FAQS: The Catalyst Fund

Section I: About EDI

How is the League defining equity, diversity, and inclusion?

Equity is fair treatment, equal opportunity, and fairness in access to information and the distribution of resources. Equity considers underrepresentation and historic marginalization and is most often measured by the actions organizations take and how those actions are perceived by its communities. Equity (or a lack of it) plays out in conscious and unconscious ways within our institutional practices, such as the types of holidays we observe or the ways we recruit and engage with orchestral staff, board members, and musicians from underrepresented communities.

Diversity is representation of our individual and collective identities. Identity markers such as age, differing abilities, education, ethnicity, gender expression, geographic location, marital and family status, national origin and immigration status, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background manifest differently depending on the context, meaning our definition of diversity is ever-shifting and needs to be. Diversity may look different from one city or state to another, due to population demographics, but it is recognizable when people with different backgrounds and experiences from within a community are present. Each organization must identify which perspectives are well represented and underrepresented within their staffs, boards, and musicians, and must consider how well they represent their larger community.

Inclusion creates a culture of belonging that embraces participation by everyone. The degree to which individuals from a wide range of backgrounds can participate fully in the decision-making processes and practices within the organization and their comfort in doing so is a measure of inclusion. For example, if an orchestra creates a culturally-specific fellowship program for musicians but does not include musicians from that culture in the planning and evaluation process, or in mentoring fellows, fellows are unlikely to feel integral to the orchestra.
Why are equity, diversity, and inclusion important to the League?

The League believes that a commitment to EDI is foundational to upholding the principles of equality and fairness inherent in creating a more just society. The League aspires to support orchestras in attaining unparalleled artistry and celebrating broad-based audience engagement through providing tools and resources for members’ growth. A deeper understanding of the breadth of underrepresented communities will only enhance orchestras’ understanding or equity, diversity, and inclusion and strengthen their ability to embrace and practice EDI principles.

The League itself is on a learning journey to develop authentic EDI practices, and it stands committed to growing in knowledge and understanding to support field progress. Underlying this commitment are our beliefs that advancing EDI is:

- Imperative for meaningful, authentic, and relevant relationships with communities
- Fundamental for creating cultures where creativity flourishes and all staff, musicians, and boards are supported in bringing their full identities into their orchestras
- Necessary for the innovation that orchestras must continually pursue to adapt to their changing environment and be fiscally secure and artistically vibrant
- Vital in attracting and retaining the highest levels of talent to all dimensions of orchestras—musicians, staff, boards, and artistic leadership
- Essential to the long-term sustainability of orchestral performance and the viability of the institutions that support it
- Foundational to upholding the principles of equality and fairness inherent in creating a more just society

Is this program suitable for my orchestra if we have not yet undertaken any EDI work?

The League aspires to support members at any point in their EDI journey, and we welcome orchestras with a range of experience to apply for Catalyst Fund grants. However, we will prioritize proposals from orchestras with a demonstrated and strong commitment to growing their understanding and application of EDI principles.

Where can I go if I would like additional learning resources on equity, diversity, and inclusion?

The League’s online Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Center offers hundreds of resources.
Section II: About the Catalyst Program

Who is eligible to apply?

The Catalyst Fund is open to all League member orchestras based in the United States (both adult and youth), whose membership is in good standing. The Catalyst Fund is not open to member organizations based outside of the United States, or to other member types, such as festivals or corporate members.

How frequently is this grant program offered?

The Catalyst Fund is a pilot grant program, made possible with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation. Under the program’s current structure, Catalyst grants are available in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Are the grants renewable?

The Catalyst Fund offers one-year grants. Prior grantees may apply in future years where they are able to show exceptional progress and authenticity toward advancing EDI and make a strong case for how a renewed grant would further progress this work.

What is the grant range?

The Catalyst Fund grants generally range from $10,000 to $25,000.

What are some of the ways these grant funds could be used?

The Catalyst Fund aims to support internal organizational development and capacity building around EDI to help orchestras be better prepared to create and deliver their external programming and engage with their communities. Examples of activities that may be supported by Catalyst Fund grants include, but are not limited to:

- Helping board and staff clarify and align their strategic thinking on EDI issues
- Conducting an institutional audit and/or developing an EDI plan
- Professional development such as coaching, mentorship, or training for staff, board, and musicians
- Developing recruitment materials and hiring practices that demonstrate prior knowledge and understanding of the principles of diversity to emphasize inclusion and equity
Is the Catalyst program just about race and ethnicity?

Each individual orchestra should consider its local context and think of ways EDI principles can address inequity and under-representation among the communities it serves. Underrepresented communities may be defined by their race and ethnicity, or by other characteristics of personal identity including socio-economic status, educational attainment, non-traditional pathways to professional life, age, ability, gender expression and sexual orientation, and religious affiliation. The League recognizes that many of the communities served by member orchestras are racially and ethnically homogenous, yet diverse in terms of income and socio-economic background.

Section III: Applying for a Grant

How do I complete the application?

Eligible orchestras may apply for a Catalyst Fund grant through the online application. (Note that online submission through Acceptd is required.)

Applicants must create an account and must complete all required fields, providing information about your orchestra, your proposed project, and the community in which your orchestra resides. In addition, applicants must upload the following documents as PDF attachments:

- A one-page letter that states the degree of commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the proposed project, signed by your organization’s board chair, executive director, and music director (or musician representative)
- A copy of your organization’s most recent financial audit
- A preliminary project budget

Who do I contact if I need technical assistance in completing this grant application?

If you have additional questions after attending a webinar (October 10, November 7, or 21, 2019), please contact us at catalyst@americanorchestras.org. We will respond to your inquiry within twenty-four hours.
Must my organization have a consultant partner identified in order to apply?

Applicants must plan on working in partnership with an external EDI expert to refine and apply their EDI goals. However, applicants are not required to identify or contract an EDI consultant as part of their initial application. Orchestras offered a provisional grant are required to engage a consulting partner to receive grant funds and will have approximately fourteen weeks to search for and hire an EDI consultant.

Can we apply as part of a consortium or partnership?

Applicants wishing to pursue this work as part of a consortium or partnership may do so in collaboration with other eligible League members. This may be of interest especially to organizations that have regional orchestra partners and wish to scale or replicate their EDI efforts. Please contact us to discuss your consortium proposal before submitting your application.

How do I budget for this work?

Applicants are asked to provide a provisional budget using the budget template provided. Only orchestras offered a provisional grant are required to identify a consultant they wish to contract and submit a final budget for consideration.

The League recognizes the challenge involved in estimating consultancy costs. Organizations without prior experience in engaging an EDI consultant may find it beneficial to ask for guidance from other orchestras that have undertaken such work, or to benchmark fees used to engage consultants in other projects such as strategic planning.

My orchestra was offered a provisional grant—what are my next steps?

Organizations offered a provisional grant will then have approximately ten weeks to undertake a search for an EDI consultant and to submit evidence of agreement between the consultant and the orchestra. Orchestras then have approximately four weeks to finalize the consulting contract and submit a final budget to the League reflecting updated project costs. The League will neither review the final consultancy proposal, nor assess the consultant selected. The League will make final grant determinations based on review of the final project budget submitted.

Orchestras offered a provisional grant are strongly encouraged to make plans for lead project staff to attend the Catalyst Forum at the League Conference in Minneapolis,
Minnesota from June 10–12, 2020. Travel and accommodation subsidies will be available for grantees.

Are there key questions my organization should ask itself before looking for an EDI consultant?

Before starting the process of actively soliciting an EDI consultant, you should consider where you are as an organization, why EDI is important to you, and who will manage and engage with the work ahead. A few things to consider:

- **Determine who will support this process.** EDI only works when done *in community* and not *to community*, and with an unwavering commitment from leadership.
- **Understand and articulate where you are as an organization.** To support this work, our Resource Guide, particularly the self-assessment worksheet, will help you to reflect on your organization’s progress to date, challenges, and needs.
- **Define your rationale for this work.** It may be beneficial to document why your orchestra is doing this work now, and to use this as a touchstone throughout your EDI learning journey.

Do you have any tips on drafting an RFP to engage an EDI consultant?

Please refer to the *Resource Guide: Preparing your Catalyst Application and Selecting an EDI Consultant* for more detail on how to develop an RFP, including some suggestions on pre-work that your organization should consider. Generally, your RFP could include:

- **Organization Overview:** Briefly share the mission and history of your orchestra.
- **Rationale:** Why are you doing this work at this moment in your orchestra’s history?
- **Scope of Work:** What are the guiding questions you hope to answer with this consultancy?
- **Anticipated Tasks and Deliverables:** At this stage, what tasks do you expect the consultant to undertake, and what outputs do you expect to result from their work? What milestones can you identify?
- **Resources:** What information, knowledge, connections, or other resources do you expect to supply to the consultant?
- **Reporting:** To whom will the consultant be accountable?
- **Application Process:** How—and by what date—should consultants approach you, and what information do you need in order to assess their suitability for the role?

Please see the *Resource Guide: Preparing your Catalyst Application and Selecting an EDI Consultant* for more guidance.
**My orchestra was offered a provisional grant—does the League know where I can find an EDI consultant?**

As part of The Catalyst Fund, and to support the field, the League has compiled a list of known EDI consultants (acknowledging that this list is neither the whole universe of such expertise, nor does the League endorse any particular entity). This list will be supplied to all orchestras offered a provisional grant.

**If awarded a grant, am I required to participate in cohort learning?**

The League acknowledges that EDI work can be challenging and has structured some opportunities for cohort learning exclusively for Catalyst Fund grantees. Through a series of three convenings (one in-person during the annual League conference; two virtual), and reinforced by an online forum, grantees will have the chance to share successes and challenges, learning from the experience of others to inform their own work. Grantees should plan to participate in all three convenings and are required to participate in all virtual cohort learning activities.