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Twenty U.S. Orchestras to Receive Three-Year Catalyst Fund Incubator Grants, Incorporating Elements from High-Tech Incubator Models to Accelerate Organizational Inclusivity and Field-Wide Learning

Grantmaking Program, Supported by a \$2.1 Million Leadership Gift from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Reimagines Orchestras as Laboratories for the Field, Developing Strategies and Utilizing a Peer-Focused Curriculum to Help Drive Field-Wide Change

New York, NY (March 24, 2022) – The League of American Orchestras has awarded three-year, \$75,000 grants to twenty U.S. orchestras to help create more equitable organizational cultures through collaborative, peer-driven learning opportunities. Made possible by a \$2.1 million leadership grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, [The Catalyst Fund Incubator](#) drives change by incorporating models from high-tech incubators, such as creating strong peer communities for brainstorming and strategizing and developing new ideas through mentorships. An important element of the program focuses on building capacity to attract new resources, including funding and partnerships, for the orchestras' equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work.

“We’re so grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their vision and years of support, and to the 49 orchestras in the initial Catalyst Fund pilot program who have infused the field with insights and helped the entire field begin to effect change,” said Simon Woods, the League’s President and CEO. “The new Incubator program accelerates and deepens this work, inspiring orchestras to nurture and sustain inclusive organizational cultures over the long-term. I’m especially excited about widely sharing this learning, including our new guide, [Promising Practices: Actions Orchestras Can Take to Make Progress Toward Equity](#) and a fantastic slate of additional Catalyst resources to come later this year.”

About The Catalyst Fund Incubator

Community building is a strong component of the Incubator. During the three-year grant period, participating orchestras will take part in five convenings each grant year—three curricular sessions and two peer learning convenings. Informal and facilitated discussion via online communication platforms will connect participants with the wider Catalyst Fund community of previous grantees. To encourage stakeholder engagement, administrative, educational, and artistic staff, board members, and musicians from each orchestra will participate.

The grants will enable orchestras to work directly with professional EDI consultants. The consultants’ work is multifaceted: helping orchestras clarify, map and measure equity, diversity, and inclusion goals, and offering guidance on a wide array of issues, such as avoiding common pitfalls when doing EDI work; mediating conflict around differences of opinion on approach and strategy; and best practices for including a multitude of voices and perspectives, among others.

Incubator grantees were required to demonstrate strength of vision, institutional commitment, and readiness. The 20 orchestras were selected via an independent panel of EDI experts and practitioners in the arts and orchestral fields.

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About Catalyst

Launched in 2019 and preceding the Incubator, The Catalyst Fund pilot program made a strong impact on the field, with several orchestras receiving multiple grants over three years to sustain their work. 76 Catalyst Fund grants were awarded to 49 orchestras of all sizes and types, each demonstrating a strong commitment and dedication to EDI work and an increased awareness that systemic change requires a sustained effort over time. More than 80% of first-year grantees reported making either policy or programming changes as a result of their funded work, with most engaging board and musicians alongside staff.

The Catalyst Fund Incubator and The Catalyst Fund pilot program are 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 important 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, including the League's Catalyst Guides, [Promising Practices: Actions Orchestras Can Take to Make Progress Toward Equity](#) and [Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras](#), its [EDI Strategic Framework](#), and articles, webinars, and other materials, is available from the League's [Catalyst Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resource Center](#).

Catalyst is made possible by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

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2022 Catalyst Fund Incubator Grant Recipients

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
Charleston Symphony Orchestra
Greater Connecticut Youth Orchestras
Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra
Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra
Jacksonville Symphony
Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
Minnesota Orchestra
Napa Valley Youth Symphony
New Jersey Symphony
San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory
South Dakota Symphony Orchestra
Stamford Symphony
Symphony Tacoma
Chicago Philharmonic
Louisville Orchestra
Walla Walla Symphony
Winston-Salem Symphony
Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra
Youth Orchestras of San Antonio (YOSA)

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 1,800 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 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.