

# How to Develop Human Resources When You Have No Resources

Organizational culture is key to retaining a capable and diverse workforce with low turnover and high employee satisfaction.

by Jesse Rosen

**M**ission-driven organizations prioritize mission delivery. Staff, board, and volunteers all engage out of their passion for the mission.

That passion and commitment are what make these organizations exciting and rewarding places to work. These organizations tend to focus outward on the outcomes and progress toward mission. Unfortunately, and especially in nonprofits, that outward focus has often been at the expense of looking inward at the people and the cultures that drive the organization. We often presume that passion for mission brings high motivation, job satisfaction, and acceptance of demanding and challenging working conditions. And we have put nearly all available resources into mission delivery, leaving little or none for talent development and culture. Well, in case anyone hasn't noticed, the days of getting a free pass for neglecting talent and culture because you are nonprofit, have a worthy mission, or just can't afford it, are over.

In today's world, every organization is expected to address at least two aspects of organizational culture: sexual harass-

ment prevention, and equity, diversity, and inclusion. This is not easy or quick work, and there are no silver bullets. But there are qualified practitioners who can help, and various forms of online guidance are available. Developing and nurturing talent, while not so much in the public limelight, is no less important. Orchestras suffer from significant levels of attrition among administrators. Too many gifted,

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motivated people leave the field. The cost of turnover of a single employee is estimated at three times the annual salary of the employee. And conversely, high rates of retention are highly correlated to effective onboarding of new staff.

While the vast majority of orchestras are not scaled to support a dedicated chief diversity officer or director of human resources, there are opportunities to access



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guidance and top-level professional services. Here are some things you can do.

## Human Resources

- Through a new partnership between the League of American Orchestras and Nonprofit HR (NPHR), the country's leading provider of outsourced human resources services in the nonprofit sector, we are offering three free webinars covering key talent development practices as a benefit of League membership:
  - *Recruiting & Interviewing: Hiring the Right Talent to Move the Mission Forward*
  - *The Challenges of Managing People*
  - *Why Culture Matters to Mission*
 For more information, visit <https://americanorchestras.org/> and look for Nonprofit HR.
- Members can also obtain discounted outsourced human-resources consultation services through Nonprofit HR with the special League member-only discount of 18 percent. NPHR's standard consultation rate is \$225 per hour. Member orchestras pay an hourly rate of \$185. Nonprofit HR offers the full range of human-resources services includ-

ing talent acquisition, onboarding and orientation, employee relations and engagement, compliance, performance management, cultural assessments, and more. <https://www.nonprofithr.com/>

- The League’s online Jobs Center has a range of information and programs designed to help those interested in exploring a career in orchestra management or looking for that right next step. You can post an opening at your organization, or look for a job on the site. The site also offers sample job descriptions and tips on applying for jobs. <https://americanorchestras.org/career-center>
- Join the Society for Human Resource Management, which provides hundreds of resources for virtually every aspect of HR: interview questions, job descriptions, sample policies, etc. Memberships start at \$95 per year. <https://www.shrm.org/>
- Board members: Recruit a human-resources professional on your board. And if you don’t already have one, charter an HR or personnel task force.
- Participate in the League’s annual Salary Survey, to benchmark your salaries and see new data on HR practices and priorities.

### Organizational Culture and Talent Development

- Guidance on sexual harassment prevention is available at the League website, including guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and guidance for boards of trustees from BoardSource. [americanorchestras.org/shprevention](http://americanorchestras.org/shprevention).
- Some states have mandated sexual harassment training for all employees. Be compliant. The League had a good experience with an online provider for its training: Clear Law Institute. Cost can be as low as \$30 per employee. Visit <https://clearlawinstitute.com/> for more.
- The League’s new Catalyst Fund

awards grants that aim to build the internal capacity of orchestras to advance their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and to foster effective EDI practices. Grants support the costs of EDI practitioner consultancies with orchestras. This year’s deadline has passed but the program continues for at least two more years. <https://www.americanorchestras.org/TheCatalystFund>

- Additional equity, diversity, and inclusion resources are available on the League’s EDI Resource Center at <http://www.americanorchestras.org/EDI>.
- Appoint a chief culture officer. No, not a high-cost C-Suite executive, but if organizational culture is an institutional priority, then some person, or people, needs to be charged with looking after it. This is as true for board and musicians as it is for staff.
- Encourage qualified people you know to take advantage of the League’s talent development programs: *Emerging Leaders Program* at <http://americanorchestras.org/ELP> and *Essentials of Orchestra Management* at <https://www.americanorchestras.org/essentials>.
- Participate in the League’s peer learning opportunities like the National Conference, Midwinter Managers Meeting, and League 360 discussion groups.
- Board members can develop their talents in governance practice and leadership through the many sources available on the League’s Noteboom Governance Center at [americanorchestras.org/noteboom](http://americanorchestras.org/noteboom).
- Join BoardSource, a recognized leader in nonprofit board leadership that supports, trains, and educates nonprofit leaders from across the country and throughout the world. <https://boardsource.org/>

Several years ago, Independent Sector—the organization that represents the entire

Lisa Brown Alexander, founder and CEO of Nonprofit HR, a leading provider of human resources services for nonprofits, participated in the League’s 2018 Midwinter Managers Meeting and National Conference. A



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nonprofit sector—launched an Initiative for Non-Profit Talent and Leadership. That program framed the leadership opportunity for the sector in a way that also applies directly to orchestras. I continue to believe this framework is highly relevant to our field, so with only a few tweaks I have adapted it here as follows:

**Vision:** Orchestras are thriving, healthy, sustainable, and fueled by a diverse network of inspired and innovative leaders.

**Theory of Change:** Valuing talent and leadership through focused investment of time, attention, and resources is one of the most effective ways to achieve transformational results for thriving orchestras.

### Core Beliefs:

- Leadership isn’t about a person or a position.
- Leadership is an ongoing practice exercised at all levels.
- Equipping leaders to make an impact requires sustaining them as healthy, thriving, and whole individuals.
- Leadership embraces and respects diversity as essential to creating the conditions that elevate community solutions.
- Leaders do not work alone: collaboration among organizations and individuals is essential.
- Highly capable and diverse leadership is a consistently effective and efficient means to achieve impact in orchestras. 