

Inclusive Stages

A program of the League of American Orchestras

Inclusion Index Survey Preparation & Sample Communications

Updated May 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
WHY IS THE INCLUSION INDEX IMPORTANT?.....	3
WHY IS IT MEANINGFUL THAT WE PARTICIPATE?.....	3
HOW DOES THE SURVEY WORK?.....	3
WHEN WILL THIS SURVEY TAKE PLACE?.....	4
HOW WILL THIS DATA BE USED?.....	4
WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?.....	4
OTHER QUESTIONS?.....	5
Preparing to Participate	6
SUGGESTED COMMUNICATIONS TIMELINE	6
Communication Templates.....	7
INTENT TO PARTICIPATE EMAIL.....	7
REMINDER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE	9
INTRODUCTORY EMAIL	10
INCLUSION INDEX SURVEY LAUNCH EMAIL.....	11
REMINDER EMAIL #1	12
REMINDER EMAIL #2.....	13
REMINDER EMAIL #3	14
THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS EMAIL	15

Introduction

The League of American Orchestras' Inclusion Index was originally developed and launched through Inclusive Stages, in partnership with Accordant Advisors in October, 2023. The Index is a tool to understand how individuals feel in their workplace and is founded on the principles of emotional intelligence and psychological safety. The survey asks about individuals' emotions, behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions across six dimensions of inclusion.

This coming Fall, we will be launching a follow-up survey to the 2023 Inclusion Index. The goal of this preparatory document is to provide guidance to help orchestras prepare to participate in the survey. In addition, the document includes sample language for communications that provide clarity about this research and are intended to encourage participation in the survey.

By participating in the Inclusion Index, you will gain critical data about your orchestra and help shape our collective understanding of the experiences of staff and musicians across the field.

WHY IS THE INCLUSION INDEX IMPORTANT?

In order to create an orchestra community that is truly inclusive, we must understand, represent, and support the many distinct groups that make up our communities in meaningful ways. To do this, we must hear from our people to understand how they identify, what their experience is, and how we can better serve them, each other, and the broader field. We believe understanding the experience and opportunity within each orchestra and the field is an important step toward creating excellent and innovative orchestral experiences in a richly diverse, contemporary world.

WHY IS IT MEANINGFUL THAT WE PARTICIPATE?

Caring for culture is an important and necessary aspect of any effort to increase representation. In addition, this work supports an orchestra's ability to achieve its mission in a more unified manner. Participation in this survey will amplify your staff and musicians' voices and will help you understand the degree to which they feel safe, supported, and heard. The survey aims to show us where we are today. With this, we can map our way forward.

HOW DOES THE SURVEY WORK?

For this year's survey, we are working with Grand Strategy Consulting, which is the successor to Accordant Advisors and comprises the same research partners who led the survey in 2023. The data and comments that musicians and staff from your orchestra provide will go directly to our partners at Grand Strategy Consulting...not to your orchestra and not to the League. All input will remain **strictly confidential and anonymous. Grand Strategy Consulting will summarize the results of the survey in ways that protect the identity of every participant.** A generous

grant from the Sakana Foundation has made it possible to offer these reports at no charge to member orchestras.

Though participation is voluntary, we strongly encourage every orchestra, their musicians, and staff to share their voice by completing the survey once it is released.

WHEN WILL THIS SURVEY TAKE PLACE?

- Survey Participation Confirmation – **Friday, September 18**
- Receipt of Your Orchestra’s Survey Link – **Friday, September 25**
- Your Launch of the Survey to Your Musicians and Staff – between **Monday, September 28 and Friday, October 2**
- Survey Close – **Friday, November 13**

Member orchestras will be able to sign-up to participate in the Inclusion Index between **early August and September 18**. Sign-up details will be shared on the Inclusive Stages [website](#) and via email. The sign-up process will include a question about the total number of staff and musicians that you are inviting to participate in this survey. The numbers submitted should reflect your orchestra’s decisions on the parameters listed below (see Who Can Participate?) and will be used to determine each orchestra’s response rates throughout the survey period. We strongly recommend utilizing the communications templates to encourage strong participation from within each orchestra.

The Inclusion Index survey will launch on **Monday, September 28** and will remain open until **Friday, November 13**. This deadline is final and extensions will not be granted. If you have questions or comments in advance of the launch, or at any point in the process, you can reach out to inclusivestages@americanorchestras.org.

HOW WILL THIS DATA BE USED?

The information gathered in this survey will be used to provide orchestras with short reports that are unique to their own staff and musicians. These reports will contain insights into the orchestra’s organizational culture, which can be used to identify opportunities for internal growth and improved support for staff and musicians. If interested, orchestras will be able to contract directly with Grand Strategy Consulting for more individualized guidance based on their survey findings.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?

We aim to ensure that the survey is beneficial for everyone participating, and in particular, that the anonymity of individual survey respondents is protected regardless of each orchestra’s staff size. Orchestras who have a response rate higher than the thresholds below will each receive a unique report with data and insights about what it’s like for individuals working at that orchestra.

Staff Members

For orchestras that have working board members or musicians who take on functions that would otherwise be staff duties, we recommend that each individual consider their most important and meaningful role when choosing whether to participate as a staff member. As an example, if an individual is a board member but takes on some duties ordinarily done by a staff member *and* if that individual feels that their most meaningful contributions to the orchestra fall under the duties ordinarily done by a staff member, that individual should participate as a staff member.

Within these parameters, the thresholds for staff participation are as follows:

- If your orchestra has 10+ staff members (*paid or unpaid*), a minimum of 25% of them must participate in the survey in order to receive a staff report.
- If your orchestra has between 5 and 9 staff members (*paid or unpaid*), a minimum of 50% of them must participate in the survey in order to receive a staff report.
- If your orchestra has 4 staff members (*paid or unpaid*), a minimum of 75% of them must participate in the survey in order to receive a staff report.
- If your orchestra has 1-3 staff members (*paid or unpaid*), 100% of them must participate in the survey in order to receive a staff report.

Musicians

Regardless of the number of staff members, a minimum of 25% of your orchestra musicians must participate in the survey in order to receive a musician report.

For orchestras who have large rosters of rotating musicians (e.g. over 200 musicians), we recommend inviting participation from those musicians who either have an appointed position or have performed consistently with your orchestra. Your orchestra can decide where the threshold of 'performed consistently' falls.

OTHER QUESTIONS?

Thank you for supporting this critical work by participating in the survey. If you have any questions about the Inclusion Index in the meantime, please contact

inclusivestages@americanorchestras.org.

Preparing to Participate

Due to the sensitive nature of the questions included in the survey, it is vital that orchestras share information about the survey well in advance. By doing so, you will gain the valuable opportunity to build the alignment and buy-in necessary to produce a strong response rate. We have included a suggested communications timeline, which includes sharing preliminary information about the survey and your orchestra's participation in it.

Communication is key! Please use internal meetings as an opportunity to enthruse your staff and musicians about the Inclusion Index, explaining the importance of the work for your organization.

Please note that for all of the communication templates, we **strongly recommend** tailoring them to your orchestra's tone and style.

SUGGESTED COMMUNICATIONS TIMELINE

- **May or June:** [Intent to Participate email](#)
- **Late-August or early-September:** [Reminder of intent to participate](#)
- **Monday, September 21–Friday, September 25:** [Introductory email to your orchestra](#)
- **Monday, September 28:** Survey opens
- **Monday, September 28–Friday, October 2:** [Launch of the Survey to your orchestra](#)
Note: While you can choose to launch your survey any day during this period, the survey will close on Friday, November 13 regardless.
- **Tuesday, October 13:** [Reminder email #1](#)
- **Wednesday, October 28:** [Reminder email #2](#)
- **Thursday, November 12:** [Reminder email #3](#)
- **Friday, November 13:** Survey closes
- **Friday, November 13 or Monday, November 16:** [Thank You and Next Steps email](#)

Communication Templates

INTENT TO PARTICIPATE EMAIL

Suggested timeframe: May or June

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other
Subject: Important Fall Initiative: Inclusion Index Survey

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you today to share something that I believe matters deeply—not just to me, but to all of us as an orchestra.

In the Fall, we will be participating in an initiative through the League of American Orchestras called the Inclusion Index, which will involve a survey focused on inclusion and belonging. I'm writing to you now, well in advance of the survey launch, because I want you to have time to reflect on what this means and why we are doing it.

This survey is a structured effort to understand how our staff and musicians genuinely feel about working at [Orchestra Name]. It is an invitation to share your perspective—your sense of belonging, the behaviors you experience and observe, and the values you see reflected (or not reflected) in our day-to-day environment. The questions will ask about your emotional experience at work, the ways we cultivate a sense of belonging or fall short in that endeavor, and what you believe about our orchestra's culture.

Some of these questions may feel vulnerable to answer. That is intentional. We cannot understand where we truly are—or where we need to grow—without asking the kinds of questions that go deeper than the surface. This survey will give us a clear picture of our current culture and will allow us to make informed decisions about where and how to improve.

What can you expect?

- Your responses will be anonymous and completely confidential. The survey is designed so that no response can be traced to an individual, and all information will be aggregated before being shared with either the League or our leadership team.
- There are no wrong answers. Your honest perspective is what we need, even when it is uncomfortable.
- We will take your feedback seriously. Once we receive the findings, we will share them with staff and musicians, and we will use the findings to create meaningful change for all of us.

The survey will be launched in late-September. There is no action required of you at this time; however, I encourage you to sit with this information. Between now and the launch of the survey, you may have questions. If so, you can contact the League team at

inclusivestages@americanorchestras.org for more information about the project, or you can reach out to me.

Your voice is important and will help us create a stronger community. Thank you for helping us build a more inclusive [Orchestra Name].

Kind Regards,

Name

Title

REMINDER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE

Suggested timeframe: Late-August or early-September

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other
Subject: Happening Soon: Inclusion Index Survey

Dear Colleagues,

Earlier this summer, I wrote to you about an important initiative in which our orchestra will be participating: the League of American Orchestras' Inclusion Index survey. I wanted to follow up as we near the end of summer and approach the survey launch date.

First, thank you to those of you who have already reached out with questions or thoughts. Your engagement means a great deal, and it reinforces why this work matters.

As a reminder, this survey will ask you to reflect on your experience working here—your sense of belonging, the behaviors and values you observe in our workplace, and your beliefs and perceptions about our orchestra's culture. The questions are intentionally personal. They are designed to help us understand how it feels to be part of this organization, as well as the habits, behaviors, and systems that form our culture.

Again, your responses will be anonymous and completely confidential.

As we get closer to the survey period, I encourage you to do the following:

- Reflect on your experience. We need your honest perspective and there are no right or wrong answers.
- Speak up if you have questions. If anything is on your mind about the survey – how it works, how the data will be used, or anything else – please reach out to the League's team at inclusivestages@americanorchestras.org or reach out to me directly.
- Plan to participate. Your voice matters. By sharing your perspective, you will shape what we learn, and ultimately, the evolution of our orchestra.

I am committed to sharing the findings with the staff and musicians and to creating meaningful change based on what we learn.

We will be sending more information about the survey in late-September, just before the survey launches. In the meantime, thank you for your continued commitment to the [Orchestra Name] and to helping us make our culture stronger.

Kind Regards,

Name
Title

INTRODUCTORY EMAIL

Suggested date: between Monday, September 21 and Friday, September 25

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Your Voice is Important to the [Orchestra Name]

Dear Colleagues,

Over the summer, we shared with you our intention to participate in the League of American Orchestras' Inclusion Index project, in partnership with Grand Strategy Consulting. We are committed to building an inclusive culture within our orchestra: we want every staff member and musician to feel respected and experience a sense of belonging. How inclusive is our orchestra? Does our culture support engagement and belonging? Your input will help us find out.

Next week, I will send a link to a survey for the [Orchestra Name] as part of the Inclusion Index project. The Inclusion Index is a focused survey developed from years of research in emotional intelligence in organizations and will give us a sense of how we are doing. Specifically, across six dimensions of inclusion, it will help us understand whether these areas are strong or need further development. Subject to the [Orchestra Name] achieving a response rate that protects respondent anonymity, we will receive our own survey results with separate musician and staff feedback reports containing data and key insights based on our collective feedback. We are committed to sharing key findings with all our staff members and musician colleagues.

Please complete the survey – your perspective is critical. The survey is anonymous and will take you less than 15 minutes to complete. Departments or sections that have fewer than 4 respondents will be merged with other departments or sections to ensure anonymity.

All responses go directly to Grand Strategy Consulting, who will analyze the data and create a feedback report that summarizes the data for our understanding. The team at Grand Strategy Consulting are experts in creating inclusive workplaces. Many of you may know or have heard of them through their work with various orchestras, and now the League, in recent years.

Your input is important and will help us create a stronger [Orchestra Name] together. Please take the time to complete the survey.

Thank you,

Name

Title

INCLUSION INDEX SURVEY LAUNCH EMAIL

Suggested date: between Monday, September 28 and Friday, October 2

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Please complete the Inclusion Index Survey – your input is important

Dear Colleagues,

Last week, I reached out to let you know that we are launching a survey to gain insight into our culture at [Orchestra Name]. Our unique survey link has been set up and the survey is now available for your input.

The assessment will take you less than 15 minutes to complete. Your input is important.

Please **complete the survey** [ADD SURVEY LINK] by **Friday, November 13**. You can complete it on a computer or a smartphone. The survey is anonymous. Grand Strategy Consulting does not track any identifiable information and will only provide data aggregated by demographic if it is possible to do so without revealing identifiable information.

The results of the survey will help us understand our culture as you experience it and understand where we have opportunities to improve.

COMPLETE SURVEY
[ADD SURVEY LINK]

If you have questions about why we are doing this, please reach out. If you have technical difficulties with the assessment or questions, please contact Armela Toro Waters at armela@me.com.

Thank you for making time to complete the survey by **November 13**.

Kind regards,

Name

Title

REMINDER EMAIL #1

Suggested date: Tuesday, October 13

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Reminder: Please complete the Inclusion Index Survey by November 13

Dear Colleagues,

Two weeks ago you received an email encouraging you to participate in the League's Inclusion Index survey. If you have not already done so, please **complete the survey** [\[ADD SURVEY LINK\]](#) by **November 13**.

Your input into this focused assessment will help us understand where we are meeting your expectations for inclusion and where we have opportunities to improve.

The assessment will take you less than 15 minutes to complete.

COMPLETE SURVEY
[\[ADD SURVEY LINK\]](#)

The survey is anonymous. Grand Strategy Consulting does not track any identifiable information and will only provide aggregated data by demographic when possible. If you have technical difficulties with the assessment or questions, please contact Armela Toro Waters at armela@me.com.

Thank you for participating in the survey as we work to build an inclusive culture.

Kind regards,

Name

Title

REMINDER EMAIL #2

Suggested date: Wednesday, October 28

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Reminder: Please complete the Inclusion Index Survey by November 13

Dear Colleagues,

There are just over two weeks remaining to participate in the League's Inclusion Index survey. If you have not already done so, please **complete the survey** [\[ADD SURVEY LINK\]](#) by **November 13**.

Your perspective is critical to us. By participating in this focused assessment, you will help us understand where we are meeting your expectations for inclusion and where we have opportunities to improve.

The assessment will take you less than 15 minutes to complete.

COMPLETE SURVEY
[\[ADD SURVEY LINK\]](#)

As a reminder, the survey is anonymous and Grand Strategy Consulting does not track any identifiable information. If you have technical difficulties with the assessment or questions, please contact Armela Toro Waters at armela@me.com.

Kind regards,

Name

Title

REMINDER EMAIL #3

Suggested date: Thursday, November 12 - day before the survey closes

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Last chance to participate in the Inclusion Index Survey!

Dear Colleagues,

You've seen the various emails over the past several weeks encouraging you to complete the League's Inclusion Index survey. If you have not already done so, please **complete the survey** [ADD SURVEY LINK] by **EOB tomorrow**.

Your input is important. The survey will take you less than 15 minutes to complete. Thank you.

COMPLETE SURVEY

[ADD SURVEY LINK]

If you have questions about why we are undertaking this important work, please contact me. If you have technical difficulties with the assessment or questions, please contact Armela Toro Waters at armela@me.com.

Kind regards,

Name

Title

THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS EMAIL

Suggested date: Friday, November 13 or Monday, November 16

From: Orchestra's CEO, ED, or other

Subject: Thank You and Next Steps for the Inclusion Index

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for participating in the League's Inclusion Index survey. The survey is now closed and Grand Strategy Consulting will begin analyzing the survey submissions.

Subject to our orchestra achieving a response rate that protects respondent anonymity, our leadership team will be provided with a report containing data and key insights based on your collective feedback. We are committed to sharing key findings with all our staff members and musician colleagues.

Thank you for participating in the survey and for helping to improve our culture of inclusion.

Kind regards,

Name

Title