



2026 ENSEMBLE FORWARD PROGRAM

Deadline: Thursday, September 25, 2025, 11:59 PM ET

Grant Notification: December 2025

Grant Period: January 1 – December 31, 2026

This program is supported by The New York Community Trust.

ABOUT ENSEMBLE FORWARD

Chamber Music America's Ensemble Forward program is an initiative for ensembles that perform Western European classical and/or contemporary chamber music and are based in the five boroughs of New York City. The goals of this program are to support ensembles at a crucial time in their career development and to help them navigate an increasingly demanding cultural landscape.

ABOUT ENSEMBLE FORWARD

CMA will provide grant funds for applicants to move their ensemble forward organizationally by working with a business consultant on their business structure and/or business development. This will enable the groups to develop and continue to provide artistic programming at a high level along with effective organizational practices as they serve their audiences.

ABOUT ENSEMBLE FORWARD

- If awarded, all ensembles are required to participate in additional career training, advancement, and networking opportunities through CMA's Learning Residentials. Learning Residentials are learning sessions tailored to the needs of each Ensemble Forward grantee group over the course of the grant period. Sessions are led by composers, ensemble leaders, presenters, as well as business professionals.
- Priority is given to chamber music ensembles that clearly communicate how their project will strengthen and improve the ability of their ensemble to move forward to its next stage of development whether they are emerging, mid-career, or established.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Funded projects will include up to two business consultants to work with the ensemble to improve business structure and/or business development. The projects will be funded up to \$10,000.

Chamber Music America gives priority to ensembles that:

- Perform Western European classical and/or contemporary chamber music and are based in the five boroughs of New York City.
- Create more access to Western European classical and/or contemporary chamber music.
- Foster a sense of respect and appreciation for Western European classical and/or contemporary chamber music.
- Create opportunities to engage with current and new audiences.

WHO CAN ENSEMBLES WORK WITH?

- Applicants can work with up to two consultants of their choosing that demonstrate relevant and appropriate expertise, skills, or required licensing to carry out the proposed project.
- Applicants may consult with CMA staff to help identify consultant(s) for their ensemble. The consultant(s) must be a U.S. business entity.

TYPES OF PROJECTS FUNDED

Funded consultant projects can include one or two of the following:

- Strategic planning;
- Marketing & Communications assessments and planning;
- Social Media & Website assessments and planning;
- Board assessment and planning;
- Audience assessment and planning;
- Financial assessment and planning;
- Development (fundraising) assessment and planning;
- Technology assessment and planning.

FUNDING AMOUNTS

- Grants are \$10,000 per grant. The program will fund 100% of eligible expenses. No matching funds are required.
- If the total consultant project will cost more than \$10,000, applicants must provide a clear plan describing where the additional funds will come from.
- Up to \$5,000 can be used for paying the consultant(s) for the work for the project.
- At least \$5,000 will be for the ensemble to use towards their time for coordination, internal meetings, implementation, and other tasks needed to produce the project.

GRANT COMPONENTS

The parts of the grant project include:

- Grant Project for Ensembles
 - Ensemble Forward grant program consultant projects funded through the individual awards to grantee ensembles.
- Learning Residentials
 - Workshops for grantee ensembles, led by business professionals, offering relevant career development expertise. This curriculum will take place during the grant period. Possible topics will include organizational management, budgeting, taxes, fundraising, marketing, copyright, etc. The topics presented will be based on the needs of the grantee cohort. Grantees will be surveyed about their needs as part of the awarding of the grant. The sessions will be held virtually via Zoom. Participation is not optional.
- Professional development event during May - National Chamber Music Month in New York City
- Consultations with CMA Staff
- Check-ins with CMA staff on the group's progress throughout the grant cycle.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications may be submitted by ensembles based in one of the five boroughs of New York City.

An applicant ensemble is eligible if:

- It consists of 2–10 musicians with fixed personnel and instrumentation or is part of a flexible roster or a collective that performs in varying configurations of no more than 10 musicians.
- In the case of a duo, the ensemble performs as equal partners, rather than as soloist and accompanist, and consistently publicizes itself as a duo.
- It is based in one of the five boroughs of New York City.
- A minimum of one member of the ensemble is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. (This member will be the primary applicant/primary contact for the application and for the grant if the ensemble is awarded. The primary contact for the grant is responsible for all tax-related work and CMA reporting.)
- It performs Western European classical and/or contemporary chamber music.

ELIGIBILITY (CONT.)

- Members can be recent conservatory, college, or community college graduates or have reached a high level of performance through other music instruction.
 - Can include a member that is on track to graduate before December 2025 or members that are ABD (All-But-Dissertation).
 - Emerging, mid-career, or established ensembles that wish to move their group forward organizationally.
 - Ensembles can only have one (1) Ensemble Forward grant open at one time. This means prior grantees must have finished their project and submitted a final report.
 - Needs to be in compliance with all terms and conditions of all previous Chamber Music America grants. This means no overdue reports or financial obligations.
- *Non-profit status is not required for ensembles to apply.**

INELIGIBLE REQUESTS

Projects that require a fiscal sponsor

Projects requesting funding for:

- Individuals
- Ensembles in their first year
- More than one application for the same ensemble
- Student ensembles
- Ensembles whose primary musical focus is opera, choral works, and/or producing incidental music for other media
- Ensembles/organizations with outstanding (past due) obligations to Chamber Music America
- Current grantees who have an active grant project in progress can apply for an Ensemble Forward grant if they are up to date with all interim reporting.

PANEL REVIEW PROCESS

- Ensemble Forward applications are reviewed by an independent panel of business professionals familiar with the needs of the chamber music field; CMA staff and board do not provide scores or select applicants.
- [Representative list of previous CMA panelists](#)

PANEL REVIEW PROCESS - WRITTEN APPLICATION

Written application- 70% of the score

- Who is the “point person(s)” from your ensemble that will work with the consultant(s) (staff person, board member, artistic director, etc.)? Why are they best suited for this role?
- A description of the project or challenge(s) that the consultant(s) is helping the ensemble create a solution for (Why is this the right consultant for the ensemble and the project?)
- A clear explanation of how this project will help benefit the ensemble and improve its capacity and bring the ensemble forward.
- A proposal from the consultant(s), including a detailed explanation of the work to be done during the grant period and schedule for completion.
- The extent to which the project will increase the ensemble’s ability to reach audiences for their work.
- How the Learning Residentials will be valuable for the ensemble’s career as a group and what key areas the ensemble is seeking additional career advancement in?

PANEL REVIEW PROCESS - BUDGET AND AUDIO SAMPLE

Budget- 20% of score

- Evidence that the applicant has an understanding of industry rates for activities planned and capacity to carry out the project within the projected budget. (If the total project budget is over \$10,000 the applicant must describe how they will pay for additional expenses.)

Audio sample- 10% of the score

- An audio sample representing the group's ability to perform Western European classical and/or contemporary music at a high level (technical skill and musicianship).

PANEL SCORING AND FEEDBACK

- The panel uses a scoring system of 10 (excellent), 7 (good), 4 (average), 1 (non-competitive/ineligible)
- While CMA does not give out the panel scores, panel feedback is verbally provided to applicants by Grants Department after notifications are made (Applicants can schedule a short call to receive feedback.) CMA does not provide written feedback from the panel.

AWARDED GRANTEES

If awarded, one New York City-based member of the ensemble must serve as the primary contact for the grant. They will be responsible for:

- serving as the grant contact for CMA on behalf of the ensemble
- providing government issued documentation as proof of their U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status
- Providing proof of their New York City domicile
- scheduling the consulting sessions
- receiving and managing the grant funds including tax responsibilities
- filing all required reporting and associated documentation with CMA

AWARDED GRANTEES - FUND DISBURSAL

Grant funds will be disbursed as follows:

- Upon successful completion of the Grant Agreement, grantees will receive an initial disbursement of 80% of grant funds. This significant portion of funding is intended to allow for substantial progress in organizational development and planning from the outset.
- The remaining 20% of the grant will be disbursed upon completion of the project and submission of a final report.
- Grant funds are taxable income; grantees must comply with all applicable city, state, and federal laws, ordinances, codes, and regulations regarding the reporting of grant funds.

THE APPLICATION

CMA uses the online application platform Submittable. Go to <https://cma.submittable.com> to create a free Submittable account if you do not already have one.

- Complete the online form directly or draft your responses in an offline document such as Word, Pages, or Google Docs as backup, then copy/paste your information into the online application.
- To save the work you have done on your application, you must click SAVE DRAFT at the bottom of the form before exiting.
- You can return to your saved application to continue working on it by following the log-in instructions.
- CMA recommends that you also save your draft in an offline document as backup.
- The application will close promptly at 11:59 PM ET on Thursday, September 25, 2025. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted. Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute complications.

UPLOADS

- A CV or resume of up to 3 pages for all consultants participating in the project that demonstrates appropriate skills to carry out the project.
- A proposal or summary, prepared by the selected consultant(s), that defines the scope of work the consultant(s) would perform and lists professional fees to be charged.

UPLOADS - AUDIO SAMPLE

One ensemble audio sample is required and must be uploaded to the online application.

- Sample that represents the group's ability to perform Western European classical and/or contemporary music at a high level.
- The sample should be up to 4 minutes and feature works for small ensemble (2-10 musicians).
- The sample must feature either the full ensemble or at least 50% of its musicians. A duo must submit a work with both partners.
- The sample should demonstrate the ensemble's performance level and be representative of the ensemble's performance within the last two years.
- Soloistic works are not recommended.
- Samples do not need to be of studio quality but should be clear.
- Only mp3 and/or m4a file types are accepted.
- Label sample as "Ensemble Name - Audio 1"

UPLOADS - PHOTOS

Upload 3 photos for use in CMA press release materials in the event that the applicant is awarded & label photos in the following format:

- 1_AwardeeName_credit_PhotographerName (Please make sure that the photos provided have been cleared for public use by your photographer before submission.)
- 2_AwardeeName_credit_PhotographerName (Please make sure that the photos provided have been cleared for public use by your photographer before submission.)
- 3_AwardeeName_credit_PhotographerName (Please make sure that the photos provided have been cleared for public use by your photographer before submission.)
- Please make sure to provide high resolution files with a file size of 1MB or higher for publication that are actual size for print publication.

TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION

- Go to <https://cma.submittable.com> and click on “Ensemble Forward.”
- Complete all required fields, including text boxes, the Funding Request, and Audio Sample information.
- Prepare your audio sample and Contract Proposal attachment.
- Upload the audio file and Consultant Proposal to the application.
- When complete, sign and date your application.
- Click “Submit” to send your application to CMA; you will receive a confirmation email.

CMA RESOURCES

- [Prior CMA Grant Recipients](#)
- [Press & Announcements](#)

THANK YOU!

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