



Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Catalyst Fund for my nonprofit?

The boards of all participating nonprofits must be in communication and have passed a resolution identifying their potential partner(s), and the proposed collaborative venture must meet the definition of collaboration noted on the Catalyst Fund website. Initially, the Catalyst Fund is focusing on four mission areas: arts and culture, community development, human services and youth development. For further details on nonprofit funding allocation criteria, please see criteria listed on the websites of Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) and the funding partners.

The Catalyst Fund supports collaborations in the Boston area. How is “the Boston area” defined?

The Catalyst Fund will consider supporting collaborative ventures located within the bounds of Route 128. While there may be opportunity in the future to reconsider the boundaries of “the Boston area”, our initial focus will be on organizations located within the bounds of Route 128.

What size funding allocations will the Catalyst Fund make?

The size of funding allocations will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the complexity of the proposed collaboration and the consideration of any prior work that may have been done. It is anticipated that collaborations supported by the Catalyst Fund will be awarded allocations in the tens of thousands of dollars.

To whom does Catalyst Fund financial support go?

Catalyst Fund financial support will be deployed on behalf of participating nonprofits to pay for services delivered by their preferred technical assistance provider. Funding allocations will cover all or part of the total engagement fees as determined on a case by case basis. In certain instances, the Catalyst Fund may elect to provide financing directly to the collaborating nonprofits to support the implementation of a formally agreed collaboration.

Will a Catalyst Fund application or funding allocation preclude my organization from receiving support from the individual funding partners?

No. Nonprofits and technical assistance providers can assume that any information they submit to the Catalyst Fund will impact only the funding allocation of the Catalyst Fund. Grant applications, contractual fee for service proposals, and other funding requests to the individual partners that are unrelated to the Catalyst Fund will not be prejudiced by participation in the Catalyst Fund.

Who will provide technical assistance to collaborative ventures supported by the Catalyst Fund?

The Catalyst Fund has built a pool of pre-qualified technical assistance providers based on responses to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). In order to qualify for the pool, technical assistance providers must demonstrate expertise advising on one or more aspects of nonprofit collaborations and experience in one or more of the four mission areas the Catalyst Fund is initially supporting (arts and culture, community development, human services and youth development). The Catalyst Fund intends to build a pool of technical assistance providers that reflects the diversity of the Boston area's communities.

How will technical assistance providers be matched with collaborating nonprofits?

Nonprofits will not need to identify their preferred technical assistance provider until after they have been selected for support. Participating nonprofits will select their preferred provider from the list of pre-qualified technical assistance providers that best fits their particular collaboration need and/or mission area. The Catalyst Fund is open to the use of technical assistance providers who are not in the Catalyst Fund pool, but are preferred by collaborating nonprofits. In these cases, the technical assistance provider would need to respond to the RFQ and meet the Catalyst Fund's pre-qualification requirements in order to engage with the collaborating nonprofits.

What is Nonprofit Finance Fund's role in the Catalyst Fund?

NFF is the Catalyst Fund Manager. As Manager, NFF is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Catalyst Fund in compliance with policies and procedures approved by the Advisory Board of funding partners. NFF handles inquiries, application and RFQ intake, prescreening, engagement management, as well as reporting to the funding partners.

Why is supporting collaborative ventures important?

Resource infrastructure and support for these sorts of collaborations have historically been scarce and/or fragmented in the nonprofit sector. Challenging economic times have highlighted this weakness in the sector as many nonprofits seek to collaborate as a way to change and strengthen the way they do business. The Catalyst Fund believes that comprehensive support for collaborations has tremendous potential to improve organizational effectiveness and increase social impact. The Catalyst Fund hopes to act as an accessible repository for collaboration resources and data for nonprofits in the Boston area – serving as a model that could be replicated in other communities.

What does the Catalyst Fund intend to achieve?

Over its five-year life, the Catalyst Fund intends to engage nonprofits, technical assistance providers, and funders in creating a learning community that transparently gathers information, builds systems, and deploys resources to build the field of nonprofit collaboration. By tracking trends in Boston area collaborations, assessing outcomes of Catalyst Fund sponsored engagements, and aggregating information on the emerging collaboration field, the Catalyst Fund endeavors to engage the local nonprofit community in building a strong, accessible collaboration infrastructure.