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**League of American Orchestras Launches  
The Catalyst Fund  
Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras**

**New Three-year Grant-making Program is  
Made Possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

New York, NY (January 9, 2019) –The League of American Orchestras announced today the launch of The Catalyst Fund, a three-year pilot program of annual grants to adult and youth orchestras that aims to advance their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and to foster effective EDI practices. The Catalyst Fund is supported by a three-year, \$2.1 million grant to the League from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

“As our field increasingly addresses the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, we are learning that meaningful and enduring change requires orchestras to confront their beliefs, behaviors, and practices, i.e., their cultures. Our experience and research confirm that programmatic diversity efforts fall short when not supported by rigorous examination of values and practices and an alignment among stakeholders,” commented Jesse Rosen, League of American Orchestras President and CEO. “With the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and informed by the League’s own data and research, our field can take steps to enact change on the most fundamental level, within orchestra culture.”

“Despite the artistic excellence and evolution of America’s orchestras, the intractable problem of there being four percent representation of Black and Latinx musicians has remained unchanged for some time,” said Mellon Foundation Program Officer Susan Feder. “We are proud to support the launch of the League of American Orchestras’ Catalyst Fund, which acknowledges that the lack of diverse representation is not due to a lack of talent—it’s due to an issue of access.”

**About the Program:**

The Catalyst Fund grants will generally range from \$10,000-\$25,000. Orchestras are required to use the funds to support the costs of retaining a skilled EDI practitioner to advance EDI learning objectives. Grantees will be linked into a learning community that serves as a platform to share their learning, including a dedicated online forum as well as remote and in-person convenings.

Examples of activities that may qualify for support include, but are not limited to, working with a consultant on some of the following:

- **Capacity Building** – helping board and staff leadership clarify and align their strategic thinking on this work.
- **Planning, Alignment, and Readiness** – supporting an EDI institutional audit, and/or supporting the development of an EDI plan.
- **Improving Competencies** – supporting EDI professional development, such as coaching, mentoring, or training for staff, board, and musicians.
- **Measuring Progress** – for those that have done initial work in EDI, this could include continued work such as a plan to identify progress markers and measure articulated goals and outcomes.
- **Peer and Group-Based Learning** – working with another League member in order to have a shared learning experience and have some economies of scale. (Applications from a group or consortium are welcome).

League member orchestras meeting the eligibility requirements will have until February 22, 2019 to apply. Applications will be reviewed by an independent panel of experts, and grant awards will be announced by May 17, 2019. Further details and complete application information can be accessed [here](#).

The Catalyst Fund responds to field needs expressed during the League's recent EDI planning process. Input from members revealed a momentum within orchestras towards serving people of all races, genders, and cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, but also the extent of the challenges involved. Orchestras recognized that engaging authentically and respectfully with diverse communities requires them to examine—and often change—their own values, cultures, and ways of working. Yet they also acknowledged the difficulties involved in resourcing and advocating for this work within their own organizations. Orchestras cited the need for

guidance from EDI leaders/practitioners, and for access to adequate financial and staff resources.

The Catalyst Fund is also informed by earlier dialogue and research. A major national convening co-hosted by the League and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in December 2015 was catalytic in launching national task forces and annual convenings to engage orchestras in EDI efforts. Two major League studies, *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, and *Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African American and Latino Musicians*, further served to inform and stimulate action. In April 2018 the League launched, in partnership with The Sphinx Organization and the New World Symphony, the National Alliance for Audition Support, a national initiative that offers Black and Latinx musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, and audition travel stipends. Additional information on these programs and other EDI activity is available from the League's online [EDI Resource Center](#).

**About the League:**

The **League of American Orchestras** leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 2,000 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The only national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning *Symphony* magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org).

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