



Center for  
Cultural  
Innovation

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# BEYOND US



# YEAR IN REFLECTION

Dear Friends,

It's been a year – How are you? Oh, us? We've been busy; actually, I'm not really sure we ever slowed down.

At the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), our reputation as a trusted intermediary, thought partner, and pattern recognizer means that we are always learning, listening, tinkering, experimenting, and collaborating within and across our core programs and services. Above all, our efforts are always guided by our mission to support individuals in the arts to realize greater self-determination.

In the past year, CCI's California grantmaking portfolio mirrored larger societal trends—the **Quick Grant** program remained in high demand to support the return of in-person professional development activities and the continued need for re-tooled business strategies. We administered our final COVID-19 Relief Fund, the **East Bay Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts - 2022 Round**, which, like the others before it, distributed more than \$500,000 in tax-free cash grants to 402 artists, teaching artists, culture bearers, and nonprofit arts workers in the most economically vulnerable communities.

We also welcomed a new slate of **CALI Catalyst** grantees, whose change-making work is giving underrepresented voices more power and influence in California's arts and culture sector. (See page 18 for more information.) Alongside our California grantmaking, CCI's business workshops and training brought responsive professional development webinars and virtual and in-person workshop series to artists and arts workers. These activities included our perennial **Business of Art** series, as well as topical themes like the **Debt Teach-in**

**& Brunch-in, Marketing Your Multi-Hyphenate Business**, and **Tax Tips for Artists**—all of which aimed at strengthening artists' financial resilience. (See page 8 for more information.)

**AmbitioUS**, CCI's 10-year time-limited initiative that invests in alternative economic models and artists' ownership of assets, has given us a front-row seat to visionaries at the center of solutions-oriented conversations around roadblocks to systems change. We're witnessing first-hand what it can look like when a community can control its assets such as **Esther's Orbit Room** in Oakland, and following the nascent Web3 space closely, investing in leaders like **Marquis Harmon**, who are reorienting this arena away from being an extractive wealth-building space and moving it towards regeneration, relationships, and broad accessibility, especially for those typically excluded. This pithy description doesn't do justice to the lengths that **AmbitioUS** is traversing through its portfolio of experimental investments, so I hope you'll read more on page 28.

CCI's commitment to innovation on behalf of artists, arts workers, and so many other workers, continues to evolve through Sol Center for Liberated Work, our new research, policy, advocacy, and innovation program. Through this work, we're singularly focused on expanding social and economic protections to arts workers and those in the broader gig economy who share their precarious working conditions. From convening worker advocates and movement leaders to reimagine new systems of protection for nontraditional and excluded workers, to articulating the legal challenges artists face around intellectual property on the blockchain during a U.S. Copyright Office public

## YEAR IN REFLECTION

roundtable and to creating a Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO) that shifts ownership and governance power to workers. This work allows CCI to lean into areas where we've long excelled—building cross-sector bridges, incubating new models, and amplifying the needs of artists and arts workers on multi-scale platforms. These highlights only scratch the surface—learn more on page 40.

Individuals are the backbone of every organization, and that's especially true of CCI, whose staff are some of the most dedicated, thoughtful, and brilliant people I've ever had in my orbit. Working as our co-conspirators are CCI's board, funders, and partners, who stand by us and with us. Then, there are the individuals in the arts—the artists, culture bearers, arts administrators, and creative entrepreneurs—whom we serve.

Thank you for trusting us, and thank you for walking with us toward greater innovation and deeper cultural connections.



Laura Poppiti  
Program Director

P.S. While we stay busy (really busy), CCI also values and places resources into the rest and well-being of our team through vacation, health, disability, retirement, childcare, and professional development benefits and protections that we believe should be available to all.



# MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW





## MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW

**The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. Its mission is to support individuals in the arts—artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs—to realize greater self-determination so as to unfetter their productivity, free expression, and social impact, which contributes to shaping our collective national identity in ways that reflect the diversity of society.**

***Knowledge is power. Connection is care. Financial independence begets creative self-determination. Partnerships lead to solutions. This is the Center for Cultural Innovation in belief and in action.***

In 2000, a significant study was commissioned by 38 funders nationally, resulting in a 2003 benchmark report produced by the Urban Institute in Washington, DC, titled *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists*. The Urban Institute study showed, and CCI's field experience has affirmed, that artists have significant needs in multiple domains, including training and professional development, material support, market access, public validation, information, and participation in larger communities and networks. In 2016, capping a two-year national research effort in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts, CCI released an updated report on U.S. artists, *Creativity Connects Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*, to understand artists' support systems in a technology-enabled era and to recognize how the very definition of "artist" has been expanding. In response to the report's findings, CCI has changed in two significant ways:

- » CCI has shifted from helping artists realize financial sustainability to include helping them realize economic self-determination. By prioritizing self-determination, CCI is attending to the needs of artists as a whole person and not just as art producers. This requires CCI to make a difference in the conditions of artists' lives, which we are doing in common cause with other sectors that are also addressing shared issues of low wages, lack of worker protections, high debt, and few assets.
- » CCI has expanded its reach to create opportunities for all. The *Creativity Connects* report called out the inequities that are built into conventional systems of arts support and highlighted the opportunity to support the diversity of cultural expressions in the U.S. This lens of opportunities-for-all prioritizes supporting those who have been traditionally marginalized so as to accelerate their impact in the arts and unfetter their contributions in society.

## MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW

Over the years, CCI has been a key infrastructure organization in a number of ways and, with these shifts, CCI continues to play an influential role in society by:

- » Validating and serving the needs of artists, cultural bearers, arts administrators and workers, artisans, makers, and creative entrepreneurs—in other words, individuals who comprise the larger creative workforce. Individuals are at the heart of the arts, and CCI is a conduit for resources and opportunities to flow directly to them rather than trickling down through institutions.
- » Acting as a bridge builder bringing together funders, artists, arts workers, researchers, field practitioners, and other innovation partners across sectors on specific problem-solving projects. Many of CCI's regranting, advocacy, funder collaborative, and research projects are incubated efforts to rise to the challenge of particular problems informed by our unique knowledge and set of principles.
- » Generating new knowledge: We commission primary research that expands our understanding of artists and their needs.
- » Serving as a platform for change to improve support systems for those who have not been well served by conventional nonprofit funding and private lending or financing systems—individual artists and arts workers, junior-level professionals, creative entrepreneurs, and community-based cultural anchors.
- » Being a leader in the field articulating a vision for the value of supporting individuals in the arts, which is particularly timely in this moment of re-writing social contracts for increasingly contingent American workers.

CCI operates with a vision that by linking the natural creativity and tolerance for risk of artists and creatives of all types to the latest professional practices and tools, new financial resources, and to one another, CCI helps artists and arts workers realize greater financial self-determination, which unfetters their productivity and social impact. In addition, by acting as a cross-sector incubator with an informed point of view, CCI advances efforts to improve conditions for artists and all those who share artists' conditions of low wages, high debt, and too-few assets.



# TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since its inception, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) has helped thousands of California artists advance their artistic careers by offering a suite of professional development training programs and workshops that give artists opportunities to acquire current and necessary business skills and access top strategies to build and sustain thriving careers and to protect their overall financial livelihood. Featuring a roster of successful arts and business experts with experience working with artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits, the program continues to prioritize and directly contribute to the sustainability, financial viability, and productivity of individual artists throughout the state.

Presented in August 2022, our virtual Debt Teach-in & Brunch-in was a space to talk about the stories and traumas debt causes, the roots of the predatory debt culture in the U.S., and what to do about it. Our speakers included artists, writers, performers, lawyers, and financial experts who have spent time digging into the problems of debt, and believe that, through creative collective actions, we as a community can take back our power and contribute to socio-economic transformation.

In spring 2023, CCI presented the “Business of Art Sampler Platter,” which offered three nutritious nuggets of learning from our signature Business of Art curriculum in easily digestible lunch hour webinars led by contributors to the 3rd Edition of the *Business of Art* book. Two of these learning nuggets are now available on our YouTube channel.

Beginning in January 2023, monthly Business of Art Office Hours were introduced, which were informal, small group coaching sessions where up to 20 artists could ask questions and workshop

**“It was fantastic... hearing the stories of others, feeling community, feeling hopeful. Have more events like this one!”**

—Sayda Trujillo, participant, Debt Teach-in & Brunch-in

**“Just a note to tell you I watched your Business of Art: Branding ‘sampler’ video and it was excellent! I shared with other members of my nonprofit ballet company. Thank you for doing that!”**

—Leigh Purtill of Leigh Purtill Ballet Company

challenges related to their art business. The meetings were led by CCI’s Artists Knowledge Manager, Allison Wyper, with guest presenters from the Business of Art series. Office Hours were a good



## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

way to expose new audiences to the Business of Art program, and an opportunity for alumni to revisit the content. They provided both individualized attention and activated peer learning.

In total, CCI provided 95 hours of programming to more than 800 artists and cultural workers in FY23.

For the third season in a row, CCI workshops were presented via Zoom. Building upon anecdotal evidence that participants appreciate the accessibility of online programming, this year's post-workshop survey results affirm that participants feel that our webinars are comfortable, convenient, and largely preferred to in-person programming. 85% of respondents said that they like attending workshops

**"I enjoyed the limited number of participants which allowed conversation and ability for Allison and Elaine to answer questions. The pricing and tax information was helpful."**

—Sue Hudelson, Business of Art Office Hours participant

**"I really admire CCI's programming and their commitment to artists. Also, I appreciate that they still have online workshops as it provides accessibility for folks with mobility or health (ex. immunocompromised) issues."**

—Siwaraya, webinar participant

that are online, live, and synchronous (i.e. Zoom meetings), while 15% like in-person workshops. 22% added that they like pre-recorded or on-demand content and 11% had no preference.

Being able to record is also important. Where 423 attended webinars live, 398 viewed recordings. Many viewers were registrants who were unable to attend the event live, but recordings also allow those who did attend to review the content later, which helps with learning retention. Having excerpts of our signature Business of Art content available for free on YouTube will draw a far wider audience to the program, promote Business of Art workbook sales, and make key lessons available to those without the means to pay. Our "Business of Art Sampler Platter: Branding" excerpt was viewed on YouTube 123 times in the first three months it was available. This feedback affirms that CCI is doing a good job of adapting to an online learning environment, and while we may hold some in-person events in the future, we are unlikely to abandon Zoom entirely.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FY23 INCLUDE:

In fall 2022, CCI's virtual **Business of Art** workshop—a 10-week entrepreneurial training program—supported cohort-style learning for 24 artists representing a range of disciplines and career stages. The workshop was presented live via Zoom for the fourth year in a row, with participants calling in from across the state of California, and two from Pennsylvania. Nine of these artists received Quick Grants covering their tuition. Art business experts Amy Kweskin, Sue Bell Yank, Jonathan Tobin, Jeremiah Olayinka Ojo, Amy Smith, and Elaine Grogan Luttrull presented from California, New York, New Jersey and Ohio, respectively.

## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CCI produced 12 free or sliding scale webinars including: **Debt Teach-in & Brunch-in**, **Marketing Your Multi-Hyphenate Business**, and **Tax Tips for Artists**; three **Business of Art Sampler Platter** excerpts of our signature training program; and six monthly **Business of Art Office Hours**. All of our online programs offered live closed captioning.

CCI organized a one-day professional development retreat for 12 recipients of the **California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists (CCFFVA)**. The event was held at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, CA.

In spring 2023, CCI presented the fourth **City of West Hollywood Artist Bootcamp**, a free 10-part Business of Art workshop for 25 local artists. Participants gathered in-person for three of the weekly sessions. In the final meeting, the artists presented their art business model (customer segments, value proposition, marketing channels, and revenue streams) and next steps to move forward with their business, and celebrated their accomplishments.

CCI organized two career planning workshops for **California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) College of the Arts**. Art business experts Katrina Frye and Elena Muslar presented “Kickstart Your Career in the Arts” and “Entrepreneurial Skills for Artists” for undergrads and graduate students from across the creative departments.

CCI organized a two-session webinar for **Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange** to support nonprofit arts workers in Arkansas, where arts funding is particularly scarce and cultural organizations have become overly reliant on local family foundations.

**“What I value the most about this experience was getting to know people who are working in all sorts of artistic disciplines and realizing that we all share a common struggle. I felt comforted to know that there were instructors willing to offer their advice so graciously and generously and that my cohort and I were all rooting for each other. I think Allison and Jennelyn had a lot to do with creating a positive environment in this virtual space, which I know is really hard to do! I am truly grateful for the warmth exuded by everyone, especially when dealing with topics that may make many of us uncomfortable (money is scary).”**

—Brenda Gonzalez, Business of Art participant

Expert Krista Smith presented “Diversifying Funding: Strategies for Arts and Culture Nonprofits” to explore alternative funding options and creative revenue models.

All together, CCI webinars served 835 participants from California and beyond, with presenters calling in from across the country. Those who could not participate live were able to watch recordings of the presentations. Of the 614 individual registrations on CCI’s website, 336 were free and 252 paid between \$5 and \$25.



## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CCF FVA Fellows and staff at the Huntington. February 11, 2023. Photo by Lauren Uy, CCF.



CCF FVA Fellows meet with art business experts for small group coaching. February 11, 2023. Photo by CCI.

Corrina Peipon coaches the CCF FVA Fellows. February 11, 2023. Photo by CCI.



**"I want to share that I DEEPLY appreciate this retreat. I have never in the 40+ years that I have been making art been able to access information like this specifically for artists. As someone who produces events, I know how hard it is to coordinate artists (yikes), coordinate, compensate speakers, find the right speakers for the group, work with institution/s, meet dietary and other physical needs, plan and orchestrate time, and basically think of everything to make an event meaningful. I applaud everyone who had the patience and vision to make this happen. Honestly, I thought it was flawless. Thank you!"**

—2023 CCF Visual Art Fellow



## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



2023 WeHo Artist Bootcamp cohort graduation. April 27, 2023. Photo by CCI.

**"This was an incredible experience and I am so thankful to have had this opportunity. Looking forward to this class each Thursday has become part of my routine; after the final class I know I will be a little sad the following week. I am grateful for the knowledge gained and the connections made."**

—Chatrice Rachelle, 2023 City of West Hollywood Artist Bootcamp participant



WeHo Bootcamp participants mingling. April 27, 2023. Courtesy of City of West Hollywood. Photo Jonathan Moore.



## TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Elena Muslar, Tanya Cummings and CCI Program Associate, Jennelyn Bailon at Entrepreneurial Skills for Artists. April 7, 2023. Courtesy of CSULB College of the Arts.



**"The energy and encouragement brought to the presentation woke me up like two shots of espresso and a summer rainbow."**

—CSULB student, Entrepreneurial Skills for Artists with Elena Muslar



Top: CSULB students learn about careers in the arts. February 24, 2023. Courtesy of CSULB College of the Arts. Bottom: CSULB students work on an exercise in Entrepreneurial Skills for Artists with Elena Muslar. April 7, 2023. Courtesy of CSULB College of the Arts.



# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS





## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

Providing artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs with financial resources to help advance their careers has been a cornerstone of CCI's work. Through our perennial grant programs, **Investing in Artists**, **Quick Grant**, and the **California Arts Leadership Investments** portfolio; time-limited initiative, **AmbitioUS**; new opportunity, **Zoo Labs: FUND**; and final year of regional relief funding, artists and arts workers were able to improve their financial conditions, advance their professional development, expand their art practice or area of cultural production, and ease financial pressures resulting from the COVID-19 federally recognized qualified disaster.

### INVESTING IN ARTISTS

The **Investing in Artists** grant program was established by CCI in 2007 to enhance the working lives of California artists and strengthen the creative support system available to them. Since that time, CCI has awarded over \$2.5 million to 344 diverse artists across the state. Through the continued support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the 2022 round of Investing in Artists awarded \$66,000 in project support grants to eight Bay Area artists. This was the second round of the program's current three-year grant cycle.

The current cycle is marked by significant updates: the number of awards available for each round has increased to eight from six; the maximum award amount has increased to \$8,250 from \$8,000; and to be even more geographically inclusive we are rotating Bay Area counties that are eligible for support. For the 2021 application round,

artists residing in Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco Counties were eligible to apply. The 2022 round extended eligibility to applicants residing in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Mateo Counties. The 2023 round will be open to applicants residing in Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. In so doing, CCI will target resources more intentionally to all ten Bay Area counties.

For the 2022 round of funding, a diverse group of panelists reflecting a range of arts knowledge and perspectives assisted CCI in reviewing the Investing in Artists applications, including: **Gilbert Guerrero** (co-founder and co-director of Shapeshifters Cinema), **Tammy L. Hall** (pianist, composer, educator, and musical director), **Stuck Sanders** (dancer, choreographer, and educator), and **Parul Wadhwa** (new media artist and immersive storyteller).

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### 2022 INVESTING IN ARTISTS GRANTEES:

**YAWEN CHIEN** (Theatre & Video/Santa Clara County) to support the development of a modern shadow-puppet theater production that explores the challenges and resilience of girls forced into marriage and child labor in 1950s Asia.

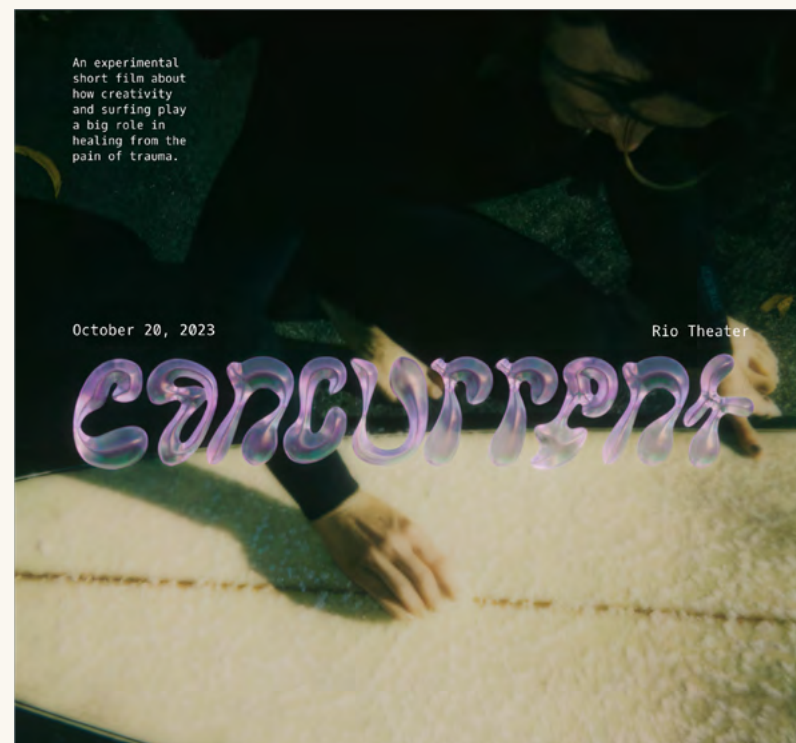
**VENUS JONES** (Film & Animation/Santa Clara County) to support the production of *Lil' Red is Riding the Wrong Way in the Hood*, a short, animated parody that deals with human trafficking, especially among black and brown youth.

**"CCI and the Investing in Artists grant has given me the opportunity to grow as an artist and explore new mediums and collaborate in ways I never even considered before receiving it. Specifically, regarding the process of film creation from storyboard to production schedule to delegation of tasks to trusting in others to help. I've been predominantly a painter my whole career so to work so collaboratively has been powerful and life-changing no doubt. This grant has allowed me to follow through with an idea (this film, *Concurrent*) that I've had for over six years and get it out of my mind and into reality."**

—Emily Meehan, 2022 Investing in Artists Grant Recipient

**MARIBEL MARTINEZ** (Theatre/Santa Clara County) to support the development of a bilingual theater production for young audiences that expands the representation of LGBTQ youth of color and reflects the lived experiences and ancestral teachings of Chicanx youth.

**EMILY MEEHAN** (Film/Santa Cruz County) to support the production and release of *Concurrent*, a short film about two female surfers in Santa Cruz who have survived sexual trauma and use surfing and creative expression as their main tools toward healing, health, and reconnection.



Courtesy of Emily Meehan, 2022 Investing in Artists Grantee. BTS Polaroid of *Concurrent* Film. March 1, 2023. Santa Cruz, CA. Photo by Vania Zask with typographic design by Sarah Khosla.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

**SRUTI SARATHY** (Music/Santa Clara County) to support the development of *Carnatic Crossings*, a cross-cultural music performance featuring new compositions that experiment with the Indian classical form through raga-based improvisation, speculative historical collaborations, and spoken word.

**LISA SNIDERMAN** (Musical Theatre/San Mateo County) to support the development of *The Grieving Project Musical*, a spoken word musical exploring concepts of mental health, transformation, identity, grieving, and thriving, intended for chronically ill and disabled communities.

**TERRANCE WALKER** (Music/San Mateo County) to support the development of *Group Therapy*, a community-based, healing-centered music project.

**ALISA YANG** (Multidisciplinary/Santa Clara County) to support the development of a short VR immersive film that narrates the story of Afong Moy, the first known Asian woman immigrant in America in 1834, through the rooms of an imagined love hotel.

**“As a queer, disabled woman of color with limited resources, the support from CCI’s Investing in Artists Grant goes beyond funding a project I would not have been able to pursue otherwise. I feel seen and valued in a world that often treats me as disposable. The grant affirms the importance of telling the history and lived experiences of some of the most vulnerable in my community, I cannot express the depth of my gratitude and significance in being trusted to carry the torch.”**

—Alisa Yang, 2022 Investing in Artists Grant Recipient



Photo courtesy of Alisa Yang, 2022 Investing in Artists Grant Recipient.

# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

## CALIFORNIA ARTS LEADERS INVESTMENTS CATALYST GRANTS

The **California Arts Leadership Investments (CALI) Catalyst** program provides unrestricted grants of up to \$5,000 to California artists and arts workers—applying as either individuals or teams—who are on the frontlines of effecting greater inclusion, access, diversity, and equity in the arts and culture sector. Through bold actions, CALI Catalyst grantees are tangibly helping underrepresented communities—including Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities—gain more influence and power in the arts and culture sector. We consider these bold actions to be change-making because they are visibly moving the needle for underrepresented communities to have more influence at an industry-wide level. In FY23, CALI Catalyst awarded \$100,000 to 20 individual and team recipients. Grantees were recognized for a range of bold actions that included organizing with artists nationally to challenge exploitative practices in the arts, fighting for artists and cultural producers to have safe live-work spaces; and centering LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC voices in a hostile cultural and political landscape.

CALI Catalyst is part of a lineage of the evolving-with-the-times CALI program, which has been marked by different phases of grantmaking priorities since its launch in 2011. In its first years, CALI (FKA, the NextGen program) was a professional development pipeline for young talent; then, when it was renamed CALI (California Arts Leadership Investments), it emphasized externally facing opportunities that prepared emerging arts professionals for managerial-level roles (i.e., workplace-specific skills and knowledge attainment). CALI Accelerator, offered from October 2018 – January 2021, prioritized activities aimed at helping grantees develop their leadership vision



Alistair Monroe at the Oakland Cannery, Oakland CA, March 17, 2022; Photo by Amaya Edwards KQED staff photographer.

**“As a cultural arts producer, who dedicated his time protecting and preserving artist live-work studios in Oakland CA, the CALI Catalyst grant was able to support changing city policy while saving 25 live-work warehouses by prohibiting cannabis cultivation on property parcels.”**

—Alistair Monroe, 2022 CALI Catalyst Grant Recipient



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

and voice while acquiring professional knowledge and skills as a means of preparing grantees to be influential in their organization, discipline, or larger arts and culture field. In response to the changing dynamics of the field, CALI Catalyst emerged in summer 2021 to support change-makers who are explicit about changing the arts and culture sector in ways that are needed by those whose voices have not been adequately heard.

### 2022 CALI CATALYST GRANTEES:

MEGHAN “MOJO” O’KEEFE, Amador County

ALISA YANG, Santa Clara County

SARAH RAFAEL GARCIA, Orange County

VOCES DEL TEATRO ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE (Liane Schirmer, Minerva Garcia, Blanca Melchor), Los Angeles County

RASHEED SHABAZZ, Alameda County

ALISTAIR MONROE, Alameda County

ELAZAR ABRAHAM, San Joaquin County

KENNETH “KENNY” RAMOS, San Diego County

RUBEN OCHOA, Los Angeles County

VIRGINIA BLANCO, San Francisco County

OPEN DOOR STUDIO (RoxAnne D. Trujillo, Tess Zufolo, Daniel Schneider, David Idell, Caraline Murphy, Mark Gonzalez, Dylan Czoschke, Taku Johnson), Ventura County

APT ACTION GROUP (York Chang, Carolyn Castaño, Elana Mann, Ken Ehrlich, Lordy Rodriguez, Shirley Tse), Los Angeles County

ELIZABETH GRANDSAERT, Amador County

**“I can’t thank CCI enough for their support. The patience and kindness of the CCI team are rare in an increasingly harsh world. The program enables activists and change-makers to move ahead with work that is usually unpaid, and often puts us at personal and financial risk. The CALI Catalyst grants provide critical support for ‘boots on the ground’ arts-workers, and I hope the program will continue.”**

—Danial Nord, 2022 CALI Catalyst Grant Recipient

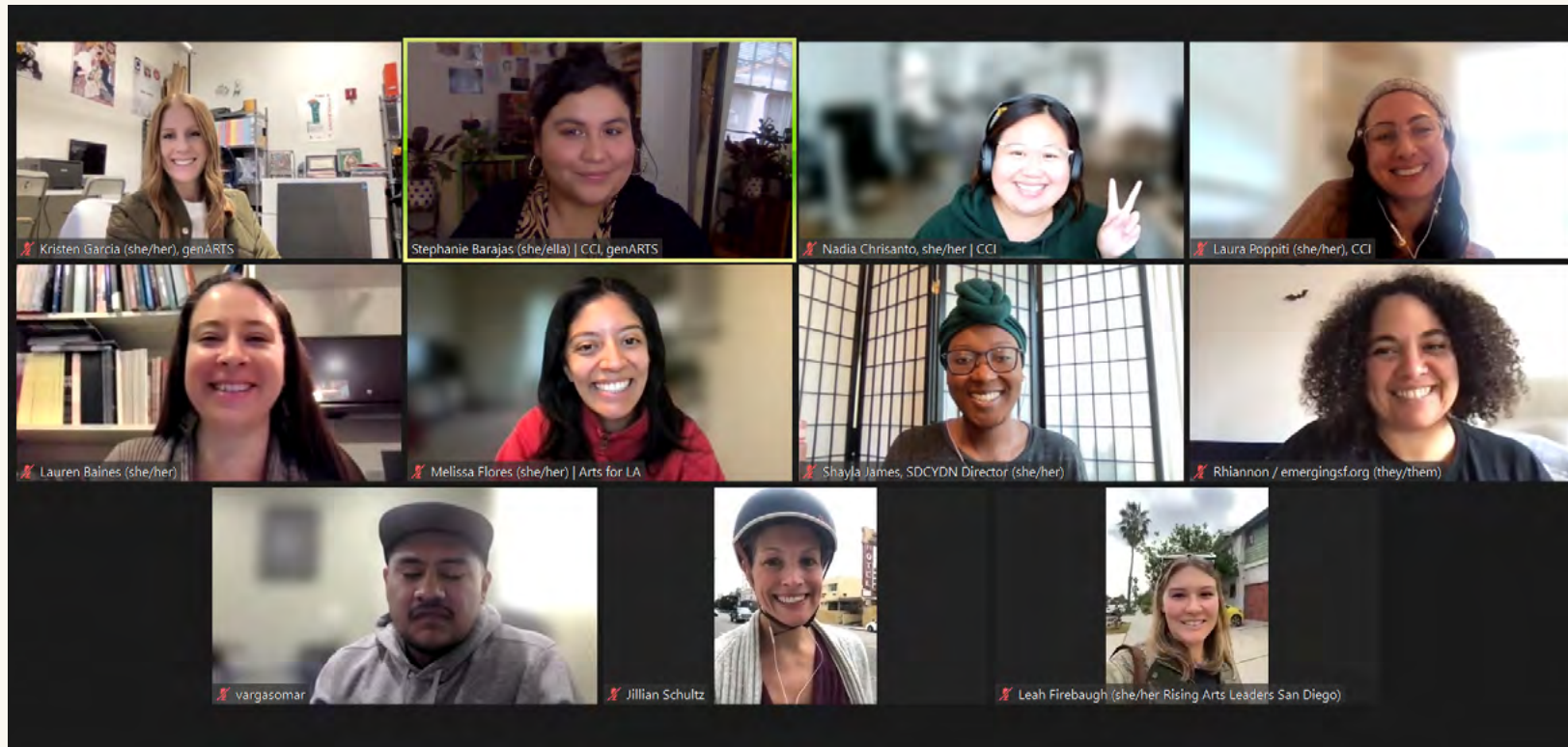


# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

## CALIFORNIA ARTS LEADERSHIP NOW

From November 2017 – December 2022, CCI managed and participated in **California Arts Leadership Now (CAL-Now)**, a network of seven entities that served arts leaders in the field in various regions of California. During this time, CCI sought to 1) facilitate connections among the seven distinct CAL-Now entities in ways that built community and cohesion; 2) promote the exchange of resources and

learning among participants; and 3) expose participants to places and ideas that inform their development as organizational leaders as well as thought leaders in the field. To accomplish these objectives, CAL-Now network members participated in monthly video conference calls to exchange insights about current trends in their organizations and the larger field, and engaged in professional development via panel



CAL-Now Network members, final meeting. (Pictured from left to right. Top Row: Kristen Garcia, CCI Program Officer; Stephanie Barajas, CCI Assistant Operations & Digital Assets Manager; Nadia Chrisanto, CCI Deputy Director; Laura Poppiti; Middle Row: Lauren Baines, Melissa Flores, Shayla James, SDCYDN Director; Rhiannon / emergingsf.org; Bottom Row: Omar Vargas, Jillian Schultz, Leah Firebaugh). December 1, 2022. Photo by CCI.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

participation, meeting facilitation, and content curation opportunities. In addition, CCI organized in-person convenings, bringing CAL-Now delegations to Stockton, CA, in 2018 and the Eastern Coachella Valley in 2019. However, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and safety concerns, from 2020 – 2022, member organizations repurposed travel funds to support their general operations, design and deliver online workshops, and enlist trainers to present on shared topics of interest.

In its final year of activity, CAL-Now members focused on wellness and healing practices. A spring 2022 workshop that centered on therapeutic artistic practices was followed in the fall by *Rooting in Self-Care: Nourishing Practices for the Arts Sector*, which was designed and facilitated by Naomi Ortiz, a proud disabled and Mestizo poet, writer, and visual artist based in Tucson, Arizona, whose work explores cultivating care and connection within states of stress. Through imagery exercises, self-reflection exercises, and both small and large group discussions, Naomi covered common, day-to-day work/life challenges, such as urgency and dealing with a lack of resolution, as well as tools for addressing these challenges via the

seven types of self-care. At the conclusion of the workshop, attendees received a copy of Ortiz's book, *Sustaining Spirit: Self-Care for Social Justice*. Shortly thereafter, CAL-Now hosted its final video conference call, which invited network representatives since 2017 to attend. This celebratory call brought together a cross-section of members who reminisced about their personal experiences and the experience of watching each organization grow and evolve. It was on this high note that CAL-Now sunsetted. A LinkedIn group was created by CCI to give CAL-Now participants the opportunity to continue being in community with one another and sharing resources.

### CAL-NOW MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

ACTIVATE - EMERGING ARTS LEADERS (FKA Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles)

CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION

EMERGING ARTS PROFESSIONALS SAN FRANCISCO/BAY AREA

GENARTS SILICON VALLEY

MULTICULTURAL ARTS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE/SAN JOSÉ

PUBLIC MATTERS/LOS ANGELES

RISING ARTS LEADERS/SAN DIEGO

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS

In response to the economic crisis, and the ensuing financial needs of individuals that resulted from the coronavirus pandemic, CCI administered ten **COVID-19 Relief Funds** from 2020 to 2022. The final fund, the East Bay Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts - 2022 Round was administered from September 6, 2022, to September 28, 2022, and awarded \$500,645 to 402 artists and arts workers in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. The Kenneth Rainin Foundation seeded the pooled Fund with additional support from the East Bay Community Foundation, Gerbode Foundation, Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Hellman Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, and Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation.

The COVID-19 Relief Funds administered by CCI included (in chronological order) the San Francisco Arts & Artists Relief Fund, Relief Fund for L.A. County Visual Artists, East Bay/Oakland Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts, California Relief Fund for Artists and Cultural Practitioners, Hardly Strictly Music Relief Fund: Bay Area, the City of San José Coronavirus Relief Fund: Artists, Oakland CARES Fund for Artists and Arts Nonprofits, East Bay Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts - 2021, Berkeley Arts Recovery Grants for Artists and Cultural Practitioners, and the East Bay Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts - 2022.

### 2020 – 2022 RELIEF FUNDING BY THE NUMBERS:

**10** Relief Funds

**25** Funding Partners

**53** Counties Supported

**4,170** Fund Recipients

**\$7.45M** Distributed



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### QUICK GRANT PROGRAM

CCI launched the **Quick Grant** program in 2009 in partnership with the San Francisco Arts Commission and San Francisco Grants for the Arts to establish a collaborative funding initiative that would strengthen the support system for artists and arts administrators. Now in its fourteenth year, the Quick Grant program is a statewide mainstay for artists and arts administrators, with multiple funding partners collaboratively invested in providing professional development scholarship funding.

With the pandemic's continued disruption to artists' financial well-being and organizational staff capacity, the Quick Grant program has become even more *in demand* to help artists and arts workers adapt

**"CCI's support of this kind of tailored professional development is invaluable and unique in the funding landscape. In order to sustain my practice, it's so important to be able to continue to grow and learn new skills. It's a relief to know that CCI provides funding for just this purpose. This is the second CCI Quick Grant that I have received, and I know that my new knowledge will serve me for months and years to come."**

—Sue Mark, 2023 Quick Grant Recipient



2023 Quick Grant Recipient Sue Mark. 2019, Oakland, CA. Courtesy of Sue Mark. Photo by Douglas Zimmerman.

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

to ever-changing conditions in order to survive financially. Whether working one-on-one with a career coach or consultant, attending an online business workshop, or participating in a virtual (and more recently, in-person) conference for network-building and field learning, Quick Grant recipients sought various ways to not just remain in the arts and culture sector, but to sustain and strengthen their artistic practice or organization.

In FY23, the Quick Grant program awarded a total of \$144,405 in reimbursement grants to 259 artists and 36 nonprofit arts organization staff members.

### FY23 QUICK GRANT FUNDERS:

BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

MAXWELL/HANRAHAN FOUNDATION

SAN FRANCISCO ARTS COMMISSION

SAN FRANCISCO GRANTS FOR THE ARTS

WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION

**“This opportunity was very important to me and I am feeling so much more resolved about my artistic journey than I was six months ago. I appreciated the 1:1 ratio and it felt more emotionally safe. Living, working, and thriving in the Bay Area feels a little easier knowing that these grants help people like me find empowerment in the local arts scene.”**

—Katarina Countiss, 2023 Quick Grant Recipient



2023 Quick Grant Recipient, Katarina Countiss. (Pictured from left to right: Andrew Rose, Dominique Nigro, Amikah Peabody, Kevin Corcoran, and Katarina Countiss). May 11, 2023. Oakland, CA. Courtesy of Katarina Countiss. Photo by David Jones.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### ZOO LABS: FUND

Zoo Labs was founded with a vision of building a startup entrepreneurship infrastructure for artists. From 2013 - 2020, Zoo Labs ran 26 accelerator residencies at their West Oakland recording studios, assembling a strong and vibrant community of over 250 artists and 350 mentors whose collective knowledge and skills are abundant. While many of these artists now have entrepreneurial skills and projects that are ready to go, there is a marked lack of capital for these individuals, especially Bay Area BIPOC artists, to afford to start or scale up their creative businesses. In response to this pointed financial need,

**“Receiving CCI’s Zoo Labs: FUND grant has had a transformative impact on House of Gongs organization. With the funding, we were able to produce a festival, release two albums, and establish a dedicated learning space for the Filipinx community. The financial support from Zoo Labs was instrumental in realizing these projects. Additionally, the invaluable mentorship provided by Zoo Labs mentors went beyond our expectations, offering guidance and support that has greatly benefited our organization and its work.”**

—Ron and Lydia Querian/House of Gongs,  
2022 Zoo Labs: FUND Grant Recipient



House of Gongs, 2022 Zoo Labs: FUND Grand Recipient. Pictured from left to right: Monz (keyboard), Charito (2nd Vocals), Ruby Ibarra (vocals), Chen (lead guitar), Mhyko (drums), Rocky G (rapper/spoken word), Mikey (Bass), Angelo Macaraeg (Kulintang practitioner). 6 May 2023. San Francisco, CA. Photo by Julio Dizon. Photo courtesy of House of Gongs.

# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

Zoo Labs partnered with CCI to launch **Zoo Labs: FUND**, which awards unrestricted grants to Bay Area BIPOC artists and teams whose music business is contributing to the region's arts and culture environment in positive ways. In addition to receiving cash grants, teams receive access to mentors with expertise in a range of industries (music, tech, marketing, legal, and more).

A second grantmaking round was offered in 2022, distributing a total of \$225,000 through award tiers of \$5,000; \$15,000; \$25,000; and \$50,000.

Two, three-member panels assisted CCI in reviewing Zoo Labs: FUND applications and making grantee recommendations. For the \$5,000 and \$15,000 award tiers, panelists included **Amy D.** (vocalist, songwriter, community leader, and music educator), **Rohith Jayaraman** (vocalist, composer, and educator), and **Christian Medina Beltz** (storyteller and educator). For the \$25,000 and \$50,000 award tiers, panelists included **Miles Dotson** (startup business leader, career product manager, author, research advocate, and entrepreneur), **Ripley Jene** (musician, multimedia digital artist, writer, and educator), and **Yesenia Sanchez** (principal consultant of Soleil Coaching & Consulting).

## 2022 ZOO LABS: FUND GRANTEES BY COUNTY

**\$50,000**    **HIP HOP FOR CHANGE**, Alameda

**\$25,000**    **GOLD BEAMS**, Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano  
**OAKTOWNSOUL**, Alameda  
**PSYCHIC EYE RECORDS**, Alameda

**\$15,000**    **ASSINYEOLA MUSIC PUBLISHING**, Alameda  
**BALAY KULINTANG / HOUSE OF GONGS**, Contra Costa, San Francisco  
**BOBI CÉSPEDES MUSIC**, Alameda  
**DIASPORA SESSIONS**, Alameda  
**LYRICAL OPPOSITION**, San Mateo, Alameda, San Francisco

**\$5,000**    **CALM WAITING**, Alameda  
**EARTHEAREAL**, Alameda  
**LOVE LETTERS TO A BLACK SEED**, Alameda  
**MARYZELLE - SOUND HEALING FOR THE PEOPLE**, San Francisco  
**UNDERDOGS SOUNDTRACK**, San Mateo, Alameda



# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

## AMBITIOUS: TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

In the moment of transition, when a caterpillar has spun a cocoon and becomes a chrysalis, amazing things happen just out of sight. Cells present since the caterpillar's birth awaken and order themselves in new ways. As the fourth year of AmbitioUS comes to a close, a similar metamorphosis is emerging within our Economic Trailblazer and Artist Ownership [portfolios](#).

Call it, if you will, our very own chrysalis phase.

At the organizational level, this was a year when we began to see a significant shift happening at [Cooperative New West Jackson](#) (CO-OP NWJ) in Jackson, Mississippi. For ten years, CO-OP NWJ has quietly carried out the work of rejuvenating and supporting an eight-block neighborhood called Hood Hill (where approximately 350 people live) through the creation of experimental and sustainable models of self-determined governance and economic revitalization. In a recent conversation, CO-OP NWJ leadership announced that it is ready to fully emerge and share what it has learned with its larger peer group, funders, and others interested in localized economic and social empowerment to transform and deliver power to historically marginalized communities.

Similarly, after years of groundwork, [Ekvn-Yefolecv](#) (pronounced: Ee Gun Yee Fo Lee Ja) recently began sharing its learnings about creating an economic system rooted in ownership as well as cultural, linguistic, and environmental sustainability more formally. It welcomed a gathering of six Indigenous communities (Dakota, Yuchi, Tuscarora, Diné, Winnemem Wintu, and Mohawk) to the ecovillage they have been

building on ancestral lands that they were forcibly removed from during the [Trail of Tears](#). Today those lands are collectively known as Alabama.

The six Indigenous communities are interested in adopting and adapting Ekvn-Yefolecv's model that offers cultural and linguistic preservation while creating an economic system that is non-extractive and in line with the Maskoke peoples' commitment to Earth stewardship. This sentiment was expressed repeatedly - that after their own incubation and reimagining of economic power centered in community ownership and governance, their own rearrangement of cells - that Economic Trailblazers are ready to emerge and share this work broadly with the hope that others see, and perhaps aim to replicate, what is possible.

Some, like [RUNWAY](#), are embracing scale. RUNWAY is stretching from a city approach to a regional one - focusing on the American South, with a new ten-year effort called [Rooted](#). The initiative intends to spark investments in Southern Black entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. Others, like [Historic Clayborn](#), through its relationship with [the BIG We Foundation](#), are harnessing the power of hyper-local integrated capital investments to support density-building for Black businesses and culture in Memphis. And still others, like [Nexus Community Partners](#), are creating ecosystems in the Twin Cities and beyond that support the Black cooperative movement. On a recent trip to Oakland, we saw a centerpiece of East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative's paradigm-shifting economic model, [Esther's Orbit Room](#). This celebrated space was once a cornerstone of Oakland's Black Business District before falling into disrepair. It's set to be reborn as a cultural hub.

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

Courtesy of East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EBPREC). Original founding members on stage during EB PREC launch night. (Pictured left to right: Greg Jackson, Marissa Ashkar, Ojan Mobedshahi, Noni Session, and Shira Shaham). December 2018. East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative, Oakland, CA.



Each of these organizations (and others in our portfolio) is emerging out of the quiet, hard, and often invisible work of building economic systems that work for all people and paving the way for a world prepared to manifest a more mutual destiny.

And we are here for that day!

Likewise, in our Artist Ownership portfolio, we are seeing inspired experimentation. Midnight Oil Collective has rearranged elements of traditional, extractive venture capital to create investable products grounded in cooperative economics. Its Spark Fund invests in artistic projects, and when those projects are successful, the Fund's other projects experience a financial benefit.

Comradery, an early-stage worker-owned crowdfunding platform, has reimagined a transactional tool originally designed to simply



Courtesy of East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EBPREC). EB PREC community design charrette at Esther's Orbit Room. (Pictured left to right: Anna Shniederman, Regina Davis, xavier buck). March 2021. EB PREC, Oakland, CA.

collect money and build an audience into one that can also elevate the creative work of marginalized people and communities. As an ethical creator-centered alternative to venture capital funded sites like Patreon, Comradery is poised for growth.

We invested in Gracepoint Neighborhood and Umba Daima which represent Black artists and entrepreneurs in the complex world of Web 3.0. They are creating ecosystems that re-center control with those who are historically excluded from economic systems. Their commitment to creating a more inclusive Web3 offers necessary alternative models and ways of organizing.

Transformation is a process; one that takes time and can be difficult to see. But change is happening. The reordering of existing pathways and the activation of new ones can lead to remarkable things.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### **AMBITIOUS BENEFICIARIES: (JULY 1, 2022 - JUNE 30, 2023)**

In total, from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, AmbitioUS made \$1,430,000 total in grants, investments, and professional services agreements.

### **BOSTON UJIMA PROJECT | fiscal sponsor: Center for Economic Democracy Inc) (\$75,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):**

Boston Ujima Project (Ujima) was founded in 2016 and is being incubated and fiscally sponsored by the Center for Economic Democracy (CED). CED launched in 2014 by Aaron Tanaka who learned the model of community-governed funds from his employment and mentorship at Boston Impact Initiative, which has been an AmbitioUS grantee. Ujima is a democratic, member-run organization building cooperative economic

infrastructure in Boston that is designed to return wealth to working-class communities of color. The Ujima Fund is privately funded, but community members control its investments. Ujima took an unconventional approach to shift the power of wealth-building from institutional owners, like heads of banks and investment funds, to community members from working class and ethnically diverse communities who are typically unable to benefit from or have a say in investment capital deployed in their communities. To date, the Ujima Fund has raised \$4.9 million from 387 investors (including community members, faith institutions, philanthropic initiatives like AmbitioUS, and civic organizations). Ujima has invested \$725,000 in local BIPOC-owned businesses and plans to reach over \$1,000,000 of invested capital before the end of 2023. It continues to serve as a thought leader and an investment fund model that demonstrates full accountability to the communities it serves. AmbitioUS provided Ujima with one year of operating support.



Courtesy of Comradery Worker Cooperative, an AmbitioUS grantee.

### **COMRADERY WORKER COOPERATIVE (\$25,000 forgivable loan and an additional \$75,000 investment; Artist Ownership category):**

Comradery Worker Cooperative is an early-stage worker-owned crowdfunding platform. The organization was formed with the explicit goal of elevating the creative work of marginalized people and communities in a non-exploitative way. Built as an ethical creator-centered alternative to sites like Patreon, Comradery has a loyal and active membership base that has been kept intentionally small as it develops its technology, business plan, and collaborative decision-making framework.

Comradery is planning its next phase of growth carefully, making sure to balance its shared governance model while opening its platform to more creators, especially those from cultural

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

communities under threat. AmbitioUS provided one year of project support to create an online mutual aid fund structure that is accessible to any of Comradery's creators and to build out its governance and outreach infrastructure. AmbitioUS also provided Comradery with a one-year forgivable loan which it can use to invest in products that benefit both the creators and Comradery.

**COMMON FUTURE (FKA BALLE) (\$5,000; Economic Trailblazer category):** Common Future is a leader in addressing unprecedented wealth inequality and economic injustice. It moves capital and decision-making power to those who represent financially vulnerable communities, serves as an incubator and accelerator for BIPOC small businesses, and uses data and research to advocate for the adoption of new economic models. With its recent acquisitions of Uncharted (a BIPOC-centered venture accelerator) announced in May 2022 and Community Credit Lab (a BIPOC-focused lending intermediary) announced in September 2022, Common Future is becoming a comprehensive economic change engine that is shaping new infrastructure to realize economic justice. AmbitioUS provided one year of general operating support to Oakland, CA-based Common Future.

**COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY OF NEW WEST JACKSON | fiscal sponsor: Voices of Calvary Ministries (\$75,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** The Cooperative Community of New West Jackson (CO-OP NWJ) is a grassroots, resident-led development model that seeks to revitalize West Jackson, MS, starting with an eight-block neighborhood called Hood Hill. Voices of Calvary Ministries (VOCM) is the fiscal sponsor. The mission of VOCM, which is also located in Jackson, MS, is to build strong individuals, families, churches, and communities that reach their full potential.



Courtesy of Cooperative New West Jackson, an AmbitioUS grantee. Pennies for Potholes project where Co-op New West Jackson residents collect pennies to repair neighborhood potholes themselves. November 2018. Co-op New West Jackson, Jackson, MS. Photo by Eunha Blake.

CO-OP NWJ works to create sustainable solutions to the chronic economic and social challenges faced by neighborhood residents. It does so by purchasing homes that have been auctioned because residents did not keep up with property taxes, and by producing goods and services that earn residents incomes that will help them retain and maintain their homes. Residents are farming abandoned properties that have been redeveloped as agricultural land; and receiving training in various trades that are needed locally such as landscaping, tree removal, home renovation and construction, etc. AmbitioUS provided one year of renewed general operating support to CO-OP NWJ.



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**DEBT COLLECTIVE** | fiscal sponsor: Sustainable Markets Foundation (\$100,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer and Artist Ownership category): Debt Collective, a project of Sustainable Markets Foundation, organizes around intersecting forms of indebtedness – from medical debt to criminal punishment debt, housing debt to student debt – that impact life for working people, particularly in Black and Brown communities. Debt Collective frames the issue as less about personal responsibility and more about a response to a financial industrial complex that targets, exploits, and extracts disproportionately from cultural communities under threat. It encourages debt holders, including artists, to collectivize their debt and their political voices to force debt relief and changes to the legal system to protect individuals from predatory financial practices. Debt Collective is part of a larger

movement attempting to shift certain basic needs—education, food, shelter, and health—from being considered a privilege earned through private market participation to a human right. Its recent significant wins of student debt relief in 2022 have elevated conversations about how debt exacerbates the racial wealth gap. AmbitioUS provided one year of project support to Sustainable Markets Foundation for its project, the Debt Collective.

**EKVN YEFOLECV** (\$25,000 investment; Artist Ownership category): Ekv-Yefolecv (pronounced: Ee Gun Yee Fo Lee Ja) is an intentional ecovillage community of Indigenous Maskoke persons who, after 180 years of having been forcibly removed from traditional homelands – in what is commonly and colonially known as Alabama – have returned to reinvigorate their language and culture by recreating a society reflective of one from which the Maskoke lexicon originally emerged, and that is premised on balanced relations with the natural world. This is a bold push for cultural preservation, anchored by the choice to return to their ancestral land and to support the subsequent development of the Ekv-Yefolecv Ecovillage as a fully off-the-grid and self-sustaining community of homes, farming, fishing, schools, and earned-income activities. This effort demonstrates what is possible for culturally connected, economically mutualistic outcomes. Although these values of cooperativism, land stewardship, and strong socio-cultural ties are often described as a “new” economic vision, Ekv-Yefolecv shows that these outcomes are about returning to a long-established, and largely lost, way of living and being. Ekv-Yefolecv is sharing a holistic model that is inspiring other Indigenous communities also in danger of having their culture and language erased. AmbitioUS provided one year of renewed general operating support to Ekv-Yefolecv.



Courtesy of Ekv-Yefolecv, an AmbitioUS grantee. The Maskoke Ecovillage. Ekv-Yefolecv, Alabama

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**THE WORKERS LAB** (Joint investment: \$30,000 from AmbitioUS and \$20,000 from Sol Center for Liberated Work; Artist Ownership category): The Workers Lab, in collaboration with the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative, is embarking on a shared project (the Gig Worker Learning Project) to understand gig workers' needs and the solutions that will impact them most. In addition to identifying key issues and potential solutions the project will build infrastructure to enable cross-sectoral collaboration between gig worker groups, which is critical for power building. AmbitioUS partnered with Sol Center for Liberated Work and provided project support for the research led by The Workers Lab and the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative.

**GRACEPOINT NEIGHBORHOOD, INC.** (\$75,000 investment; Artist Ownership category): Gracepoint Neighborhood is a BIPOC-centered community that has both blockchain and in-person elements. With his design, Marquis Harmon, the organization's founder and CEO, is essentially hacking the digital extractive wealth-building space and reorienting it towards regeneration, relationships, and broad accessibility, especially for those typically excluded. While it replicates some of the elements that are already available in the marketplace, such as a digital asset exchange which could be seen as a competitor of market leaders such as Coinbase or Gemini (disclosure that CCI has an account with Gemini), its ethos and terms are designed to be more protective versus extractive. Core to its work is creating a safe, secure crypto wallet that is constructed around the experiences of BIPOC users. In order to minimize exploitation and extraction, Gracepoint will have a robust set of Web3 and financial educational offerings allowing users to access and earn utility tokens. AmbitioUS provided an equity investment executed as a SAFE agreement to support Gracepoint during their seed phase of building a digital exchange that is safe and protective of BIPOC users.



Courtesy of Gracepoint Neighborhood, an AmbitioUS grantee. CEO, Marquis Harmon, works diligently to outline the initial development strategy. October 2022. Gracepoint Neighborhood, Dallas, TX.

**GUILDDED** | fiscal sponsor: United States Federation for Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) (\$100,000 investment; Artist Ownership category): The United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) is the national grassroots membership organization for worker cooperatives. It is the fiscal sponsor for Guildded, which is a freelancer-owned cooperative that provides 1099 workers with access to timely guaranteed payment, invoicing and tax services, and a range of worker benefits like licensing, insurance, and direct primary care. Guildded creates financial stability while providing freelancers with opportunities to build relationships with other gig workers, collective agency and power, and financial assets as cooperative owners. AmbitioUS provided one year of expenditure responsibility support for Guildded's operations.



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Courtesy of Richard Copley. I Am A Man. March 1968. Memphis, TN.  
Photo by Richard Copley.



Left to right: CCI Narrative Shifter, Nichole Christian, Anasa Troutman,  
Executive Director of Historic Clayborn Temple, AmbitioUS Director  
Cate Fox, and Angie Kim, CCI President and CEO. Photo by CCI.



### **HISTORIC CLAYBORN TEMPLE (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):**

Historic Clayborn Temple is a nonprofit organization located in downtown Memphis, Tenn. The building (also known as Historic Clayborn Temple) is officially acknowledged as a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The church was founded in 1892. It was sold in 1949 to an African American congregation, who changed the name to Clayborn in honor of their local African Methodist Episcopal (AME) bishop. Clayborn Temple served as the base of operations for the Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968, where civil rights and labor activists organized to demand better working conditions and higher pay. On March 18, 1968, during the height of the Sanitation Workers' Strike, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered a speech at the Temple that helped to galvanize the nation's attention. Despite its historical significance and role it played in Memphis's African American community, the church closed in 1999 and subsequently fell into disrepair. Artist, cultural strategist, and restorative economics practitioner Anasa Troutman envisioned more when she was brought on to help draft a plan to reclaim and restore the Temple and its legacy as part of the city's MLK 50 celebration.

Anasa's vision is to transform the Temple into an entity designed to serve and nurture the Black community of Memphis, specifically its artists, creatives, and cultural organizers. As such, Historic Clayborn Temple developed a threefold mission: 1) architectural preservation and restoration; 2) engagement of its legacy as a spark for Black social activism and organizing as demonstrated during the Civil Rights Movement; and 3) reengagement of Memphis residents in a model of community ownership and collective governance for the future of the Temple and Black Memphis neighborhoods facing

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similar states of disrepair and threats of disenfranchisement. AmbitioUS provided one year of renewed general operating support to Historic Clayborn Temple.

**NEW ECONOMY COALITION (\$30,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** New Economy Coalition (NEC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that supports the solidarity economy movement in the United States by holding convenings, connecting members of the movement through working groups and regional organizing structures, and providing financial support for youth-led and frontline organizations through its New Economy Movement Support Fund. It is a membership-based network of more than 200 organizations that puts people over profit; subscribes to a set of principles, practices, and institutions that provide real alternatives to capitalism; is part of a system where all of the things a community needs are controlled and governed by everyday people; and uses a framework rooted in participatory democracy, cooperation, solidarity, and respect for the Earth. As such, the staffing and operational structure of NEC is as a worker-directed nonprofit. Recently, NEC has made it a higher priority to support cultural organizing as part of its effort to popularize solidarity economies. It is developing a relationship with Art.coop, which exists to grow the solidarity economy movement by centering systems-change work led by artists and culture-bearers. AmbitioUS provided one year of general operating support to New Economy Coalition.

**NEXUS COMMUNITY PARTNERS (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** Incorporated in 2010, Nexus Community Partners (Nexus) is a nonprofit organization that operates at the intersection of community building and economic development for

communities of color, focusing on the historically African American neighborhoods of North Minneapolis, where Nexus is located. Through its community wealth-building programs, Nexus focuses on cooperative development, which helps residents build greater individual and collective wealth. While its first cohorts were in-person and focused on serving those in the Twin Cities, its recent virtual cohorts have included local and national Black-led cooperative founders. Nexus now collaborates with other cooperative and community wealth-building programs nationwide. AmbitioUS provided continued support to Nexus for its North Star Black Cooperative Fellowship and its Fellowship Alumni Fund.



Courtesy of Nexus Community Partners, North Star Black Cooperative Fellowship, Cohort 3 (2018-2019) at the fellowship orientation welcome dinner. (Pictured from left to right, front row to back row: Khadijah Parris, Jasmine Boudah, Danielle Mkali, Nkuli Shongwe, Selah Michele, Shiranthi Goonathilaka, Stacey Nyaboke Rosana, Quincy Ballard, Ini Augustine, Duaba Umenra, Rena Mekha, Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski, Chalonne Wilson, Quandra Arch, Tia Williams, Roxanne O'Brien, Marcus Harcus, Tyree Gulley) October, 2018. Nexus Community Partners, St. Paul, MN.



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Courtesy of the Midnight Oil Collective (MOC), an AmbitioUS grantee. MOC founders in front of the Yale School of Management. (Pictured left to right: Allison Chu, Frances Pollock, Keith Hamilton Cobb, Sarah Fiele, Emily Roller). May 2023. Midnight Oil Collective, New Haven, CT. Photo by Norman Oats.



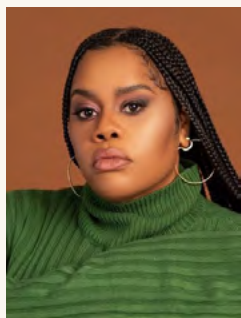
**MIDNIGHT OIL COLLECTIVE (\$75,000 investment; Artist Ownership category):** Midnight Oil Collective (MOC) incubates, accelerates, and invests in arts and entertainment ventures. Founded by artists, MOC is a worker-owned cooperative registered as an LLC. It combines elements of venture capital and cooperative economics, providing early funding to promising projects and supporting artists as they bring their ideas to fruition. It aligns the interests of producers, investors, and artists by creating a structure where artists participate in the realized profits of both their project and the fund as a whole. AmbitioUS provided an equity investment to support its Spark Fund which is experimenting with providing non-extractive capital to artists and helping to positions as their own managers and producers. The fund also supports profit sharing, and incentivizes collaboration over competition.

**ORANGE MOUND (TONE FKA THE COLLECTIVE) (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** TONE is an organization based in Memphis, Tenn., whose mission is to elevate Black artists as innovative thought leaders, courageous storytellers, and risk-taking problem solvers through intentional exhibitions, conversations, concerts, and artist development. In partnership with the CEO of record label Unapologetic, James Dukes, TONE purchased the former United Equipment building site on Lamar Avenue (a major thoroughfare) to turn it into a hub of Black creativity and innovation. They are working with community members to reimagine it as a multi-use, community-owned and governed asset that meets the needs and dreams of Black Memphis. It is a 10-acre industrial site comprising a group of buildings once used as a grain operation, including a grain elevator known by neighborhood residents as the "Tower." The site has been vacant since 2010. It is located in the historic Orange Mound neighborhood, the first neighborhood built by and for Black people in the United States, just a few minutes' drive from downtown Memphis. The plan for the Orange Mound Tower site includes redeveloping the existing warehouse and tower, including art-making spaces, galleries, artists' residencies, studios, commercial market space, multifamily housing, office and live-work space, a recording and performance venue, and a courtyard. AmbitioUS provided one-year of renewed project support for TONE's work on Orange Mound Tower.

**ROANHORSE CONSULTING, LLC (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** Roanhorse Consulting, LLC is an Indigenous women-owned firm that supports community-led solutions in addressing social, economic, health, and well-being challenges; co-creates opportunities and spaces that challenge systemic

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barriers through power-building and self-determination; reframes and strengthens systems through an equity and justice lens; and builds the capacity of all clients. Roanhorse works with frontline organizations, serving the states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado and the sovereign nations across New Mexico and Arizona. AmbitioUS provided a two-year expenditure responsibility grant focused on Roanhorse's work in advancing alternative lending in financing mechanisms for Native American and women-led communities.



Courtesy of RUNWAY, an AmbitioUS grantee. Picture of Jessica Norwood, Founder and CEO of RUNWAY.

**RUNWAY | fiscal sponsor: Everyday People for Change (\$50,000 and an additional investment of \$50,000; Economic Trailblazer category):**

RUNWAY is a social enterprise that invests in Black entrepreneurs and strengthens the financial ecosystem and infrastructure that supports their businesses. It demonstrates the untapped possibilities that occur when financial services prioritize the borrowers as well

as the investors. Building on its successful pilot in Oakland, RUNWAY has launched its program in Boston and Chicago and is expanding into the American South over the next ten years. Its model provides community-centered, non-extractive capital combined with culturally relevant education so as to ensure investees' success.

RUNWAY is essential infrastructure in an economy that works for everyone. It provides replicable funding models for Black creatives and their businesses, tools and processes to financial institutions committed to changing their practices and policies to reflect equitable lending, and capacity-building programs and partnerships to

strengthen and support local entrepreneurial networks. AmbitioUS provided a one-year \$50,000 general operating grant to RUNWAY.

**PB&J - REIMAGINING PROTECTIONS, BENEFITS, AND JOY FOR ALL (\$120,000 contract; Artist Ownership category):**

Arts and culture workers experience harms due to the lack of benefits and protections that are typically tied to full-time employment. Rather than push workers into employment models to expand protections, we are working with Web3 entrepreneur, Sian Morson, to seed new solutions rooted in the ways individuals work and live their lives. The project leverages blockchain technologies—in particular Decentralized Autonomous Organizations, or DAOs—to shift ownership and governance power to the workers themselves. We hope this interdependent platform cooperative will deliver aggregated social protections to non-traditional workers in ways that perpetuate sharing of prosperity in our economic systems and enable people to live with enough safety, time, and security to realize their full potential for themselves and society. AmbitioUS partnered with Sol Center for Liberated Work and provided project support for PB&J.

**SOLIDAIRE NETWORK (\$25,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):**

Solidaire Network is a community of donors mobilizing critical resources into intersectional movements for racial, gender, and climate justice. Solidaire prioritizes funding that: is led by people most directly impacted by injustice, builds power to challenge oppressive systems, and confronts the root causes of oppression. About 48% of its approximately 325 members are individuals. The remainder are institutions. Membership dues are pooled and allocated to social and racial justice movement partnerships primarily through its portfolio of grants given through its Movement Infrastructure Fund.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

Over the past year, Solidaire moved \$12 million in unrestricted funding to 166 social movement organizations. In addition to grant-making, Solidaire activates its network through educational programming, community-building opportunities, and information sharing on its listservs. AmbitioUS provided a one-year general operating grant to be part of this giving community that shares vision and values. Participation also has mutual benefits: AmbitioUS staff is learning from the member individuals and institutions. We can extend our impact beyond our pooled fund participants to draw the Solidaire members' attention to our grantees and investees.

**SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES LAW CENTER (SELC) (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):** Founded in 2009, the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC) is a worker-directed 501(c)3 nonprofit that incubates and supports projects at the intersections of economic, racial, and climate justice with a goal of redistributing wealth, democratizing governance, and providing long-term stewardship for vital resources. SELC creates, develops, fiscally sponsors, spins-off, and nurtures projects, such as immigrant-owned cooperatives, Black-owned real estate cooperatives (such as AmbitioUS grantee and investee East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative [EB PREC]), Indigenous land trusts, and new intermediaries. Over the years, SELC has transitioned from a traditional nonprofit into a worker-directed 501(c)3, meaning that it is experimenting with running a nonprofit as an employee-governed cooperative. The 17-person team of lawyers and non-lawyers each earn between \$60,000 and \$87,000 with pay differentials based on cost of living and dependents not on academic degrees or organizational positions. AmbitioUS provided one year of general operating support to SELC.

**THE BIG WE FOUNDATION (\$50,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category):**

The BIG We Foundation develops cultural strategies that center people from historically marginalized communities (Black, Indigenous, women, people with disabilities) with a focus on the Southern United States. In addition to the creative content and community it creates, The BIG We Foundation also engages in restorative economics by investing in projects that generate sustainable impact and place more and different people in power. The BIG We was created by Anasa Troutman, who is also the Executive Director of AmbitioUS grantee Historic Clayborn Temple, as a collaborative platform to raise significant funds to not only stave off the erasure of Black cultural communities, which are currently under threat of gentrification but to also uplift and empower them. In order to harness the full potential of funds raised to date, Anasa is working with consultant Jamie Bennett, an experienced fundraising strategist and respected national leader in the arts sector who brings extensive networks of relationships as well as experience raising millions of dollars at a national scale. This underwritten consulting support affirms the work that Anasa is doing with both organizations and helps to address a significant need to unlock networks and funding relationships needed to make Anasa's vision of a thriving Black Memphis, and other Southern African American cities, a reality. AmbitioUS provided an investment that would cover over two-and-a-half years of consulting support for The BIG We Foundation (in collaboration with Historic Clayborn Temple) as it develops and implements a fund that provides African American communities in the South pathways to economic self-determination.



Courtesy of the The BIG We Foundation, an AmbitioUS grantee.

## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS



Courtesy of Umba Daima, an AmbitioUS grantee. Black NFT Networking Dinner, hosted by Umba Daima Inc. and Brittany Pierre. June 2022. Umba Daima, New York City, NY. Photo by Brittany Johnson.

### **UMBA DAIMA (\$75,000 investment, Artist Ownership category):**

Iris Nevins is an unconventional tech CEO. She started her career as an organizer for Movement for Black Lives. Her experience as an organizer and teacher eventually led her into technology and ultimately into the blockchain as she looked for ways to solve entrenched socio-economic problems for Black and historically marginalized people. Her systems changework is rooted in an organizing practice which emphasizes

relationships and transparency, cultural preservation and pride, and self-determination and community benefit. Based on our experience, Iris offers a rare combination of experiences and values in Web3 that closely align with our interests and learning goals. AmbitioUS provided an equity investment executed as a SAFE agreement to support Umba Daima's seed phase of funding which will provide necessary start-up capital to a Black entrepreneur working to address the racial wealth gap.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

**UPTIMA ENTREPRENEUR COOPERATIVE** | fiscal sponsor: **RUNWAY (\$40,000 investment; Economic Trailblazer category)**: Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative provides holistic and culturally relevant education, advising, and community to support diverse entrepreneurs in creating thriving businesses in service to their communities. Entrepreneurship is a pathway for self-sufficiency and intergenerational wealth creation. However, growing a business comes with many risks, challenges, and frustrations.

Uptima is a recognized leader in guiding entrepreneurs of color in designing, building, and implementing businesses that reflect their values and communities. Uptima is a partner of AmbitioUS grantee RUNWAY and an essential part of its economic intervention on behalf of Black entrepreneurs. It is positioning itself for continued growth in its current locations (Oakland, Boston, and Chicago) as well as a national expansion in partnership with RUNWAY. AmbitioUS provided operating support over two years to Uptima, through its fiscal sponsor Everyday People for Change Inc., d/b/a RUNWAY, as it pursues accreditation for its courses, enhancing both the credibility of its course work and the financial sustainability of the cooperative.

**URBAN INSTITUTE** (Collaborative investment: \$75,000 from AmbitioUS and \$75,000 from Sol Center for Liberated Work; Artist Ownership category): The Urban Institute is a dedicated nonprofit that is elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector. AmbitioUS partnered with Sol Center for Liberated Work and provided support for "Documenting Fractional Ownership Models and History," a research project led by the Urban Institute that documents community fractional ownership models and history. This research will serve AmbitioUS's desire to contribute to cultural communities' wealth-building opportunities as a means of cultural preservation, and also advance Sol Center's priority to use research products to socialize alternative solutions, providing a blueprint for our advocacy work to identify rules, laws, and funding mechanisms government can use to support and enable participatory models of community ownership.

**DEMU** (\$5,000 honorarium in recognition of the time and effort they put into sharing information about their work with AmbitioUS.)

# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

## BUILDING FOR ALL

This was a year of learning, exploration, and experimentation for Sol Center for Liberated Work, CCI's new research, policy, advocacy, and innovation program focused on expanding social and economic protections to arts workers and those in the broader gig economy who share their precarious working conditions.

Strategically, we articulated three core commitments to guide the implementation of our work:

- » First, we are committed to making sure all means ALL, by building social protections that cover all workers, regardless of their employment status. Your job should not determine your safety net. Full stop.
- » Second, we are committed to building a multi-racial, multi-sectoral effort that centers and solves for those historically harmed by and excluded from existing systems of support, beginning with BIPOC, disabled, and immigrant workers from across sectors. Our long-standing mission to support arts workers and culture bearers gives us the unique opportunity to build unconventional collaborations with movement groups who are committed to building alternative labor and economic systems.
- » Third, we are committed to advancing solutions that shift power to workers and their communities, trusting that folks experiencing challenges actually know how to solve them, given the resources and authority to do so. For people of color in particular, building community power—ownership power, economic power,

governance power, and political power—is a crucial precondition to preserving cultural identities, making diverse artistic and cultural expressions possible, while enabling those communities to thrive.

We also identified a few core strategies to guide our work. In particular, we seek opportunities to build bridges and infrastructure to support, amplify, and help direct resources to efforts across sectors that advance our shared vision of protections for all. We also help arts workers join and support those efforts, and look for opportunities to build and support diverse coalitions that build collective power. Finally, we incubate and build support for new models—both public and private—of social and economic protection. In particular, we look for “slippery slope” opportunities to advance protections for all, centering the most marginalized workers so as not to replicate today's inequities or historic ones.

## BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS SECTORS

### REIMAGINING SOCIAL PROTECTIONS FOR EXCLUDED AND NONTRADITIONAL WORKERS

On December 6, 2022, we partnered with the Urban Institute to convene worker advocates and movement leaders to reimagine new systems of protection for nontraditional and excluded workers. The convening brought together worker advocates representing nontraditional workers from across a wide swath of sectors—domestic workers, migrant workers, temp workers, street vendors, migrant workers, sex workers, and more. Together, we set aside the



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

constraints of today's systems, and gave ourselves permission to imagine an alternative vision of economic security for today's workforce, to dream beyond barriers of all kinds. The ideas that garnered widespread support were pretty inspiring, and start to paint the picture, and the true possibility, of an alternative system of protections that isn't contingent on your specific job or identity as a worker, but is guaranteed to you, as a human. Read the [full convening summary](#), published in April 2023.

### GIG WORKER LEARNING PROJECT

In February 2023, Sol Center partnered with AmbitioUS to make its first grant of \$50,000 to support the Gig Worker Learning Project, a participatory research project by The Workers Lab and the Aspen Institute Future of Work Initiative, seeking to understand gig workers' needs and the solutions that will impact them most. The project relies on participatory research methodology to develop a foundational understanding of gig workers' most pressing challenges and identify solutions that workers feel would impact them personally. In this, the Gig Worker Learning Project doesn't just start with excluded and marginalized workers; it puts them in the driver's seat of research design, data collection, dissemination, and data ownership. Perhaps most importantly, the project will build the infrastructure to enable cross-sectoral collaboration between gig worker groups, one rooted not in the perspectives of powerful interest groups, but in the perspectives of workers themselves.

### PAID LEAVE FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED

On October 3, 2022, we co-hosted a convening, entitled Paid Leave for the Self-Employed, alongside the Center for American Progress (CAP) and the Freelancers Union. The hybrid event brought together

representatives of the independent workforce alongside policy experts and advocates working on the issue of paid family and medical leave to imagine what a truly great paid leave benefit for the self-employed might look like, and chart the beginnings of a path to advance that vision. The event laid the groundwork for future relationships and alliances among participants (many of whom had never met before), while simultaneously bringing both worker advocates and paid leave policy experts into a deep discussion about the opportunities and challenges of imagining a system that actually works for the most excluded workers.

### BRINGING ARTS AND GIG WORKERS' VOICES TO THE POLICY TABLE

#### EXPANDING WORKER PROTECTIONS TO INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

In August 2022, the Department of Labor put out a request for comments on its new proposed classification rule, which created an important opportunity to uplift the experiences of arts workers and others working in the gig economy who may be rightly classified, but lack worker protections under labor laws. We worked with allies in the arts to solicit feedback about arts workers' experiences, and heard about frustrations some creatives feel having to choose between security and flexibility, as well as common challenges such as bargaining for fair pay, given that independent contractors are not allowed to collectively bargain under the law. Based on that feedback, we [submitted public comments](#) to the Department of Labor that broadly supported the new rule, while also making the point that all workers, regardless of their classification, deserve wage protections and the right to collectively bargain.

# GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

## ADVOCATING FOR ARTISTS ON THE BLOCKCHAIN

When we started seeing many BIPOC artists moving into the blockchain space several years ago, we started building our own expertise in this area, and were excited to learn in late 2022 that the U.S. government had undertaken a study into the issues surrounding intellectual property and NFTs. We worked with other stakeholders from the arts community to collect feedback on the issues artists and creatives face in the NFT space, and collaborated with Alex Glancy at the law firm Gundzik Gundzik Heeger LLP to develop comments to the USPTO/USCO study. We also participated in one of the public roundtables the Copyright Office organized, advocating on behalf of the creatives CCI serves, especially those from marginalized communities. You can read our [submission here](#), and [watch the roundtable here](#).

## SEEDING NEW MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

### NFTS, SMART CONTRACTS, & DAOS: A RESOURCE FOR CREATIVES

Artists' economic security depends on their ability to own and control their intellectual property rights, but they often lack the means or bargaining power to protect those rights. The blockchain offers exciting opportunities for artists to take more control over their work, and expands ways for them to earn income from that work, but also creates significant risks. That's why we commissioned Alex Glancy at Gundzik Gundzik Heeger LLP to author a report exploring the legal challenges artists face on the blockchain. To support creatives as they engage with this new technology, the report seeks to provide information in the legal areas of copyright, business entities, securities, contracts, and trademark, as applied to these emerging tools. Ultimately, we hope [this](#)

[report](#) serves as a resource to help creatives capture the opportunities of blockchain technologies, while protecting themselves from the risks.

## PB&J - REIMAGINING PROTECTIONS, BENEFITS, AND JOY FOR ALL

As long-time supporters of arts and culture workers, we understand the harms all gig workers experience due to the lack of benefits and protections that are typically tied to full-time employment. Rather than push workers into employment models to expand protections to them, we are working with Web3 entrepreneur, [Sian Morson](#), to seed new solutions rooted in the ways they work and live their lives. The project, which is jointly funded with AmbitioUS, leverages blockchain technologies—in particular Decentralized Autonomous Organizations, or DAOs—to shift ownership and governance power to the workers themselves. We hope this interdependent platform cooperative will deliver aggregated social protections to non-traditional workers in ways that perpetuate the sharing of prosperity in our economic systems and enable people to live with enough safety, time, and security to realize their full potential for themselves and society.

## DOCUMENTING COMMUNITY FRACTIONALIZED ASSET MODELS

In May 2023, Sol Center collaborated with AmbitioUS to make a \$150,000 grant to the Urban Institute for the research project, "Documenting Fractional Ownership Models and History." The internal collaboration between these two CCI programs reflects their shared priorities. In particular, this research will serve AmbitioUS's desire to contribute to cultural communities' wealth-building opportunities as a means of cultural preservation. It will also advance Sol Center's priority to use research products to socialize alternative solutions, providing a blueprint for our advocacy work to identify rules, laws, and funding mechanisms government can use to support and enable participatory models of community ownership.



## GRANT FUNDING & PROGRAMS

### SOL LEARNINGS

In March 2023, we changed our name from Rustle Lab to Sol Center for Liberated Work. In selecting this name, we hoped to embed our aspirations for this work directly into the identity of the program itself, and for the name to do more work communicating who we are and what we care about. For us, Sol represented the energy of the sun to fuel new life and ecosystems. As a Spanish word, we felt it honored the immigrant and marginalized communities we hope to work alongside, as well as our California home. And it formed the root of other words we hold dear - solutions, solidarity, even solo workers.

Meanwhile, Liberated Work encapsulated our world-building ambitions. For us, liberated work was about self-determination. It was about co-creating a world where the jobs we do to earn money do not dictate everything else about our lives—our benefits, our security, our time to rest, or our possibilities for the future. Liberated work includes our labor to pay our bills, but it is so much more. It is the work we do individually to care for our families, participate in our communities, and contribute artistically and culturally to a thriving economy.

When we rolled out the new name and brand, however, we heard feedback from some of the allies and communities we work alongside.

They told us that the name wasn't landing in the ways we hoped—and for different reasons. For some, Sol was too easily understood as Soul, and the deep cultural resonance that term holds for Black communities. For others, the use of a Spanish word felt appropriating in the absence of LatinX leadership within our program. For others, Liberated Work borrowed too heavily from the language of Black Liberation movements, again absent leadership from within those communities.

Hearing that feedback, CCI reflected on the ways we should have solicited more input from our allies before rolling out our new name, as well as our gratitude for those who shared their concerns with us directly. All of which led to our decision to change the name, and our concurrent commitment to move more slowly, deliberately, and in a deeper relationship with the folks we hope to build alongside. This experience gave us the opportunity to strengthen our muscles for what it looks like to really do this work anchored in our values. We're grateful for the opportunity to practice accountability to our communities. At the close of FY23, CCI was excitedly exploring and testing a new name for Sol. The name will formally debut as part of FY24.

We hope that you will stay in conversation with us as we work to co-imagine and co-create a future where everyone has the social and economic protections they deserve.



# ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE





## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) continued its pattern of prudent management in FY23, with income of \$8,403,123 received against program and operating expenses totaling \$5,978,761. CCI's practice of recognizing multi-year restrictions and commitments during the same budget year they were received has created a seeming financial imbalance but one in line with strict adherence to income restrictions for future spending.

For further information on CCI's audited FY23 financial statements, please contact the CCI Administrative Office at:  
**244 S. San Pedro Street, Suite 401, Los Angeles, CA 90012.**

### **CCI SALUTES THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FOR THEIR GENEROUS PROGRAMMATIC AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT DURING DURING FY23:**

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation  
Anonymous  
Barr Foundation  
Builders Initiative  
California State University Long Beach  
California Arts Council  
The Chicago Community Foundation  
(anonymous donor)  
City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs  
City of San José, Office of Cultural Affairs  
City of West Hollywood  
Craig H. Neilsen Foundation  
Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange, Inc  
(CACHE)  
Doris Duke Foundation  
East Bay Community Foundation

Gerbode Foundation  
Hellman Foundation  
Kenneth A. Picerne Foundation  
Kenneth Rainin Foundation  
Kresge Foundation  
Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture  
Maxwell Hanrahan Foundation  
Nathan Cummings Foundation  
Possibility Labs  
Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation  
San Francisco Arts Commission  
San Francisco Foundation (donor advised funds)  
San Francisco Grants for the Arts  
Surdna Foundation  
Walter and Elise Haas Fund  
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

### **CCI IS GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR GENEROUS COMMITMENT OF CCI'S MISSION AND RELIEF FUND EFFORTS IN FY23:**

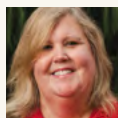
Betty Avila  
Deann Borshay  
Sage Crump  
Sally J. Fifer  
Paul G. Heller  
Edgar Hirst  
Jeffrey Holgate  
Angie Kim  
Lorna Lathram  
Marti Morrison  
Henrietta Sparkman  
Nancy & Richard Walch  
Eleanor Wong  
Megan Yarnall

# ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

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PRESIDENT AND CEO



Lauren Bailey  
MANAGING DIRECTOR



Laura Poppiti  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR



Cate Fox  
DIRECTOR, AMBITIOUS



Althea Erickson  
DIRECTOR, SOL CENTER  
FOR LIBERATED WORK



Nichole M. Christian  
NARRATIVE SHIFTER



Allison Wyper  
ARTISTS KNOWLEDGE MANAGER



Nadia Savira Chrisanto  
ASSISTANT OPERATIONS +  
DIGITAL ASSETS MANAGER



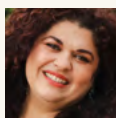
Lorena Moreno  
SYSTEMS AND GRANTS MANAGER



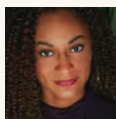
Stephanie Barajas  
PROGRAM OFFICER



Jennelyn Bailon  
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE



Norrell Thompson  
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE



Nyia Hawkins  
FELLOW, AMBITIOUS

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PRINCIPAL, LATHRAM CONSULTING

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Edgar Hirst, Secretary/Treasurer

Betty Avila  
FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
SELF-HELP GRAPHICS

Sage Crump  
PRINCIPAL AND CO-FOUNDER,  
THE KINFOLK EFFECT (TKE)  
PROGRAM SPECIALIST,  
LEVERAGING A NETWORK FOR  
EQUITY (LANE)

Angie Kim  
PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION



## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

### CCI IN THE WORLD WITH PURPOSE & GRATITUDE

CCI staff were once again on the go and out in the world, taking part in one of the highest privileges of our work: in-person engagement with grantees, partners, and collaborative learning organizations.

Building connections with, and on behalf of, the communities we serve in California and beyond is at the center of the CCI difference. It is our honor to learn together and a great joy, for this intentionally remote staff, to do so face-to-face.

We extend deep gratitude and appreciation to the grantees and partner organizations who safely welcomed CCI staff for in-person site visits, training workshops, and convenings in 2023.

Oh, the places we did go:



CCI's fully remote staff gather for first post-COVID in-person retreat in San Francisco, 2022.



## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

CCI Managing Director Lauren Bailey and Assistant Operations and Digital Assets Manager Nadia Chrisanto work to include a moment of fun during a break at the SHRM Inclusion conference in San Diego, 2022



CCI staff take a pause while they soak up leading nonprofit strategies while attending PEAK in Baltimore, Maryland. Staff pictured left to right: Lorena Moreno, Systems and Grants Manager; Nadia Chrisanto, Assistant Operations and Digital Assets Manager; and program associates, Jemelyn Bailon, and Norrell Thompson and program officer Stephanie Barajas.



CCI staff, and friends create community at the 2023 Consensus Conference in Austin, Texas. Pictured left to right: Paul Rucker, AmbitioUS; Director Cate Fox; CCI Program Associate, Norrell Thompson; Next City staff editor and writer, Kelsey Thomas; CCI President and CEO, Angie Kim; Sol Center for Librated Work Director, Althea Erickson; Narrative Shifter, Nichole Christian; and CCI Program Associate, Jemelyn Bailon. Photo by CCI





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