

Florida Cultural Group

Play it Forward: Outfitting a Home for Community Music

Florida Cultural Group (FCG), the nonprofit steward of the Manatee Performing Arts Center, is guided by its mission to create, entertain and strengthen an artistic, creative, curious, and thriving community by bringing people together. Aligned with this mission, its ***Play it Forward: Outfitting a Home for Community Music*** initiative would deliver a fully furnished, acoustically optimized and turnkey-ready Community Orchestra Rehearsal Room in the new Sara's Studios, a four-story arts and education facility.

This initiative would turn the fourth floor of Sara's Studios into a designated Rehearsal Room, outfitted with 80 ergonomic musician chairs, 80 music stands, acoustic carpeting, climate-controlled storage, and a full suite of orchestral percussion instruments. This addresses the lack of professionally equipped affordable rehearsal space for youth and community musicians. Our grant would fund the \$108,000 total initiative budget, which includes \$72,662 for 42 percussion instruments, \$22,300 for ergonomic musician chairs, and \$13,038 for music stands with rolling carts, acoustical wall tiles and climate-controlled storage.

FCG would expand music access programs to serve 500 additional musicians annually, a 150% increase, including youth, adults, and senior community ensembles. This includes a new Community Youth Orchestra, serving 80 middle and high school students annually who lack access to orchestral programs, rehearsal space, instruments and formal training. This would expand arts access for underserved and Title 1 youth and provide professionally equipped rehearsal space for up to 400 community ensemble musicians annually. These groups would benefit from reliable, acoustically treated space with quality equipment, improved sound quality, faster setup time, higher participation and retention of performers, and free sound technician support.

The construction of Sara's Studios is on schedule with the Rehearsal Room completion expected in February 2027, within the two-year grant period.

The initiative calls for one-time capital expenditures designed for long term durability. The space would be sustained with operating revenue from below-market rate rentals, grants, sponsorships, and donor campaigns. Existing staff would manage and maintain it.

This initiative would strengthen the cultural fabric of the region with the rehearsal space acting as a hub for collaboration, education and ensemble development. By offering below-market access to local groups, it removes financial and logistical barriers, fulfilling FCG's mission to build an inclusive, thriving arts community.