

## AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS' FUTURES FUND

*Made possible by the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation*

### 2017 PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

#### OVERVIEW

The American Orchestras' Futures Fund is a competitive grants program designed to advance the innovative work of orchestras that belong to the League of American Orchestras. Made possible through the generous support of the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation and administered by the League, the Futures Fund builds on the results of the earlier League-sponsored and Getty-funded grants to orchestras and replaces that program. The Getty Foundation's generous support of the new Futures Fund allows the League to grant larger and longer-term grants than those previously available.

The overarching goal of the Futures Fund is to cultivate a culture of learning and innovation in orchestras of all sizes, structures, and locations. Toward this end, the Futures Fund will offer two-year grants to a select number of orchestras that are making investments in incubating innovation and exploring new ways of working that demonstrate impact within the organization and its audiences and communities. To foster learning and innovation across the orchestra field, the League will collaborate with the grantees to document and share their approaches, practices, and results.

The League of American Orchestras recognizes that many orchestras today are engaged in experimental work and seeks to further these efforts through the Futures Fund. The Futures Fund welcomes applications that represent concerted efforts to:

- Experiment with multi-media and new technologies inside the concert hall or outside the concert hall in order to engage with audiences in virtual and digital realms;
- Address new organizational models that explore alternatives to traditional operating models, offer new leadership structures, and redefine relationships among organizational stakeholders;
- Craft programs on or off the stage that are responsive to and reflective of their communities and the key issues they face;
- Expand the orchestra's role in society through cross-sector collaborations to address important social issues;
- Increase participation and engagement in music by racially, ethnically, and economically diverse communities;

- Research the reasons people attend, or don't attend concerts, and tailor offerings to support multiple and distinct audience segments;
- Pursue new strands of community service, such as cross-cultural creative partnerships, lifelong learning, or health and wellness programming;
- Develop new ways to advance classical music through new forms of performance, new concert experiences, and new artistic partnerships;
- Pursue other initiatives that result in organizational learning and innovation.

## FUNDING CRITERIA

The Futures Fund is designed to help orchestras develop the capacity to explore any area of their choosing — artistic, audience development, education, technology, community engagement, operating model, and others — and seeks orchestras whose forward momentum, ambition, and creative practices distinguish them as field leaders.

The Futures Fund will award two-year grants to orchestras engaged in exemplary practices that demonstrate both a culture of learning and innovation as well as potential to influence the field. Grant recipients have flexibility in determining how the funds will be used to further their work toward organizational learning and innovation. Applicants will be asked to describe their past accomplishments and plans for future initiatives; to demonstrate their capacity to evaluate their experimentation and make evidence-based, adaptive decisions in response to what they're learning; and to document the ways their explorations can meaningfully contribute to field-wide learning. Proposals will be reviewed with the following criteria in mind: (Depending on the nature of proposed work, emphasis in each area may vary.)

### **1. Evidence of organization's capacity to respond and adapt to opportunities and changed circumstances:**

#### **a. Clear identification and analysis of a core issue important to the future of the applicant orchestra which is:**

- Central to its viability and relevance in its community
- Builds on past and current innovative work
- Clearly defined with long-term vision and short-term objectives
- Strategic
- Has the potential to be sustained

#### **b. A demonstrated culture of learning inside the organization:**

- In-depth internal collaboration and distributed ownership across departments, stakeholders, and constituents

- Courageous framing of institutional and community issues, and candor regarding obstacles and challenges, including past false starts, or unexpected results
- Ability to articulate the rationale for action, intended outcomes, and how results will be measured, evaluated, and shared for collective learning
- Evidence of self-reflection and continuous improvement processes
- Evidence of effective financial management
- Illustration of how the Futures Fund will enable the organization to further its innovative work

**2. Evidence of potential for impact on multiple dimensions:**

**a. Artistic Impact:**

- Evidence of compelling and engaging forms of performance and distinctive programming
- New and satisfying opportunities for musicians to perform a wider range of music
- Thoughtful artistic collaborations and partnerships

**b. Internal Impact:**

- Evidence of staff and musicians working collaboratively
- Willingness of board of directors and both senior management and musical leaders, including, but not limited to, the music director, to lead adaptive practices and take risks
- Evidence of an evolving vision and willingness to shift strategies based on changing circumstances

**c. Community Impact:**

- Evidence that the orchestra is becoming an active partner in the civic life of its community
- Evidence that community partners have input in the program design, implementation, and evaluation
- Evidence of expanded and returning new audiences

**d. Public Value Impact:**

- Evidence that the orchestra is seen in its community as a model cultural institution, deeply identified with civic vitality and identity
- Recognition of the orchestra's work beyond the concert hall in improving quality of life

**e. Field-Wide Impact:**

- Evidence of compelling practices that offer promising new directions for the orchestra field

## ELIGIBILITY

2017 applications are open for League member groups 5 – 8 and youth orchestras. Member orchestras can verify their group designation on the League website [here](#).

All applicants, regardless of their League-defined group size, must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- U.S.-based League-member adult or youth orchestra and current in its payment of membership dues to the League of American Orchestras (Non-member orchestras may join the League at the time of application to become eligible);
- Youth orchestras that are part of a professional orchestra can apply with a separate youth orchestra League membership;
- Operating with annual operating expenses of at least \$150,000 per year for each of the two most recently completed fiscal years;
- Employing at least one full-time staff member; and,
- Presenting at least three concerts annually for the public in each of the past two seasons.

## REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Orchestras meeting eligibility criteria will apply in a two-step process. Applicants will first submit Letters of Intent, from which select orchestras will be invited to submit Full Proposals. The League of American Orchestras will convene independent peer review panels for each review stages, drawn from a pool of knowledgeable experts in the orchestral field as well as from the performing arts field at large. Panels will include people with expertise in artistic programming, audience development, media and technology, financial management, governance, and education and community engagement.

Applications will be first processed by the League staff to ensure eligibility and completeness. The review panel will then evaluate each application according to the [review rubric](#). The League will make grants directly to selected orchestras.

## GRANT AMOUNT

Intended grant amounts are as follows, subject to final panel recommendations:

League member group	Grant amount	Number of grants to be awarded
Groups 5 - 8 and Youth Orchestras	\$30,000 over two years (\$15,000 per year)	Up to 18 grants total

## TIMELINE

**League Groups 5 – 8 and youth orchestras:**

August 31, 2017	Letters of Intent due
Week of October 23, 2017	Full Proposals invited
November 30, 2017	Full Proposals due
January 2018	Applicants informed of funding decision
No later than April 2018	First grant payments made

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Each grantee will be required to submit two grant reports: an interim report and a final report. These reports will be an opportunity for grantees to share what they have learned about the process of their innovation work as well as ways for capturing its outcomes. The League will develop report templates based on each grantee's proposal. Grantees will be asked to describe how the funds were ultimately used for their work, however, no detailed project budget will be required. The second-year grant payment is contingent on demonstration of the grantee's fulfillment of its intended work.

## PROMOTING FIELD-WIDE LEARNING

The League will also work with grantees to develop various ways of sharing their work with the field, which may include one or more of the following:

- Video, audio, and photographic documentation as applicable
- Preparation of written materials for *Symphony* magazine, other articles, and reports
- Participation in and/or presentations at League-sponsored events, meetings, and webinars
- Hosting visits from other grantee orchestras or other colleagues in the field

Dissemination methods will be developed in line with the resources available in each grantee's documentation plan.

To maximize learning across the field, the League has engaged WolfBrown as an evaluation partner to collaborate with the Futures Fund grantees. This will enable orchestras to tap external expertise, ensure impartiality, and increase credibility of findings.

The League will also provide up to 50 travel stipends to underwrite visits by other orchestras' personnel to grantee organizations to learn firsthand about work supported by the Futures Fund. Visitors could come from other grantee orchestras or from among other League member orchestras.

As part of their grant agreement, grantee orchestras are required to participate fully in field-wide dissemination and learning efforts.

## LETTER OF INTENT GUIDELINES

To apply, please complete the [online application form](#) and upload the following documents:

- Letter of Intent narrative (see instructions below)
- One-page description of your orchestra's current program or initiative that is most like the work proposed in the Letter of Intent, including comments on how you might change or expand it to inform its future development.
- Current year operating budget with prior two years' actual budget, on a single page
- Financial information: If available, most recently audited financial statements; if no, most recent Form 990.

Save your documents with the following naming convention and upload as PDF:

- Orchestra Name\_LOI Narrative
- Orchestra Name\_Related Work
- Orchestra Name\_Budget

**Please craft your Letter of Intent in the following format. Each section should be in 200 words or less, single-spaced using 12-point font.**

[Document heading]

Orchestra Name

City, State

Orchestra Website URL

Page #

[Narrative] Each section in 200 words or less.

**1. Summary**

- This should be able to stand alone. If the reviewer reads nothing else they should know what you want to accomplish with the Futures Fund grant.
- Address the what, who, and why of your proposed work.

**2. Core Issue**

- Explain what issue/need/opportunity you are addressing.
- Explain why it matters to your orchestra and the communities you serve. Why is this work important in your local communities?

**3. Approach**

- Give a brief overview of the activities involved, what you will do and how you will do it.
- Describe desired outcomes and impact – Who will benefit? What will change?
- Highlight why your approach merits the special attention that the Futures Fund represents (i.e., an emphasis on innovation and organizational learning)

**4. Organizational Readiness**

- Demonstrate how your organization is well-equipped to carry out the work.
- Explain who's involved and accountable, and how you will ensure this work receives sufficient support and attention of the entire organization.
- Indicate here if there will be collaboration(s) with other organizations.

**5. Learning Culture**

- Provide your orchestra's history relevant to the proposed work or past experience with experimentation, if any.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of similar work taking place elsewhere. Who else is working on this, what have they done, and how will your work benefit from, or build on, their experiences and results?

**6. Evaluation and Documentation**

- Describe your evaluation plans. How will you know you've achieved your desired outcomes?
- What quantitative and qualitative assessments will you make?

## 7. Sustainability

- Explain how the work will continue after the Futures Fund award is completed.
- How might it become an integral part of your orchestra's operations, if successful?

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