

The Catalyst Fund

Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in American Orchestras

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Introduction

The Catalyst Fund is a three-year pilot program of the League of American Orchestras that awards annual grants to build the internal capacity of member orchestras (based in the U.S.) in advancing their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and in encouraging effective practice.

While there are many ways to define equity, diversity, and inclusion, the League defines EDI in the following way:

Equity is fair treatment, equal opportunity, and fairness in access to information and the distribution of resources.

Diversity is representation of our individual and collective identities.

Inclusion creates a culture of belonging that embraces participation by everyone.

Application Deadline: Friday, November 6, 2020

Background

The Catalyst Fund was created in response to field-wide feedback from the League's most recent EDI planning process. Members expressed a strong desire to serve people of all races, abilities, and genders from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. They realized, however, there are challenges to doing this in meaningful and fiscally sound ways. EDI work requires a re-examination of orchestras' values, cultures, and ways of working, along with a willingness to change. The Catalyst Fund provides grants orchestras use to engage EDI consultants to help them create and implement strategies that are relevant to their own orchestras and communities.

The League itself is working to develop authentic EDI practices and stands committed to using its resources in support of field progress. The League's commitment to supporting the field in growing knowledge and understanding of EDI is based on the belief that:

- EDI is essential to the long-term relevance of orchestral performance and the viability of the institutions that support it.
- EDI is imperative for meaningful, authentic, and relevant relationships with communities.
- EDI is fundamental to creating cultures where creativity flourishes, and all staff, musicians, boards, and artistic leaders are supported in bringing their full identities into their orchestras.
- EDI is necessary for the innovation that orchestras must pursue to adapt to their changing environment and to be fiscally secure and artistically vibrant.
- EDI is vital in attracting and retaining the highest levels of talent to all dimensions of orchestras— musicians, staff, boards, and artistic leadership.

- EDI is foundational to upholding the principles of equality and fairness inherent in creating a more just society.

The League invites applicants with an approach to EDI that mirrors the program’s ideals, specifically:

- **Humility**, which acknowledges that answers may be elusive and the process of getting to them uncomfortable, but undertaking the work of EDI with openness, objectivity, and deep institutional commitment.
- **Transparency**, which is defined as clear communication with all stakeholders and a willingness to be candid about the challenges and opportunities inherent in becoming more equitable institutions.
- **Authenticity**, where we realize that EDI is a sustained practice that eschews tokenism and instead embeds equity across the institution.

Program Overview

Advancing EDI is challenging work for any institution. To assist orchestras in creating more equitable cultures, The Catalyst Fund provides the following resources:

- Annual grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000, enabling successful applicants to work with a professional EDI consultant to self-define and advance internal EDI learning objectives during the one-year grant period.
- A community to share learning with other grantees that includes a dedicated online forum as well as remote and in-person convenings.
- Opportunities to lead and participate in fieldwide learning activities, giving visibility to EDI work in orchestras. Grantees may be profiled in League communications such as The Hub and *Symphony* magazine or speak during convenings and other League events.

Program Components

Learning Goals

The Catalyst Fund requires applicants to articulate their specific challenges, intended goals and outcomes, and what progress looks like to their organization. Applicants must work with an external EDI consultant to assist them in refining and clarifying their goals. For additional guidance on hiring and working with a consultant, please refer to the League’s [Resource](#) and [RFP](#) guides.

The Catalyst Fund aims to support **internal EDI organizational development and capacity building**. Examples of activities that may be supported by Catalyst Fund grants include, but are not limited to:

- Helping board and staff clarify and align their strategic thinking on EDI issues
- Conducting an institutional audit and/or developing an EDI plan
- Professional development such as coaching, mentorship, or training for staff, artistic leadership, board, and musicians
- Developing recruiting materials and hiring practices that demonstrate prior knowledge and understanding of EDI principles

Cohort Learning

The Catalyst Fund learning community is meant to be a resource to grantees through peer-to-peer support and meaningful information exchange. Grantees will participate in this community through four convenings during the grant period (one, during the League’s National Conference, to be held online, and three remote sessions) in addition to informal and facilitated discussion via the League360

platform. Orchestras are encouraged to have representatives from each constituency (i.e., programs staff, artistic leaders, board, musicians, etc.) participate in these activities. Regular participation by grantees is expected, as is embodying the program ideals of humility, transparency, and authenticity.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive grants from The Catalyst Fund, applicants must:

- Be a League adult or youth orchestra member in good standing based in the United States, meaning the orchestra has:
 - paid all dues or be current with all authorized installment payments for the membership year(s) that fall during the grant period;
 - provided the League with a current list of staff, musicians, board members, and volunteers—including titles, email addresses, and the street addresses of those eligible to receive *Symphony* magazine as a benefit of membership; and
 - completed and submitted a response to the League's Orchestra Statistical Report (OSR) Survey for each year that falls during the grant period.
- Employ at least one full-time staff member
- Have operating expenses above \$150,000 in the previous two fiscal years
- Match at least 20% of the project's EDI consultant fee
- Have presented a minimum of three concerts annually for the previous two seasons

Non-member orchestras may join the League at the time of application to become eligible. Grant requests may not exceed 20% of the orchestra's total annual operating budget.

Consortium Grants

A group of orchestras in a geographic region are eligible to apply for Catalyst Fund grants so long as all parties meet the above criteria. Consortium applications must address the following questions on the application:

- Why do you want to work on this EDI project with (a) partner(s)?
- What benefit(s) do you hope each partner will derive from this collaboration?
- How are you ensuring an equitable distribution of work and accountability among the consortium partners?
- Is this your first time collaborating, or do you have a history of working together?

Please contact Lee Ann Norman, Director, Learning and Leadership Programs at catalyst@americanorchestras.org to discuss your consortium proposal before you apply.

Applying for a Grant

Before applying, new applicants must attend a webinar about the application and selection process. You may register for a webinar on our [website](#). Previous applicants do not have to attend a webinar but may contact us to discuss their application at catalyst@americanorchestras.org.

Eligible orchestras may apply through **Acceptd**, the online application portal for The Catalyst Fund. Applicants must create an Acceptd account, complete all required fields on the application, and upload the required attachments as PDFs to your account. For technical support using Acceptd, please email support@getacceptd.com or call 888-725-2122.

The Catalyst Fund application includes the following:

- Section I: Eligibility

- Section II: Applicant Information
- Section III: Community Information
- Section IV: Project Narrative
- Section V: Consortium Applicants
- Section VI: Attachments
 - Project Budget (using the [budget template](#))
 - Applicants are required to submit a preliminary budget that estimates the costs associated with the project. To complete the template, applicants should consider the total costs necessary for implementation including, but not limited to:
 - Consultancy fees
 - Program and activity fees related to the proposed project
 - Consultant travel (Note: Do not include travel to the League's National Conference in June 2021 in this budget estimate)
 - Program administration (e.g., staff, artistic administrators', and musicians' time spent on the proposed project, meeting expenses such as space rental, technology needs, etc.)
 - Commitment Letter, signed by Executive Director/CEO, Board Chair, Music Director, and Musicians' Representative (i.e., the orchestra's elected players' representative; the signatures of a quorum of musicians; the orchestra's personnel manager) stating the orchestra's commitment to growing understanding of EDI and the proposed project
 - Most Recent Audited Financial Statement
 - Optional: Relevant digital or analogue material from the past three years that demonstrates your commitment to sustained EDI work (e.g., previous organizational audit, agenda for anti-bias/anti-racism workshop, notes from internal/external conversations with key stakeholders, collected or disaggregated data from previous program activities, report from a prior consultancy, evaluation tools you've created and use, materials from a similar program, etc.)

Adjudication and Selection Process

After verifying the eligibility of applicants, the League will engage an independent panel to review applications and make grant recommendations according to the following criteria:

- **Institutional Commitment:** the extent to which applicants demonstrate their commitment to advancing and sustaining EDI efforts and a culture that holds EDI as a central value and priority for their organization
- **Project Readiness:** the degree to which project goals are articulated and applicants demonstrate a clear understanding of the activities and timeline necessary to achieve stated outcomes
- **Implementation Plan:** the degree to which applicants provide a clear and detailed account of those inside the institution who would lead this work, as well as the rigorousness of the case for why the proposed work is necessary at this time

Finally, the panel will review the overall composition of recommended grantees to ensure a **Balanced Cohort** that is a broad representation of perspectives, geographies, budget group sizes, and project types.

Applicants will be notified of decisions by February 19, 2021. Those selected as a provisional grantee will receive information with recommendations on how to hire an EDI consultant and have until early

April to submit a Memorandum of Understanding, notifying the League of their intention to work with their chosen consultant. To receive grant awards, provisional grantees must submit a fully executed contract and final project budget for the League's review by May 3, 2021. Final grant amounts will then be determined and announced.

2021 Catalyst Fund Timeline

Program Announcement and Online Applications open	September 3, 2020
Informational Webinar #1 (2–3:00 p.m. EST)	September 10, 2020
Informational Webinar #2 (8–9:00 p.m. EST)	October 8, 2020
Application Closes	November 6, 2020
Applicant Eligibility Verified and Applications Reviewed by Independent Panel	December 2020 through February 2021
All Applicants Notified of Decision	February 19, 2021
Provisional Grantees Solicit and Hire an EDI Consultant	March through May 2021
Final Confirmation of Grantees and Awards	May 2021
Grant Period	June 2021 through May 2022
League National Conference and Catalyst Forum Grantee Meeting (Online)	June 2021
Virtual Convening #1	October 2021
Virtual Convening #2	February 2022
Grantee Feedback Session	May 2022
Final Report	June 2022

Questions

If you have additional questions about The Catalyst Fund or the opportunity, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our website. If you still have questions or wish to discuss your application, please email catalyst@americanorchestras.org.