

Strategic Framework

FY27–FY30

League
of American
Orchestras

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I. Introduction

Developed during a period of intense change following the pandemic and the racial reckoning, the League's 2023-26 Strategic Framework reflected an organization working to help stabilize and energize the orchestra field while responding to a wide range of competing priorities. Thanks to strong philanthropic support, a high proportion of the initiatives laid out in the plan were realized. Out of 56 strategies, 46 were launched or committed—an implementation rate of more than 80%.

In fall 2025, the League's board and staff undertook a refresh of the Framework to guide the period from 2027 through the end of the decade. Our vision, mission, and commitments remain strong and are carried forward unchanged. The updated priorities balance external strategies to support the orchestra field with internal strategies to strengthen the League's effectiveness and ability to deliver value to its members.

Orchestras today are navigating great complexity and uncertainty. Economic volatility, inflation, and evolving patterns in philanthropy are putting pressure on business models. Shifting demographics, changing audience behaviors, and the urgent need to welcome new generations into our concert halls are intensifying questions about relevance. The federal policy environment has forced arts organizations to reconsider how they articulate their commitments to inclusion, while political polarization and heightened scrutiny are increasing the need for orchestras to enhance and articulate their value to communities. Artificial intelligence is bringing seismic disruption, offering real opportunities for insight and business effectiveness and posing disquieting questions about artistic creativity, intellectual property, and the environment.

Through all of this, orchestras continue to inspire communities of all sizes across the country with their artistry. Despite the complexity of the operating environment, the way music touches millions of lives each year remains the field's north star, sustaining orchestras in their work and guiding the League in its role providing information and resources and training the next generation of leaders.

This new Strategic Framework is closely targeted at addressing the issues outlined above. It leads with two major transformational initiatives, continues with a series of focus areas tied to the critical needs of the field, and concludes by outlining internal effectiveness and business strategies that are essential to the League's ability to support the field. Appendices outline the development process and the scope of the League's current and continuing work.

We are grateful to the many people who contributed their time, insight, and experience to the development of this plan.

II. Vision, Mission, Commitments

OUR VISION

A thriving future for orchestras and their communities that celebrates creativity, artistry, and inclusion.

OUR MISSION

To champion the vitality of music and the orchestral experience, support the orchestra community, and lead change boldly.

OUR COMMITMENTS

As an organization and as individuals, we affirm the following commitments in our work together:

Service: We support our members and those who contribute to the orchestral experience.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion: We embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion as fundamentals, valuing the richness of difference, centering marginalized voices, and creating a supportive environment for all.

Advocacy: We champion the orchestral field and tell the story of its impact.

Leadership: We lead bravely, with transparency, integrity, and authenticity.

Respect: We welcome divergent views, assuming others' good intent while considering the impact of our words and actions.

Creativity: Inspired by the artistry in our field, we strive for innovation and continuous improvement in our programs, practices, and culture.

Accountability: We set ambitious expectations and we deliver on what we promise.

We work together for a common cause.

III. Transformational Investments

Between now and the end of the decade, the League will embark on two major transformational initiatives to **build the next generation of data, knowledge, and learning capacity** the orchestra field needs in a complex and rapidly changing environment. These initiatives represent strategic investments that will reshape how the League serves the field and how orchestras access knowledge, data, learning, and mentoring in the future.

A. Comprehensive Learning and Mentoring Platform

The League will build a **comprehensive learning and mentoring platform** to dramatically expand access to professional development, skills acquisition, and leadership development across the orchestra field. The platform will complement the League's long-standing selective leadership programs and extend learning and career development opportunities to the entire field.

Anchored by a new learning management system (LMS), the platform will support:

1. A new generation of **online, open-access curricula** designed for people at all career stages, across all roles and disciplines in the orchestra field; and
2. A **mentoring exchange** to support peer mentoring, knowledge-sharing, and professional support networks across the field.

The League's selective leadership programs—Essentials of Orchestra Management, the Anne Parsons Leadership Program, and the new Orchestra Intensives—will remain a central part of the League's work. The platform will work alongside these existing programs to create a comprehensive leadership development ecosystem that helps build a connected and continuously learning orchestra field.

B. AI, Technology, and Data Infrastructure

The League will make **a major investment in artificial intelligence, technology, and data infrastructure** to strengthen the orchestra field's capacity to make informed decisions and adapt to rapid technological change.

As a national service organization for which research, data, and field intelligence are core services, the League is well positioned to harness the opportunities of artificial intelligence for the benefit of

the orchestra field. By investing in technology infrastructure and supporting orchestras in staying ahead of technological change, the League will:

1. Launch an **AI-powered interactive data and intelligence hub** for the orchestra field, embedded within the League's research function;
2. Support the **field's adaptation to AI**, including developing resources to guide orchestras' effective and ethical use of AI tools;
3. Engage in **policy and advocacy related to AI's impact** on intellectual property, human creativity, and the arts sector;
4. **Streamline League operations** through improved technology infrastructure, including integrated membership and fundraising systems, digital asset management, and organization-wide project management tools.

Over time, this work will exponentially strengthen the field's ability to use data, technology, and artificial intelligence to support mission, creativity, and public value.

IV. Supporting the Field: Content and Focus Areas

The transformation in the League's technology, data, and learning infrastructure will provide new capabilities and possibilities in addressing the key areas of field-wide need that are critical for the future.

A. Relevance and Public Impact

1. Undertake a **major research initiative to study generational change in audience preferences**, leading into a learning cohort and open-enrollment professional development opportunities.
2. Create an updated, interactive version of the **Public Value Toolkit** to help individual orchestras invest in and articulate their local impact. Build a comprehensive national knowledge base to support collective action around orchestras' relevance and public value.

3. Convene field-wide conversations and develop new resources to **help orchestras engage meaningfully with societal priorities**, including health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, community cohesion, and civic identity.
4. Partner with electronic media leaders to develop curriculum around **strategy, infrastructure, content creation, and implementation for video, audio, and digital**, targeted at expanding reach, participation, and demand for live events.
5. Support the transformative work of **youth orchestras and adult orchestras' youth programs** through new **professional development opportunities**.

B. Organizational Sustainability

1. Launch a new **interactive Orchestra Statistical Report** (OSR) with integrated AI tools to aid real-time strategic decision-making, including trend analyses, guides for adoption, and extending to youth orchestras.
2. Establish a **Finance and HR Resource Center**, drawing on materials from across the broader nonprofit sector, that offers financial analysis, tools, resources, and templates to support financial planning, capitalization, liquidity, and healthy personnel practices.
3. Deliver new content and learning resources to **help orchestras understand and respond to field-wide trends**, including patterns in audience attendance and behavior, the changing philanthropic landscape, business model innovation, and strategies for long-term resilience.

C. Organizational Culture

1. Continue working toward an orchestra field that is **equitable, diverse, and inclusive** in support of long-term artistic vitality, relevance, and sustainability. Key new commitments include a sustainable extension to Inclusive Stages and Catalyst Guides, an investment in creating awareness of and support for accessibility and disability, and working to mitigate exclusion on grounds of geography and socio-economic status.
2. Support the building of **healthy and inclusive organizational cultures** through research, convenings, data, and curriculum. Embed these principles in all League leadership and convening programs.

3. Invest in **helping orchestras prevent and address sexual misconduct**, improve psychological safety, mitigate bias, and improve working conditions for all employees, through trainings, prevention and response resources, recommendations, and discussion frameworks.

D. Leadership Development

1. Work closely with musicians and the League's musician board members **to shape new ways for the League to serve musicians**, support artistry and career enrichment, deepen engagement with League programs, and strengthen ties with national musician leadership.
2. Relaunch the **Women in Classical Music** gathering on a bi-annual basis in partnership with an orchestra to be announced.
3. Produce **new artistic leadership resources**, including publishing a second edition of the Music Director Search Guide, seeding dialogue about the future role of our artistic leaders, and developing a new set of guidelines for Assistant Conductor positions.
4. **Expand League offerings for orchestra board members**, including refreshing the Noteboom Governance Center, expanding access to board chair roundtables, developing virtual learning opportunities, increasing availability of customized data, and further developing the Board Forum at Conference.
5. Build the **League's student constituency** into a must-join home for college students, exposing them to the full range of orchestra careers, reimagining pathways into orchestra administration, and nurturing future audiences and volunteer leaders.

V. League Internal Strategies

In addition to the Field Focus Areas outlined above, the following represent the League's major internal strategies for the coming period.

1. Continue to build an **inclusive, supportive, and rewarding employment experience** for League team members, including providing ongoing staff training and dedicated funding for individual professional development.

2. Add a new position of **Member Engagement Coordinator** to expand access to networking opportunities, improve awareness of current League resources, improve new member onboarding, establish field-wide mentorship opportunities, streamline constituency management, and better integrate membership and donor operations.
3. Invest in **League Board of Directors effectiveness and impact**, continuing to increase diversity, active participation, and philanthropy, as well as increasing direct engagement from League board members with member orchestra board members, adjacent boards, and other regional networks.
4. Develop a **long-term financial strategy** built on a sustainable blend of earned and contributed revenue, ensuring capacity to support core operations and new strategic initiatives beyond the campaign period.
5. **Exceed the \$7M cash goal for the Amplify Campaign** through continued major gift solicitations and extend the Campaign goal to \$10M through major and planned gifts.
6. **Grow annual fund revenue by 4% each year** to help support sustainable annual operations following the Amplify campaign.
7. **Revisit membership and donation structures** and improve engagement and case-making for supporting the League.
8. Define and build **engagement strategies and pipelines** for Annual Fund donors, League Board, President's Council, League Council, Volunteer Council, and League Alumni Network to increase affinity and encourage increased philanthropy.
9. **Unlock latent philanthropic potential** to support the League's mission through improving awareness of League programs and content and systematic nationwide engagement with orchestra board members.

May 2026

VI. Appendices

Appendix I—Summary of Planning Process

Work began in summer 2025 with a comprehensive membership survey, analysis of web usage data, a SWOT assessment, and an environmental scan, all of which provided insight into the operating context, member needs, engagement patterns, and areas of opportunity. In fall 2025, these findings were explored through a series of staff and leadership team retreats and a full board meeting, shaping the direction and content of an initial draft.

In early 2026, the draft was tested and refined through feedback at the Midwinter Managers Meeting, alongside further consultation with board and staff. A final draft was reviewed by board committees prior to approval by the League's board at its April 2026 meeting.

Appendix II—Ongoing Core Activities and Key Programs

Membership and Field Convening

National Conference and Midwinter Managers Meeting

The League's principal national convenings, bringing the field together for peer learning, professional development, field-wide dialogue, and shared strategy.

Constituency Groups and League360

Role-based networks, convenings, and an online engagement platform supporting connection, exchange, and problem-solving across orchestra sizes and roles.

Board and Governance Engagement

Board Chair roundtables, the Orchestra Board Member Forum, and governance resources supporting effective board leadership.

Leadership and Professional Development

Essentials of Orchestra Management

The League's flagship leadership program for early- and mid-career professionals, building competencies and innovation in all key areas of orchestra management.

Leadership Pipeline Programs

The Anne Parsons Leadership Program and Orchestra Intensives, supporting executive readiness, specialized administrative expertise, and inclusive leadership pathways.

Research, Data, and Resources

Orchestra Statistical Report (OSR)

The League's primary financial and operational benchmarking resource, supporting strategic planning, board oversight, and comparative analysis across the orchestra field.

Salary and Benefits Report

Benchmarking report promoting salary transparency and fairness across the field, and empowering employees to advance their careers.

Resources

Orchestras-at-a-Glance, Effective Orchestra Governance Guide, Catalyst Guides, plus digital resources on critical topics including fundraising, audience diversification and growth, and preventing and addressing sexual misconduct.

Knowledge Center

Email and phone inquiry service, helping members to understand and apply League data in furthering their orchestra's strategic and operational priorities.

Research Initiatives

Longitudinal research in partnership with leading research organizations, examining programming trends and audience behavior, plus orchestra-specific reports on key financial topics including endowments, business models, and best practices.

Artistic, Education, and Community

Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation Orchestral Commissions Program

National commissioning initiative supporting new music and increasing gender diversity among composers presented on orchestral stages.

Cross-Sector Innovation

Programs and partnerships advancing orchestras' work in areas such as community engagement, civic collaboration, and music and health.

Youth and Student Orchestra Engagement

Support for youth and student ensembles as integral components of the orchestral ecosystem.

Community Partnership Mapping

Sector mapping and impact initiatives highlighting orchestras' civic reach and strengthening their role as community anchors.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Inclusive Stages

National initiative expanding onstage racial diversity through a cohort approach including orchestras, youth ensembles, and training organizations.

National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS)

Field-wide audition preparation network supporting musicians from historically excluded communities and strengthening equitable access to orchestral careers.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Data Hub

Data, case studies, and guides that support evidence-based approaches to help build an orchestra field that is fair, accessible, and welcoming to all.

Advocacy and Public Policy Leadership

National Advocacy Efforts

A national voice for orchestras, raising public awareness and advancing policy priorities related to the arts, nonprofit sustainability, music education, and international artistry.

Advocacy Alerts and Member Mobilization

Policy updates and calls to action enabling coordinated engagement at local, state, and federal levels.

Advocacy Toolkits and Training

Resources and guidance enabling orchestra leaders, staff, musicians, and boards to communicate their public value and advocate at the local, state, and federal levels.

One-On-One Advocacy Support

Direct advisory service to individual orchestras on policy-related questions and challenges.

International Presence

Representation of American orchestras in global treaty negotiations and other areas of international cooperation and exchange.

Publications and Communications

Symphony Magazine

Flagship editorial platform including field-wide news and regular, new editorial content

Field Newsletters and Digital Updates

Regular communications sharing resources, research, opportunities, and League initiatives.

Media Relations

National and local press to highlight members and tell the stories of the orchestra field.