

Catalytic Consulting Guidelines for Grantee Partners

Updated April 2025



Overview

The Catalytic Consulting program is part of The Lenny Zakim Fund's (LZF's) Catalytic Community Building Program and grantmaking approach. For most grassroots nonprofits with limited budgets and staff capacity, high-quality consulting support can be transformational but is often an unattainable luxury. The Catalytic Consulting program aims to provide targeted, **short-term support** for grantee partners to work with a consultant on a **project that advances organizational learning, strategy, or sustainability, with the goal of enhancing your organization's capacity for mission delivery or growth.**

LZF's grantee partners may access **up to \$875 per grant year to work with a consultant.** This is calculated based on 5 hours of consulting (including both direct service and preparation), compensated for at a rate of \$175/hour. Grantee partners may work with any consultant of their choosing, and LZF maintains a list of trusted consultants if you need recommendations.

Some examples of possible consulting projects:

- Setting up or refining organizational processes (i.e., board committees, hiring or HR protocols, communications or PR templates, emergency response protocols, etc.)
- Testing or piloting a new program
- Creation of customized frameworks (i.e., cash flow tool, scenario planning)
- Training(s) or professional development for staff or board members (i.e., on governance best practices, how to use QuickBooks, financial management, executive coaching, etc.)
- Conducting research or analysis to better understand your organization's donors, constituents, or stakeholders (market research)
- Facilitating organizational culture change or board development efforts
- Technology consultation and/or systems upgrade to better support your work
- Organizational assessment to identify key priorities, needs, and/or growth areas

How it works

- 1) Identify an area of need or potential project. Look through LZF's list of trusted consultants or identify someone who best fits your organization's needs.
- 2) Email Tiffany Lau (tlau@thelennyzakimfund.org) to set up a brief 30-minute conversation about your consulting project. Tiffany will confirm your project's eligibility and is also happy to serve as a thought partner in project design and consultant selection.
- 3) Complete your consulting engagement.
- 4) Your consultant emails Tiffany with an invoice detailing their rate and the number of hours worked. LZF will process the payment of up to \$875.
- 5) Tiffany will reach out to you for any feedback you are willing to share (via survey or conversation) on the Catalytic Consulting program and your consulting engagement.

We have secured funding for **up to 30 current and 5 former grantee partners to participate this year on a first come, first served basis**, understanding that not all our grantee partners may be in a position to best utilize and take advantage of this offering at this time.

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Clarifications and FAQ

If my consultant's rate is less than \$175/hour, can more hours be covered?

- Yes, **LZF will cover up to \$875 of your consulting engagement regardless of the rate** your consultant charges. We recognize that some consultants may be willing to work on a sliding scale and suggest you have a conversation with your consultant about what they would consider reasonable.
- We believe that \$175 is a fair rate for high-quality consultants and is the rate that we use when engaging facilitators for seminars and executive coaching. Regardless of their rates, we encourage grantee partners to be thoughtful about their consulting needs and whether their project can reasonably be completed for \$875.

When is the deadline to apply?

- Catalytic Consulting is a continuous program that rolls over with the calendar year. The last day of the 2025 cycle is December 31, 2025.
- We recommend reaching out to Tiffany by December 1, as **all consulting invoices must be processed before December 31**.
- Each organization may only be granted Catalytic Consulting funds once per year. If your organization already used Catalytic Consulting funds in 2025, you would be able to apply for a new project starting January 1, 2026.

What projects or costs are not eligible for this program?

- Hiring contractors (i.e., bookkeepers, grant writers) and outsourcing organizational work does not count as consulting and is not eligible.
- Back-dated consulting work is not eligible.
- Products and intellectual property are not eligible. For example, a consultant may be compensated for their time developing a cash flow framework for your organization, but they should not charge you for use or ownership of the framework.

What if we want to pursue a longer-term consulting project?

- Longer-term consulting projects such as strategic planning, development audits, fundraising campaigns, or feasibility studies typically cost significantly more than \$875. If you are interested in pursuing a longer-term project, the LZF team is happy to connect you with consulting partners who may take on the project pro bono or at significantly subsidized rates.
- A portion of a larger consulting project *is* eligible to be covered through Catalytic Consulting. Your organization would be responsible for the remaining cost beyond \$875.

I have other questions about Catalytic Consulting.

- Should you have questions anywhere along the process, please don't hesitate to contact Tiffany Lau, Deputy Director, at tlau@thelennyzakimfund.org.