement in 2012, Alzaga found her second calling: being a parent advocate for Latino students and parents. In 2017, she founded the Latino Engagement and Diversity (L.E.A.D.) at Chamblee Charter High School, promoting engagement and education between community and school. During the pandemic and through her advocacy work, Alzaga recognized the social, academic, emotional impacts, and gaps in reaching the corridor's younger students. Alzaga approached WLBH's executive director in 2021, and in just under six fast months the organization launched its inaugural cohort, where 10 students representing local area elementary schools experienced their first touches on a string instrument. In August of this year, Mrs. Alzaga launched the second cohort of 14 additional students. We have our first community-activated performance on November 13th, to highlight the work of these local students. Most recently, Alzaga received the American String Teachers Association's Lifetime Achievement Award, 2022. Mrs. Alzaga was selected to the North Carolina Conductor's institute Discovery Program and furthered her conducting studies at the Julliard Conductor's Institute in New York during the summer of 2013. After her retirement in 2012, Alzaga found her second calling: being a parent advocate for Latino students and parents. In 2017, she founded the Latino Engagement and Diversity (L.E.A.D.) at Chamblee Charter High School, promoting engagement and education between community and school. During the pandemic and through her advocacy work, Alzaga recognized the social, academic, emotional impacts, and gaps in reaching the corridor's younger students. Alzaga approached WLBH's executive director in 2021, and in just under six fast months the organization launched its inaugural cohort, where 10 students representing local area elementary schools, experienced their first touches on a string instrument. In August of this year, Mrs. Alzaga launched the second cohort of 14 additional students. We have our first community-activated performance on November 13th, to highlight the work of these local students. Alzaga received the American String Teachers Association's Lifetime Achievement Award, 2022, and most recently, received recognition by [Telemundo's Somos Heroes as Hero Educator](#) in 2023.



Alignment with State and/or National Education Standards

BHOP follows the Georgia Music Standards of Excellence (MGSE), The Gwinnett County Schools AKS standards for orchestra, and The Georgia Music Education Association (GMEA). WLBH's Director is a retired orchestra teacher/conductor with more than 30 years of public-school orchestral education. The

students have already surpassed the skills noted under MGSE Performance ESBO.PR.1 and ESBO.PR.2. The students are performing at GMEA Level 1, which is achieved at the end of the second year. Additionally, the students self-evaluate their performance through writing, so they can connect to their performance as well as the group performance. Students are always engaged in auditory training as well as listening to self and ensemble balance. It is essential to create a good posture for our initial set-up as this foundation is crucial for developing skills, growth, and development (see attached teacher evaluation and self-evaluation).

Program Design as Part of a Sequential and Ongoing Curriculum

At its earliest conception with initial classes via Zoom, students first learned about music theory (music writing, rhythm, identification of different clefs, etc). This prior knowledge was essential before placing instruments in the student's hands. This not only worked, but it increased the initial awareness of the importance of knowing the theory behind playing. The students in the orchestra had NO music background, sequential curriculum is seen on a weekly basis. The students use "Essential Elements book 1, which is the same book used by many beginning orchestra programs in the state of Georgia. It is a method that presents the beginning curriculum. After learning the basic posture according to a child's choice of instrument, the student builds on performing skills such as left and right position, tone production, identification of notes within three different keys signature, time signature, bowing skills such as legato, slurs, accents, etc. The skills learned are then incorporated into their music performance repertoire (GMEA - Level 1). In the process, students strive to work as a cohesive ensemble, learning to interpret the intended music written by the composer. The cohorts are intended to differentiate a sequential level of performance.

Budget Request, Breakout & Narrative

Programmatic Funding Request (Base Budget): \$ 50,000.00; Expense period 10/1/2025 – 9/30/2026

Supplemental Funding Request: \$10,000.00; Expense Period 10/1/2025-9/30/2026

Pending Contract (in process) \$44,899.92 – Division of Family and Children Services Expense Period: 10/1/24 - 9/30/25 * note that this contract ends 9/30/25.

Applied Grant (not confirmed) \$10,000.00 – CarMax Foundation Expense Period: 1/1/2025-12/31/2025

Request for funding support of the Dekalb County Board of Commissioner's Office supports the following programmatic services:



- Two, weekly, after school instructional sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays)
- 1 Georgia Music Educator certified lead instructor, 2 co-teachers
- Curriculum (cohort-based), homework books, evaluations (twice per year), self-evaluations, parent surveys
- Climate-controlled storage for instruments
- Audio equipment for performances
- Resource connection discussions for our growing cohort of children identified through BHOP for deeper enrichment opportunities i.e.: school choice, scholarships, etc.
- 4-5 annual community performances (Dia de los Ninos with Consulado de Mexico; DCSD's Hispanic Heritage; Spring and Fall community concerts; Brookhaven's International Festival; Doraville's Holiday events, etc.)
- Parent community group development and management, current private FB Community Group Page of 184 parents and stakeholders
- Summer workshops

BHOP 2025/26 Budget						
Total Budget:	\$50,000.00					
Break out		<i>Lead Program Director (PT) 15-20 hrs per week: •Two, weekly, after school instructional sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays), •Curriculum (cohort-based), homework books, evaluations (twice per year), self-evaluations, parent surveys, •Resource connection discussions for our growing cohort of children identified through BHOP for deeper enrichment opportunities ie: school choice, scholarships, etc., •4-5 annual community performances (Dia de los Ninos with Consulado de Mexico; DCSD's Hispanic Heritage; Spring and Fall community concerts; Brookhaven's International Festival; Doraville's Holiday events, etc.), •Parent community group development and management, current private FB Community Group Page of 184 parents and stakeholders, •Summer workshops</i>	<i>Instructional Co-Teacher (Contractor 8 hrs per week): • Two, weekly, after school instructional sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays), • 4-5 annual community performances (Dia de los Ninos with Consulado de Mexico; DCSD's Hispanic Heritage; Spring and Fall community concerts; Brookhaven's International Festival; Doraville's Holiday events, etc.), • Curriculum (cohort-based), homework books, evaluations (twice per year), self-evaluations, parent surveys</i>	<i>Concert Music and Instructional Books</i>	<i>Instrument Storage (Temperature Controlled)</i>	<i>Maintenance of Instruments (string replacement, bow re-stringing, bridge repair, etc.)</i>
Instructional	\$45,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$10,000.00			
Operations	\$5,000.00			\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
Total:	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00

Supplemental Budget:

- Additional Instruments and equipment (violins, violas, cellos, basses, music folders, sheet music, books, and stands)
- After school snacks - over 2000 snacks served per program year for children who are on free and reduced meals
- End of year program celebrations, with over 200 attendees from the community

Supplies (notebooks, music folders, pencils, stands)	\$ 1,000.00
End of year recognition event (food, awards, certificates) 200 people	\$ 2,000.00
Snacks for classes (80 total classes + 4 community events)	\$ 2,000.00
Additional Instruments (violins, violas, bass, cello)	\$ 5,000.00
Total:	\$ 10,000.00

Testimonials and Visual Highlights

QUALITATIVE MEASURES MATTER

Maria is a single parent of Andrea (BHOP student) also has a daughter Emily who has Cerebral Palsy. Emily has been in and out of the hospital due to her disease and unforeseen surgery. A group of parents jumped in and have been helping not only with supporting Maria but carpooling so that Andrea does not miss class. Andrea is a 3rd grade student.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES MATTER

Carla, parent of Carlo, personally took on the task of taping the Program Director's instructions, aligned to the weekly study guide. This allows parents to see specifically what and how to help the students practice at home.

