

The Catalyst Fund Incubator Program Guidelines

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Introduction

The Catalyst Fund Incubator is a program of the League of American Orchestras designed to build the capacity of 20 member orchestras to nurture and sustain a culture that empowers a feeling of inclusivity among stakeholders, which will enable the orchestra to welcome the diversity it seeks.

There are many ways to define equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), and 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 and power.
- » **Diversity** is representation of our individual and collective identities.
- » **Inclusion** creates a culture of belonging that embraces participation by everyone.

Application Deadline: Friday, October 22, 2021

Background

The Catalyst Fund was created in response to feedback from member orchestras and thought partners. During conversations, surveys, and round tables conducted between 2016 and 2018, orchestras increasingly recognized our field's history of discrimination and lack of inclusion, and expressed a strong desire to better serve people of all races, abilities, and genders from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, they realized they needed external support to achieve their goals in authentic and sustainable ways. The resulting pilot program provided annual grants to orchestras ranging from \$12,000 to \$25,000 for hiring professional EDI consultants to provide education and training, organizational audits and plans, and to conduct facilitation activities designed to help orchestras build more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizational cultures.

Through 78 grant awards to 49 orchestras totaling \$1.55 million, the League learned that key indicators of healthy organizational change in orchestras are often demonstrated by the following actions and attitudes:

- » Alignment from all stakeholder groups in the orchestra on the importance of using an EDI lens at the organization
- » A high degree of organizational awareness and honest reflection of its status quo with a corresponding commitment to take action that addresses the issues that impede inclusion
- » Creating plans with sustainable structures and accountability, and appropriate metrics, both qualitative and quantitative

- » An investment of resources in the orchestra's operational budget dedicated to EDI (e.g., staffing, money, time, community partners, etc.)
- » Approaching the work with humility and openness, authenticity, patience, and understanding of and appreciation for the non-linear nature of the process

Incubator Program Overview

To assist orchestras in creating more equitable cultures, the League has designed the next phase of The Catalyst Fund to incorporate elements from technology incubator models, such as supporting the development of new ideas through mentorship and guidance, and connection to peer communities engaged in similar developmental processes. A key focus of orchestras participating in The Catalyst Fund Incubator will be to build capacity to attract new resources for their EDI work such as funding, staff, board members, musicians, and other community partnerships, to support their work of embedding EDI into all aspects of the organization, including financial and artistic planning, civic engagement activities and plans, and business operations.

During The Catalyst Fund Incubator program, the League will provide the following resources for orchestras in support of this focus:

- » Three years of grant support totaling \$75,000, enabling successful applicants to work with a professional EDI consultant to create a plan and conduct activities that will assist the orchestra in achieving its vision of a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizational culture
- » A peer learning community that includes both online and in-person discussion forums, and convenes formally two times per grant year, to help orchestras brainstorm, strategize, and share progress and challenges with others who are working to improve the culture at their organizations using an EDI lens
- » Sequenced curricular modules to support orchestras in building their capacity to create and sustain an organizational cultural that facilitates the change they seek
- » Mentorship and guidance from convening faculty and guests, League staff, and other EDI experts

Program Components

Becoming a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organization neither happens overnight, nor can be achieved by simply adding more people of color, women, or LGBTQIA+ people to the staff or board to increase representation. People must feel seen, heard, and meaningfully empowered within the organization to make change. In organizational cultures that are inclusive, all stakeholders feel empowered to share and contribute, which encourages a genuine sense of belonging that includes factors like:

- » A positive perception that the organization is open to learning about and incorporating views that are unfamiliar
- » The degree to which people feel the organization responds to and manages change in a timely manner

- » Transparency in who is involved in decision making and how those decisions are communicated
- » The quality of people's social connections within the organization

Successful applicants to The Catalyst Fund Incubator can articulate their commitment to sustaining a more inclusive vision for their organization over the three-year grant term, regardless of technical challenges such as personnel changes. While that vision can be singular or sparked and initially driven by one person or a small group, successful implementation requires engaging all stakeholders to create workable plans throughout the process.

Cohort Learning

The Catalyst learning community is meant to be a resource to orchestras through peer-to-peer support and meaningful information exchange. Orchestras will participate in this community through five convenings during each grant year (three curricular modules and two formal peer learning convenings) in addition to informal and facilitated discussion via the League360 platform and Slack channels. Orchestras are encouraged to have dedicated representatives from each internal constituency (i.e., administrative, educational, and artistic staff, board, musicians) participate in these activities. Orchestra representatives will be tasked with completing a one-sentence personal and organizational reflection after attending the convenings to help their orchestra chart the course of its learning journey throughout the three-year incubation program. Regular participation by Incubator orchestras in cohort learning activities is expected, as it ensures cohesion and community building during the program.

Directed Grant Support

The Catalyst Fund Incubator provides orchestra participants a total of \$75,000 to support their EDI activities over the three-year grant term (\$25,000 each grant year) based on satisfactory progress on their goals and plans, in addition to their program participation.

As an organizational culture change accelerator, The Catalyst Fund Incubator program is an investment in which the League is deeply committed. We believe investing in the growth and learning of orchestras participating in the incubator has the potential to transform the orchestral field in meaningful ways.

To receive subsequent years of support, participating orchestras will be required to be active participants in curricular and peer learning sessions and complete the reflections and check-in activities assigned by League staff, convening faculty, and guests. Orchestras will also be required to complete interim reports at the end of Years One and Two of the program as well as a Final Report and Reflection on their journey and their overall Catalyst Fund Incubator program at the end of the three-year grant term.

Eligibility

The Catalyst Fund Incubator is designed to provide support, guidance, and feedback to orchestras that wish to take their EDI learning and action to the next level. During the program, participating orchestras will be actively considering how to create appropriate business structures and cultural models that support their EDI learning and vision.

To apply for The Catalyst Fund Incubator, 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 is current with all authorized installment agreements for the membership years that occur during the three-grant term;
 - 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 term.
- » 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 grant amount (i.e., contribute a minimum of \$5,000 of the orchestra's funds in Year One, and meet subsequent match amounts in Years Two and Three of the grant period)
- » Have presented a minimum of three public events, annually, for the previous two seasons

Non-member orchestras may join the League at the time of application to become eligible.

Ineligibility Criteria

The following orchestras are not eligible to apply for The Catalyst Fund Incubator program:

- » Orchestras that have received two or more years of grant support during The Catalyst Fund pilot program (2019, 2020, 2021) are not eligible to apply for the Incubator program.

Applying for a Grant

Before applying, all applicants must attend a webinar about the application and selection process. You may register for a webinar on our [website](#). After attending the webinar, you may contact the League at catalyst@americanorchestras.org if you have additional questions about submitting your application.

Eligible orchestras may apply through Acceptd, the online application portal for The Catalyst Fund Incubator program. 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: Attachments
 - A three-year budget projection demonstrating the 20% (\$5,000) cash match each year (Please include project activities in your budget narrative.)
 - Current year organizational budget inclusive of all ongoing EDI activities
 - List of key internal personnel involved in your work during the Incubator period and a brief description of their role in the organization
 - Commitment Letter signed by the CEO, Board Chair, Music Director, and Musicians' Representative¹
 - Meeting notes confirming that each of the orchestra's constituents discussed applying for The Catalyst Fund Incubator program (i.e., board meeting, musicians' committee meeting, and staff meeting notes documenting those discussions took place)
 - 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 recommendations for 20 incubator participants according to the following criteria:

- » **Strength of Vision:** the degree to which applicants articulate and demonstrate a clear and compelling vision and rationale for the change they seek at the orchestra as a result of completing the three-year Catalyst Fund Incubator program
- » **Institutional Commitment:** the extent to which applicants articulate and demonstrate an aligned and equitably shared commitment across the organization (i.e., musicians, board, and staff) to advancing and sustaining their vision for a more inclusive organizational culture

¹ The Musicians' Representative may be represented by:

- The signature of the orchestra's elected players' representative
- The signatures of a quorum of musicians
- The signature of the orchestra's personnel manager

- » **Readiness:** the degree to which applicants articulate and demonstrate their current capacity to pursue their vision and the strategies they plan to use to implement the change they seek and sustain it beyond the three-year Incubator program

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

Applicants will be notified of decisions by December 2021. Those selected for The Catalyst Fund Incubator will receive information with guidance for selecting an EDI consultant based on the information provided in their application. Orchestras will have until early February 2022 to submit final documents to receive grant funds. Cohort activity for orchestras participating in the Incubator program begins in March 2022.

2021 Catalyst Fund Incubator Timeline

- » Program Announcement and Online Application opens **Sept 22, 2021**
- » Informational Webinar #1 (2–3:00 p.m. EST) **Sept 23, 2022**
- » Informational Webinar #2 (8–9:00 p.m. EST) **Oct 7, 2021**
- » Application Closes **Oct 22, 2021**
- » Applicant Eligibility Verified and Applications Reviewed by Independent Panel **Oct 25 through Nov 2021**
- » Applications Reviewed by Independent Panel **Dec 2021**
- » All Applicants Notified of Decision **Dec 2021**
- » Provisional Grantees Solicit and Hire an EDI Consultant **Dec 2021 through Feb 2022**
- » Final Confirmation of Grantees and Awards **Feb 2022**
- » Grant Period Begins **Mar through June 2022**

Questions

If you have additional questions about The Catalyst Incubator opportunity or wish to discuss your application, please email catalyst@americanorchestras.org.