

Introduction

Consultants can be extremely helpful in assisting the orchestra in clarifying, mapping, and measuring equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) goals. These experts can offer a great perspective on how your orchestra is progressing compared to peers or the nonprofit industry as a whole; offer advice that can help you avoid common pitfalls when doing EDI work; assist in mediating conflict such as differences of opinion on approach and strategy; and highlight and center typically marginalized voices and views, ensuring a range of perspectives is heard by key leaders and decision makers.

It's important to remember that equity, diversity, and inclusion work must be driven by internal stakeholders. While consultants can be invaluable in providing support and guidance, the orchestra's musicians, staff, board, and artistic leaders are ultimately responsible for ensuring the success of the project and doing the work.

We hope this guide will provide you with information and inspiration as you continue on your journey to find a consultant who is flexible and responsive to your needs as you grow your EDI learning and practice.

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Step 1: Understand What EDI Consultants Do

While an EDI consultant may act as an educator, a resource for knowledge or counsel, a coach or motivator for change, a facilitator, or combination of these, their work falls generally in four broad categories:

- **Guidance:** The consultant works with the project team to plan and execute the goals, objectives, and project activities, serving as a meeting or process facilitator.
- **Analysis:** The consultant collects data about the orchestra's policies, audiences, operations, etc., using a variety of methods. The consultant provides analysis and recommendations to create a more equitable institution.
- **Training:** The consultant conducts a variety of trainings (e.g., inclusiveness, diversity, anti-racism, anti-bias, etc.) to build the orchestra's capacity to create a more inclusive culture.
- **Evaluation:** The consultant creates a plan to assist the orchestra in measuring its progress in its EDI learning and practice.

Step 2: Determine Your Budget

Hiring a consultant is a significant expense of your Catalyst Fund project. Consulting costs vary widely, based on:

- the number of consultants used (e.g., a multi-person team or if the consultant uses subcontractors for any part of the work such as data analysis);
- project scope;
- consultant's location and involvement throughout the process;
- the activities in which you involve your consultant; and/or
- the depth and complexity of training, data gathering and analysis, and other activities.

Be sure to allocate enough money to cover a consultant's work for at least a year and include it in the organizational budget, which ensures EDI work can continue in some form regardless of outside grant or donor support.

We have learned from previous Catalyst Fund grantees that the work almost always costs more and takes longer than the orchestra initially predicted. While there is an excitement and urgency around growing your EDI learning and taking action, be mindful that genuine, measurable, and enduring EDI outcomes can take years to achieve. Equity work differs from artistic programming work in this way: Rather than focusing primarily on quantitative outcomes, such as attendance numbers or zip code distribution, EDI work tends to prioritize the ways institutional culture changes over time.

To gauge the budget you need for consulting fees, we recommend you talk to peer organizations that have worked with consultants on similar projects. They can help you get insight on how to design the project goals and timeline and create a realistic budget estimate for the scope of work. Rough estimates for hours based on the kind of activity EDI consultants might conduct with your orchestra are below. Note that these estimates can vary based on the size of your organization and the depth and intensity of the activities you require.

- **Guidance:** 20 to 60 hours per contract year
- **Analysis:** 30 to 60 hours per contract year
- **Training:** 20 to 40 hours per contract year
- **Evaluation:** 10 to 20 hours per contract year

Step 3: Create an Outline for an RFP

An RFP (request for proposals) is a document that outlines the scope of your project, describes the assistance you believe you need to meet the project goals, and defines any deliverables and expected outcomes. It should include information about your organizational mission, vision, and values; a proposed timeline for the project; and the budget you have allocated for the work. The RFP should provide enough context to give potential consultants a clear understanding of the project, your goals, challenges, and the context in which the work exists.

Keep in mind that the RFP is only one way to engage a consultant for your project. It is useful because it helps your organization get clarity about the kind of work that will be completed within a given timeline and budget. Some highly qualified consultants, however, may find the RFP process is not efficient in relation to the time and effort required to submit a proposal. Some may want to protect their intellectual property, fearing that their ideas and approaches might be used even if they are not ultimately selected for the role. We encourage you to be open to using the RFP as a guiding—rather than a prescriptive—process to help you find a consultant that is right for you.

Sections to include in your RFP:

- **Background and Rationale:** Who you are and why you are doing this work right now
- **Project Scope:** What exactly you want the consultant to do and the goals and objectives of the project
- **Anticipated Deliverables:** What documents, processes, or other tangible items you expect the consultant to create for you
- **Anticipated Tasks:** What activities you expect the consultant to conduct during the project along with any milestones you can identify throughout the course of the engagement
- **Reporting Relationships, Communications, and Accountability:** The primary contact for the project, expectations and procedures for communicating and clarifying information, to whom the consultant will report, etc.
- **Key Dates:** anticipated start and end dates for the project, key milestones, the proposal review period and interview timeframe, and the dates for vetting and notification of a final selection of the consultant
- **Candidate evaluation and selection criteria:** Information about your selection criteria and whether you require additional materials or information to evaluate a candidate's credentials or the rigor of their proposal, etc. (e.g., resume, references, examples of past work or clients, etc.)

Step 4: Identify Consultants for Your Catalyst Fund Project

To support applicants recommended for a grant from The Catalyst Fund, the League provides a list of known consultants specializing in EDI, based on our own research and recommendations from partners, and from past Catalyst Fund grantees. We acknowledge this list is neither exhaustive nor inclusive of the entirety of EDI expertise and approaches, and therefore, do not endorse any specific consultant or entity for this work. We encourage provisional grantees to use this listing as a starting point and guide to assist them in finding an EDI consultant that is right for their specific situation. In addition, provisional grantees may consult resources available at the [DEI Expert Hub](#) and [American for the Arts](#) for more recommendations and guidance.

Additional things to consider when seeking an EDI consultant include:

- Knowing what skill or expertise your organization requires at this time
- Defining what is “sufficient” with the understanding that there is no “perfect” consultant
- Discerning how self-aware the consultant is as an individual or a consulting practice
- Knowing your work style and process as it relates to the consultant’s:
 - o Geographic location
 - o Area of expertise: arts-specific or not
 - o Size of the consultancy and their anticipated client workload during your project’s proposed timeframe

After compiling a list of consultants you’d like to learn more about, share your RFP with them and invite them to submit a proposal. We recommend you give potential consultants adequate time to respond—at least four weeks—and follow up with them at least one week before the submission deadline.

Step 5: Talk to Potential Candidates

Before you begin inviting potential EDI consultants to interview, establish review criteria that will provide a consistent way to evaluate the proposals from candidates. You might also consider who is involved in the interview process (e.g., a separate committee, members of the project team, etc.) and how they will be involved in selecting the final candidate.

Once you begin to receive applications, you may find it helpful and efficient to provide questions in advance to candidates you wish to invite for interviews. Typically, consultants or firms will provide a written response to those queries before the interview, allowing you more time to expand on ideas or address additional concerns in person.

Ask the consultant anything that feels relevant to your understanding of their approach and process as well as what it would be like to work with them. Be sure you understand their:

- **Philosophy and Proposed Approach:** There are many approaches to and frameworks for addressing EDI issues such as a focus on anti-racism, anti-oppression, or intersectionality, among others.

- **Deliverables:** What documents, trainings, assessments, etc. will you receive? When do you expect them and what does the consultant need from you to create or deliver them?
- **Process and Responsiveness:** What is the consultant's working process? What are the expectations for communication and collaboration? How many other projects and clients will the consultant be working with while they work on your project?
- **Budget:** Are there any discrepancies? Do you understand all the costs outlined? Are there any expenses missing or ones you have questions about? Is your project contingent on receiving a Catalyst Fund grant or any other contributed or earned revenues? (If so, we recommend you be transparent about that with candidates.)
- **Cultural Adaptability and Experience:** Has the consultant worked with other orchestras or other arts organizations like museums or theater companies? Inquire about their understanding of the orchestra field's challenges and opportunities for growth and impact. Ask them to discuss any challenges they anticipate when working with your organization.

Step 6: Finalize Your Selection

Once consultants have addressed all of your questions and concerns, and you have selected your desired consultant, let them know you'd like to work with them. Share details of your orchestra's process for working with independent contractors, finalize the start date and fee, and confirm the details of the engagement through a written contract that includes information about how to end or amend the agreement if things aren't working or to accommodate for extraordinary or unexpected events.

Sample RFP Template

Request for Proposal (RFP) – YOUR CATALYST FUND PROJECT TITLE

Introduction

ORCHESTRA is seeking proposals for CONSULTANTCY PROJECT. Each consultant responding to this RFP is expected to:

- fully inform themselves on all aspects of the work to be performed;
- submit its proposal that addresses all proposal components; and
- submit its proposal to CONTACT as outlined.

By submitting a proposal, the consultant agrees to comply with the process as outlined and understands that acceptance of a proposal will occur only when a contract is executed.

RFP Schedule: Key Dates

Event	Dates
Request for Proposals to ORCHESTRA accepted	Date range
Proposal Review	
Window for Follow-up questions sent to Consultants	
Applicants not invited for interviews notified of status	
Consultants Invited to meet PROJECT INTERVIEW COMMITTEE	
Verification of Qualification for Finalists	
Selected Consultant Notified	
Projected Project Start	

Request for Proposals

ORCHESTRA is seeking proposals for *YOUR CATALYST FUND PROJECT*.

1. Background

- Briefly share your mission, vision, and organizational history
- Briefly describe your audiences and programs
- Share why you are pursuing an equity project at this time

2. Goals and Objectives*

- Briefly describe your overarching goals and objectives for the project.
- What benefit do you hope your orchestra will receive by completing this work?
- What skills/knowledge/capacity do you hope to gain by completing this EDI project?

*Try to keep the goals and objectives focused on the timeframe of the project (e.g., FY21, the 2021-22 concert season, etc.)

3. Scope of Services

3.1 Consultant Activities

Describe the activities you'd like the consultant to perform, e.g.,

- Training/workshops
- Facilitation for conversations or processes
- Conducting assessments
- Etc.

3.2 Expected Deliverables and Associated Timelines

Describe any tangible products, reports, items, etc., you expect the consultant to produce during the project along with targeted milestone dates, such as:

- A document describing ORCHESTRA'S shared values and EDI imperatives/priorities
- An institutional audit of EDI practices
- A report recommending a set of actions for an EDI plan
- Training manual or guide for marketing, communications, and donor services etc.

3.3 Expected Milestones with Proposed Payment Schedule

#	Activity	Description	Date	Payment to Consultant
1	Engagement with Consultant Begins		Start Date	% of contract value
2	Activity/Deliverable 1	Description	Date	% of contract value
3	Activity/Deliverable 2	Description	Date	% of contract value
4	Activity/Deliverable 3	Description	Date	% of contract value

3.4 Consultant Qualifications

(Describe candidate selection criteria and any tools or benchmarks you will use to evaluate their qualifications.)

The consultant, through their proposal, should describe their philosophy and approach to EDI and to delivering the services. Consultant should demonstrate an understanding of ORCHESTRA'S context, mission and vision, and the key issues and stakeholders related to achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The consultant should provide an appropriate methodology and work plan for completing the project within the specified timeframe.

In addition, the consultant should provide evidence of the ability to undertake the activities outlined in this request for proposals, including:

- evidence of a breadth and depth of knowledge of EDI philosophies, approaches, and practices;
- experience working on projects of similar size, scale, and/or scope and
- proven analytical skills, qualitative and quantitative research skills, facilitation skills, exceptional written and verbal communication skills, and any other specialized knowledge necessary for completing the project successfully.

3.5 Additional Requirements

(Describe any special requirements or conditions you may have for candidates to be considered, such as method of submission, pre-screening questionnaires, other institution-specific processes or protocols.)

3.6 Reporting, Communications, and Accountability

The selected consultant will be required to liaise closely and work in collaboration with PROJECT TEAM/REP/COMMITTEE. The selected consultant will keep the PRIMARY CONTACT informed of progress of the work and timelines, as agreed upon and scheduled.

4. Project Budget

Subject to the satisfactory completion of the services, ORCHESTRA shall pay the selected consultant up to \$XXXX to complete this work, according to the payment schedule identified above at Clause 3.3. Consultant is required to prepare a detailed budget when submitting their proposal, including consultancy fees and administrative support charges, with unit cost and the number of hours/days proposed to be devoted to the project.

5. Conflict of Interest

At the time of submitting a proposal, consultant agrees there is no conflict of interest (real or perceived) unless specifically and clearly identified in their proposal with a recommended plan to manage the conflict of interest. Conflict of interest can be defined as any situation in which an individual or organization is in a position to exploit his/her professional or official capacity in some way for personal or corporate benefit.

The consultant agrees to notify ORCHESTRA immediately if an actual or potential conflict of interest arises.