the lewis prize
for music

community | collaboration | leadership

2021 Definition of Systems Change

Systems

Society is comprised of overlapping "macro" and "civic" systems, which we define below. All systems consist of: Beliefs, Attitudes, Culture, Practices, and Policies.[1]

Systemic Inequality

The Lewis Prize for Music recognizes that inequities in the United States are rooted in systems that devalue, exploit, and exclude people. Such systems have been in place since Europeans first arrived in the Americas and displaced indigenous peoples. Concurrently, Europeans initiated the transatlantic slave trade that brought African peoples to North America to be enslaved. The systems of chattel slavery and jim crow have been overturned by the efforts of people working toward systems change. However, remnants remain in the beliefs, attitudes, cultures, practices, and policies that continue to marginalize African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American as well as religious, differently abled, and gender groups in the United States. Additionally, poor and working class white people, especially, but not exclusively, located in contemporary rural contexts, experience hardships due to unjust systems and ever increasing income inequality.

Disenfranchisement based on race, gender, socio-economic status, immigrant status, and other markers of difference from the dominant culture have developed over centuries to codify macro systems of oppression. Examples of ongoing macro system injustices include racism, gender discrimination, economic and civic exclusion, health disparities, and environmental degradation among others. Correspondingly, these macro systems dictate the shape of civic systems that marginalize and under resource people from targeted communities and backgrounds. Civic systems with this effect include education, redlining, policing, incarceration, and foster care, among many others.

Achieving a just, fair, and humane society for all requires transforming and replacing discriminatory systems, especially those that continue to undermine historically marginalized and under-resourced communities.

Systemic Impacts on Young People

Multiple Civic systems are constructed to specifically interact with young people. These include education, child welfare, juvenile justice, health, and workforce development systems. The

---

[1] This list of systems components is inspired and influenced by the work of Emergent Pathways.

systems ostensibly intended to benefit young people are rooted in unjust Macro systems, operated by adults, often for the benefit of adults, and uphold society's inequities.

Systemic Impact on Youth Arts Learning

One result of systemic inequities in youth-oriented systems is an increasing disparity in access to arts learning opportunities for young people. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, between 1982 and 2008, the percentage of African American and Hispanic young adults who received arts education in childhood dropped from 51% to 26% and 47% to 28%, respectively. In contrast, the percentage of White young adults who received childhood arts education during that same period only dropped from 59% to 58%.[2]

Systems Change and The Lewis Prize for Music

The Lewis Prize for Music believes that music in the lives of young people is a catalytic force to drive positive change in our society. We seek a future where every young person — regardless of who they are or where they live — has access to creative youth development music programs from an early age. We are convinced this can only occur through efforts to change systemic beliefs, attitudes, culture, practices (including funding), and policies.

The Lewis Prize for Music and Creative Youth Development

The Lewis Prize for Music has identified Creative Youth Development (CYD) as the artistic practice with the greatest potential to positively influence systems change for the benefit of young people, and to create universal access to music learning, creating, and performing opportunities. The CYD field models systems change characteristics by incorporating young people into decision making, giving young people tools to express themselves, and being deeply connected to local culture. CYD's attentiveness to the holistic needs of young people, including their social, material, health and educational wellbeing, makes the field a natural initiator of positive change in other youth-oriented systems. We expect that by pursuing systems change that increases music opportunities for young people this will lead to other systemic changes that achieve equity for young people.

Systems Change as a Process[3]

Systems change is a long term undertaking that depends on trusted individual relationships, shared experiences, and common pursuits. Systems change nearly always requires people internal and external to the system to participate in the full change process. Music is a powerful resource for building trust, creating extraordinary experiences, and transcending codified hierarchies and roles.

The necessary transformations in beliefs, attitudes, culture, practices, and policies to achieve systems change generally take place in this sequence:
1. People experience the need for change
2. Diagnosing the systems

---

[2] https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-ArtsLearning.pdf
[3] http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept93/vol51/num01/The-Stages-of-Systemic-Change.aspx

3. Creating a progressive change initiative
4. Enabling a tipping point to infuse systems with change (partnering with civic systems, coalitions and social movements are a few examples of how to enable a tipping point)
5. Sustaining the transition to new systems
6. The new rules of systems are the new mainstream/standard

The Lewis Prize for Music **seeks applicants who have a solid progressive change initiative underway and are beginning to see progress toward a tipping point or are sustaining the transition to a new system**.

The Lewis Prize for Music System Change Priorities

The field of creative youth development is dynamically positioned to affect change through the empowerment of young people and amplification of their voice through music. The Lewis Prize for Music is interested in championing systems change efforts in all the ways that they are occurring in and alongside the field of creative youth development. Being open to diverse approaches, here are the levels of systems change in which we seek to invest. Accelerator Award applicants will be expected to describe their alignment with these levels of systems change in their Round I Application.

Macro systems change[4]: Macro systems operate in society at large and shape the formal civic systems. Examples of fair and just Macro Systems include: cultural preservation, racial justice, immigrant inclusion, gender and LGTBQIA+ equality, disability justice, environmental justice, food security, and economic opportunity.

Civic systems change: Civic systems are functions of society operated, regulated and funded by local, state and national government as well as other resourced entities like corporations, associations, and philanthropies. Examples of Civic Systems include: education, child welfare, correctional/justice system, policing, workforce training, employment, housing/shelter, immigration, healthcare, or political/democratic participation.

Applicant's CYD work must increase youth music opportunities and aspire for overall systemic impact within at least one macro and/or one civic system.

The Lewis Prize for Music's Role in Systems Change

We recognize that systems change happens through a dynamic intersection of catalysts, including philanthropy. We invest in and partner with creative youth development leaders to fill gaps where systems fail and imagine new systems for young people to thrive and lead the way for future generations. We understand that in order to be an effective partner in disrupting inequitable systems, we must do so from the inside out, as actors in systems ourselves. This is why the Lewis Prize strives to center racial equity in our internal practices as well as our funding and external relationships, so that we reflect the values and change that we seek.

---

[4] This definition of macro systems change is inspired and influenced by the work of the Leeway Foundation.