The Catalyst Fund

*Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in American Orchestras*

Made possible with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation

**Introduction**

The Catalyst Fund is a three-year pilot program of the League of American Orchestras that awards annual grants to build the internal capacity of member orchestras in advancing their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and in encouraging effective practice.

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.
- **Diversity** is representation of our individual and collective identities.
- **Inclusion** creates a culture of belonging that embraces participation by everyone.

**Application Deadline: Friday, December 6, 2019**

**Background**

The Catalyst Fund was created in response to field-wide feedback from the League’s most recent EDI planning process. Members expressed a strong desire to serve people of all races, abilities, and genders from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. They realize, however, there are challenges to doing this in meaningful and fiscally sound ways. EDI work requires a re-examination of orchestras’ values, cultures, and ways of working and a willingness to change. The Catalyst Fund provides grants orchestras can use to engage EDI consultants to help them create and implement strategies that are relevant to their own communities.

The League itself is on a learning path to develop authentic EDI practices and stands committed to using its resources in support of field progress. The League’s commitment to supporting the field in growing knowledge and understanding of EDI is based on the belief that:

- EDI is essential to the long-term relevance of orchestral performance and the viability of the institutions that support it.
- EDI is imperative for meaningful, authentic, and relevant relationships with communities.
- EDI is fundamental to creating cultures where creativity flourishes and all staff, musicians, and boards are supported in bringing their full identities into their orchestras.
- EDI is necessary for the innovation that orchestras must pursue to adapt to their changing environment and to be fiscally secure and artistically vibrant.
- EDI is vital in attracting and retaining the highest levels of talent to all dimensions of orchestras—musicians, staff, boards, and artistic leadership.
- EDI is foundational to upholding the principles of equality and fairness inherent in creating a more just society.
The League invites applicants with an approach to EDI that mirrors the program’s ideals, specifically:

- **Humility**: acknowledging that answers may be elusive and the process to getting them uncomfortable, but undertaking the work of EDI with openness, objectivity, and deep institutional commitment
- **Transparency**: defined as clear communication with all stakeholders and a willingness to be candid about the challenges and opportunities inherent in becoming more equitable institutions
- **Authenticity**: realizing that EDI is a sustained practice that eschews tokenism and instead embeds equity across the institution

**Program Overview**

Advancing EDI is challenging work for any institution. To aid orchestras in their pursuit of a more equitable field, The Catalyst Fund provides the following resources:

- Annual grants ranging from $10,000 to $25,000 where successful applicants will work with a skilled EDI consultant to self-define and advance internal EDI learning objectives during the one-year grant period.
- A community that serves as a platform to share their learning with other grantees and includes a dedicated online forum as well as remote and in-person convenings.
- Opportunities to lead and participate in field-building activities to give visibility to EDI work in orchestras and inspire members. Grantees may be profiled in League communications such as *The Hub* and *Symphony* magazine or speak during convenings and other League events.

**Program Components**

**Learning Goals**

The Catalyst Fund requires applicants to articulate their specific challenges, intended goals and outcomes, and what progress looks like to their organization. Applicants must plan on working with an external EDI consultant to refine their goals. (For additional guidance, please refer to the League’s [Resource Guide](#).)

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 and EDI plan
- Professional development such as coaching, mentorship, or training for staff, board, and musicians
- Developing recruiting materials and hiring practices that demonstrate prior knowledge and understanding of the EDI principles
**Cohort Learning**
The Catalyst Fund learning community is meant to be a resource to grantees by providing opportunities for peer-to-peer support and meaningful information exchange. Grantees will participate in this community through three convenings during the grant period (one, in person, at the League’s National Conference and two virtual sessions) in addition to informal and facilitated discussion via the League360 platform. Orchestras are encouraged to have representatives from each constituency (i.e., administrative staff, board, musicians) participate in these convenings and conversations. It is expected that grantees will participate regularly in the community, embodying the ideals of the program: humility, transparency, and authenticity.

**Eligibility**
To be eligible to receive grants from The Catalyst Fund, applicants must:
- Be a League adult or youth orchestra member in good standing based in the United States
- Employ at least one full-time staff member
- Match at least 20% of the project’s EDI consultant fee
- Have presented a minimum of three concerts annually for the previous two seasons
- Have completed the most recent Orchestra Statistical Report (OSR18). Note: if an orchestra has not completed the OSR, you must commit to completing it by **February 21, 2020**.

Non-member orchestras may join the League at the time of application in order to become eligible. Grant requests may not exceed 20% of the orchestra’s total operating budget.

**Consortium Grants**
A group of orchestras in a geographic region are eligible to apply for Catalyst Fund grants so long as all parties meet the above criteria. Successful consortium applications would address the following questions within the Narrative section of the application:
- Why do you want to work on this EDI project with a partner(s)?
- What benefit(s) do you hope each partner will derive from this collaboration?
- How are you ensuring an equitable distribution of work and accountability among the consortium partners?
- Is this your first time collaborating, or do you have a history of working together?

Before beginning your consortium application, please contact us at catalyst@americanorchestras.org to speak with Lee Ann Norman, Director, Learning and Leadership Programs about your project.

**Applying for a Grant**
Eligible orchestras may apply through **Acceptd**, The Catalyst Fund’s online application portal. **Before applying, applicants must attend a webinar about the application and selection process.** You may register for a webinar on our website. Applicants must create an account, complete all required fields, 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:

1. Section I: Applicant Information
2. Section II: Community Information
3. Section III: Project Narrative
4. Section IV: Attachments
   a. Project Budget
   b. Commitment Letter, signed by Executive Director/CEO, Board Chair, Music Director, and Musicians’ Representative (i.e., the orchestra’s elected players’ representative; the signatures of a quorum of musicians; the orchestra’s personnel manager) stating the orchestra’s commitment to growing understanding of EDI and the proposed project
   c. Most Recent Audited Financial Statement

Preparing Your Preliminary Budget
Applicants are required to submit a preliminary budget that estimates the costs associated with the project. To complete the template, applicants should consider the total costs necessary for implementation including, but not limited to:

- Consultancy fees
- Workshop fees
- Travel (Note: Do not include travel to the League’s National Conference in June 2020 in this budget estimate. Additional stipends and reimbursement will be available to Catalyst Fund grantees.)
- Program Administration (e.g., staff time, artistic administration, musician time, meeting expenses, etc.)

Adjudication and Selection Process
After verifying the eligibility of applicants, the League will engage an independent panel to review applications and make grant recommendations according to the following criteria:

- **Institutional Commitment**: the extent to which applicants demonstrate their commitment to advancing and sustaining EDI efforts and a culture that holds EDI as a central value and priority for their organization
- **Project Readiness**: the degree to which project goals are articulated and applicants demonstrate a clear understanding of the activities and timeline necessary to achieve stated outcomes
- **Implementation Plan**: the degree to which applicants provide a clear and detailed account of those inside the institution that would lead this work, as well as the rigorousness of the case for why the proposed work is necessary at this time
- **Balanced Cohort**: the overall composition of selected grantees to ensure a broad representation of perspectives, geographies, budget group sizes, and project scope

Applicants will be notified of decisions by February 25, 2020. Those selected for a provisional grant will receive information about the process to hire an EDI consultant and have until early May to notify the League of their intention to work with a consultant. To receive full grantee status, provisional grantees must submit a fully executed contract and final project budget for the League’s review by May 29, 2020. Final grant amounts will then be determined and announced.
2020 Catalyst Fund Timeline

| Event                                                                 | Date
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<tr>
<td>Program announcement and online applications open</td>
<td>September 25, 2019</td>
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<td>Informational Webinar #1 (2–3:00 p.m. EST)</td>
<td>October 10, 2019</td>
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<td>Informational Webinar #2 (8–9:00 p.m. EST)</td>
<td>November 7, 2019</td>
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<td>Informational Webinar #3 (2–3:00 p.m. EST)</td>
<td>November 21, 2019</td>
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<td>Application Closes</td>
<td>December 6, 2019</td>
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<td>Applicant Eligibility Verified and Applications Reviewed by Independent Panel</td>
<td>December 2019 through February 2020</td>
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<td>* Final Due Date for OSR submission</td>
<td>February 21, 2020</td>
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<td>All Applicants Notified of Decision</td>
<td>February 25, 2020</td>
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<td>Provisional Grantees Solicit and Hire an EDI Consultant</td>
<td>March through May 2020</td>
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<td>Final Confirmation of Grantees and Awards</td>
<td>May 2020</td>
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<td>Grant Period</td>
<td>June 2020 through May 2021</td>
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<td>League Annual Conference and Catalyst Forum Grantee Meeting (Minneapolis)</td>
<td>June 10–12, 2020</td>
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<td>Virtual Convening #1</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
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<td>Virtual Convening #2</td>
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<td>Grantee Feedback Session</td>
<td>May 2021</td>
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<td>Final Report</td>
<td>June 2021</td>
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Questions
If you have additional questions about The Catalyst Fund or the opportunity, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our website. If you still have questions or wish to discuss your application, you may email [catalyst@americanorchestras.org](mailto:catalyst@americanorchestras.org), and we will respond to your inquiry within twenty-four hours.