

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Center for
Cultural
Innovation

YEAR IN REFLECTION

Dear Friends,

There has been no shortage of profound economic, social, health, and climate disruptions in the past year. The simultaneity of crises has felt surreal and insurmountable. And yet, there are bright spots in the miasma. We have a new administration with Kamala Harris as the first woman, the first Black American, and the first South Asian American to be elected Vice President; the American Rescue Plan centered equity at the federal level to deliver immediate relief to those most impacted; and, through global cooperation, researchers and scientists shared data to accelerate a COVID-19 vaccine. Focusing on these wins is symbolic of CCI's own ethos, which is to embrace challenges precisely for the opportunities that they might yield.

As CCI's Program Director, I work with a team of incredible colleagues to respond to the needs of artists and arts workers as a whole person, and not just as producers of art. This means that alongside our traditional project-based funding opportunities and business trainings, we're also supporting efforts that make a difference in the conditions of artists' and arts workers' lives, which we do in common cause with other sectors that are addressing shared issues of low and unpredictable wages, lack of worker protections, high debt, and few assets.

The incubator for CCI's cross-sector, structural interventions is *AmbitioUS*. Now in year three of this time-limited initiative, we've gotten more crisp about articulating how artists and cultural work can affect better economic systems that work for all.

When COVID-19 paralyzed the arts and culture sector's workforce, CCI entered the relief fund space and distributed over \$6,290,000 to 3,431 California artists and arts workers. Across these funds, CCI prioritized cultural communities who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, as well as freelance artists (i.e., independent contractors)

who initially had no access to state unemployment insurance. At the onset of the pandemic, we wouldn't have fully understood the precarity of freelance artists had it not been for our *AmbitioUS*-commissioned research into California Assembly Bill 5 and its net impacts on worker classifications, including independent arts workers who lack workplace protections and cannot access employer-conferred benefits such as sick leave, subsidized health insurance, and unemployment. The published report goes beyond analysis of the challenges surrounding arts workers to recommend labor policies that will work better not only for those in the arts but for the millions of other Americans who operate outside the traditional bounds of employment.

At CCI, we believe that we'll get further faster through collective action and not by being siloed by industry or sector. Therefore, our triennial convening intentionally invited speakers from non-arts and culture entities to speak to a mostly arts-affiliated audience on matters where there's common cause—strengthening local economies, building ownership, and eliminating debt. Bridging sectors, building new knowledge, and connecting individuals is necessary to truly impact the conditions of artists' lives.

We are at a moment when great upheaval can catalyze improved support systems for those who have been underrepresented and underserved. This upheaval has meant that CCI is constantly adjusting, learning, pushing, and pulling, and I'm grateful to work alongside staff, board members, funders, artists, culture bearers, and cross-sector allies to create the future we want to live in.



Laura Poppiti
Program Director

MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW



MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to promote knowledge sharing, networking, and financial independence for individuals in the arts by providing business training, grants, and incubating innovative projects that create new program knowledge, tools and practices for artists in the field, and conditions that contribute to realizing financial self-determination.

In 2000, a major study was commissioned by 38 funders nationally, resulting in a 2003 benchmark report produced by the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., 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 supports, access to markets, 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 financial self-determination. By prioritizing self-determination, CCI is attending to the needs of artists as a whole person and not just as producers of art. This requires CCI to commit to making 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 our 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 important role in society by:

- » **Validating** and serving the needs of artists, culture 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 by 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 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 that articulates 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.

Knowledge is power. Financial independence begets creative self-determination. Partnerships lead to solutions. This is the Center for Cultural Innovation.

GRANT FUNDING



AND PROGRAMS

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

Providing artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs with financial resources to help them advance their careers has been a cornerstone of CCI's work. And, as an intermediary focused on the financial well-being of individuals in the arts, CCI continued to support relief fund efforts that alleviated artists' financial hardship as a result of the economic devastation brought upon by COVID-19. Through our perennial grant programs, **Investing in Artists**, **Quick Grant**, and the **California Arts Leadership Investments** portfolio—in addition to our time-limited initiative, **AmbitioUS**, and **regional relief funds**—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 and strengthen the creative support system for California artists. Since that time, CCI has awarded over \$2.4 million to 328 diverse artists across the state.

Through the continued support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, in 2020 CCI welcomed applications for the Investing in

Artists program from Bay Area performing and media artists who are creating work that pushes the envelope of their artistic practice.

Following that application round, CCI awarded \$48,000 in Investing in Artists grants to six California artists.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

2020 INVESTING IN ARTISTS GRANTEES:

MADDY CLIFFORD (Music) to support *Wild Seed*, an innovative visual hip-hop album that pays homage to Black women hip-hop artists and science fiction writer, Octavia E. Butler.

KAT COLE (Dance) to support *QUAKE*, an immersive movement-based performance about mental health through the perspective of artists from across the Asian American community.

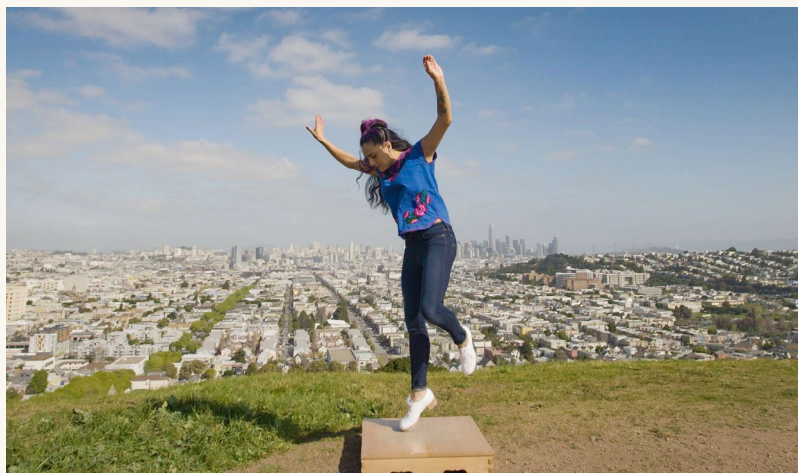
MARGA GOMEZ (Theatre) to support the development and production of *Imaginary Friends*, a radio play about childhood.

ROBERT MOSES (Dance) to support the creation of *Untitled*, a solo work of self-preservation and exhaustion that looks at the independent

life and penalties that emerge when an African American walks away from the terms of societal acceptance.

VANESSA SANCHEZ (Dance) to support the development of *Ghostly Labor*, a dance performance that brings together tap dance, son jarocho, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms to explore the history of exploitation of female labor in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

LEILA WEEFUR (Media) to support *PLAY/PREY*, a four-channel video installation and publication series that explores the complexities of playful impulses, innocence, and the underlying violence implicated in harmless fun while analyzing the structures and rules imposed on Black frivolity and sexuality from childhood to adulthood.



Courtesy KOED Arts, Vanessa Sanchez, Tap Dance, March 2020. San Francisco, CA. Photo by Kelly Whalen.

“Support from the CCI Investing in Artists grant helped us get the new project Ghostly Labor off the ground! Funding supported our initial investigation, site visits with local farmworker communities and development residencies with Bay Area based dancers and musicians. This support allowed us to not only focus on community engagement and research, but also to pay artists in the early stages of the work.”

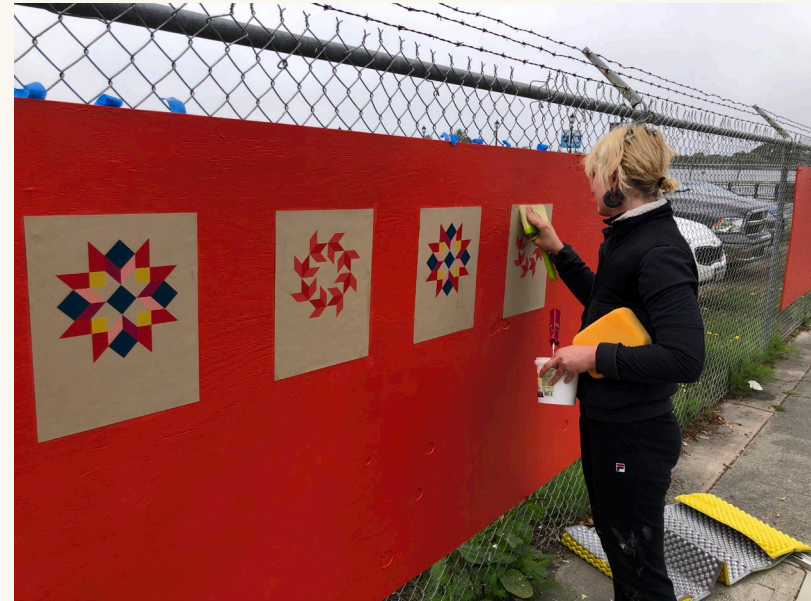
—Vanessa Sanchez, 2020 Investing in Artists Grantee

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA ARTS LEADERSHIP INVESTMENTS ACCELERATOR GRANTS

The **California Arts Leadership Investments (CALI) Accelerator** program provides funding of up to \$1,000 to individual California emerging arts leaders for professional and leadership development. In FY'21, the CALI Accelerator grant program awarded 23 applicants a total of \$20,298. Grantees sought funds to participate in activities that emphasized individual leadership development that prepared them to be influential in their organization, discipline, or larger arts and culture field. The program prioritized helping junior-level applicants with finding and practicing their leadership voice.

January 2021 marked CALI Accelerator's final application cycle. The program then went on a temporary hiatus as CCI staff worked to develop a new iteration. In June 2021, CALI Accelerator was rebranded as CALI Catalyst, in a move to evolve with the times, and to reflect the program's new funding priority of supporting individual artists and arts workers whose bold actions are tangibly helping underrepresented communities—Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities—gain more influence and power in California's arts and culture sector.



Courtesy of Taylor lea Snowberger, 2020 CALI Accelerator Grantee. Taylor lea Snowberger wheatpastes artist Nicole Kita's "Barn Prints" at the Eureka Waterfront. July 2021. Eureka, CA. Photo by Nicole Kita.

"[With CALI Accelerator's support] I have expanded my network and the breadth of my skills, and created a reputation and presence in my local art community that carries weight."

—Taylor lea Snowberger, 2020 CALI Accelerator Grantee

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA ARTS LEADERSHIP NOW

Since 2018, CCI has managed and participated in the **California Arts Leadership Now (CAL-Now)** network, which is comprised of seven associations for rising arts professionals in various regions of California. To stay connected, CAL-Now network members participate in monthly video conference calls to exchange insights about current trends in their organizations and the larger field. In addition, representatives of the CAL-Now network look forward to travelling each year to an outside convening to build their professional networks and for exposure to specific learning topics. However, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the network's FY'21 travel funds were repurposed, albeit with the same objectives that were sought by outside convenings (i.e., network building and field learning). Therefore, each organization

received funds to participate in EMERGENCE, Emerging Arts Professionals San Francisco/Bay Area's annual convening for Bay Area arts and culture workers to connect, share ideas, and elevate their work and voices. Together, the network collaborated on a half-day, pre-convening gathering on the themes of adaptability and creative problem solving. Additionally, the repurposed travel funds supported each organization to design a "workshop" or "session" of interest or relevance to the larger network. Organizations had creative license in designing their session—such as inviting a speaker, curating a panel, hiring a trainer, or facilitating an interactive exercise—and were encouraged to invite their membership base to attend. Workshop development continued into the fall.

CAL-NOW MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION

EMERGING ARTS LEADERS/
LOS ANGELES

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

CAL-Now Network members, EMERGENCE 2021. (Pictured from left to right: Top Row: Rhiannon MacFadyen, Stephanie Barajas, Frederick Liang; Middle Row: Laura Poppi, Ashley Ajayi, Shayla James; Bottom Row: Rio Yañez, Nadia Chrisanto). 2 June 2021. Photo by Stephanie Barajas.



GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS

With the continued economic crisis and ensuing financial needs of individuals resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, CCI administered four additional relief fund efforts that included the California Relief Fund for Artists and Cultural Practitioners; Hardly Strictly Music Relief Fund: Bay Area, which was administered in partnership with the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA); City of San José Coronavirus Relief Fund: Artists; and the Oakland CARES Fund for Artists and Arts Nonprofits. Funds were administered from July 22 – October 23, 2020 and supported grantees statewide, in addition to those in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Sonoma counties and the Cities of San José and Oakland.

To realize these efforts, CCI worked with California Arts Council, Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, the City of San José's Office of Cultural Affairs, the City of Oakland's Economic & Workforce Development Department and Cultural Affairs Division, and individual donors.

For applicants in the Bay Area, CCI created and managed a listserv wherein artists and arts workers could give and get advice, job or housing leads, and information to much-needed resources. All individual applicants, no matter if they obtained a relief fund grant, were invited to participate. In the face of so much economic need and shelter-in-place isolation, CCI wanted to help those in the arts experience a sense of community and share resources in the spirit of the commons.

RELIEF FUNDING BY-THE-NUMBERS:

4	5	7	54	725	1,752	\$3,221,032
REGIONAL RELIEF FUNDS	FUNDING PARTNERS	INDIVIDUAL DONORS	COUNTIES SUPPORTED	LISTSERV MEMBERS	GRANTEES	DISTRIBUTED

FY'20 - '21 Grand Total: \$6.29M distributed to 3,431 grantees

GRANT FUNDING AND 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 twelfth year, the Quick Grant program is a statewide mainstay for artists and arts administrators with eight funding partners collaboratively invested in providing professional development scholarship funding.

“The Professional Development Quick Grant from CCI empowered us! Before, we had been a two-person run organization, with two people handling all the budgets, grants, and operations, wanting to grow and not having the capacity. Thanks to CCI, we received the coaching and support we needed to grow. We feel empowered to integrate our budget with our mission. We got supercharged.”

—Queer Cat Productions, 2021 Quick Grant Recipient



Courtesy of Queer Cat Productions. Queer Cat Productions Company Members united “socially distant style” with their logo. 2020. San Francisco, CA. Photo by Queer Cat Productions.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

“[The coaching] has been incredibly helpful and helped me understand how to focus my efforts and overcome unhelpful habits in a profound way. I realize how much this may be needed for other artists – a way to gather some support in what can sometimes seem like an overwhelmingly difficult field to navigate. My work and career are moving with notably more speed, precision, and intention after this work. I am incredibly grateful to CCI for their support of this experience!”

–Abby Crain, 2021 Quick Grant Awardee

With the pandemic’s severe disruption to artists’ financial well-being, and the increased pressure to have an accessible (and ideally, polished) online presence, CCI reimbursed grantees whose professional development activity was cancelled but who had already prepaid for expenses (hotel or airfare) that either couldn’t be refunded or were tied up in the form of a credit to be used at a later time. In addition, CCI temporarily updated grant guidelines to encourage prospective applicants to work with consultants who could help them transition their practice or programming to the digital realm. As a result, Quick Grant award recipients were able to realize high-quality, online artistic experiences, optimized websites, and new revenue strategies.

In FY’21, the Quick Grant program awarded a total of \$81,962 in reimbursement grants to 172 artists and 19 arts organizations.

THIS FISCAL YEAR’S PARTICIPATING FUNDERS INCLUDED:

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

CITY OF LOS ANGELES,
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, OFFICE OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF ARTS AND CULTURE

SAN FRANCISCO ARTS COMMISSION

SAN FRANCISCO GRANTS FOR THE ARTS

WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT
FOUNDATION

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

AMBITIOUS

In mid-2020, at the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic, many AmbitioUS investees and grantees were anxious about how the ensuing economic downturn would impact their progress. At the same time, a number of them were sought after in the wake of protests against racial injustice. In particular, because so many of the investees offer alternatives to the harms of extractive and harmful economic systems by creating new models that prioritize BIPOC artists and cultural communities, they were tapped with new opportunities to catapult their impacts. With the participation of an expanding pool of funders, AmbitioUS was, at times, able to respond to both anxieties and opportunities by providing general operating support to promote resilience and also increased funding to afford new opportunities. At the beginning of 2021, several AmbitioUS grantees launched capital campaigns to support the pace of growth they were experiencing, which in turn provided opportunities for AmbitioUS to experiment with providing different forms of capital, such as investing in a direct public offering. We are excited to see how the early seed capital provided by AmbitioUS and its funders will play out as these iconoclastic, trailblazing efforts take root.

This year also marked the design and launch of AmbitioUS's first open-application grant program: The **Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives**. The program encouraged applications from cooperative enterprises by artists that were at their earliest stages, either with formation (i.e., there was a commitment to starting the cooperative or the cooperative was newly incorporated) or growth (i.e., still a young cooperative with an opportunity to realize new growth with additional capital).

The Fund was a collaboration between AmbitioUS; Seed Commons, a national cooperative of locally rooted non-extractive loan funds; and Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative (formerly known as Uptima Business Bootcamp), a member-owned business accelerator that provides hands-on education and resources to entrepreneurs. The Fund had three distinct components: 1) a general operating support grant, 2) a non-extractive loan product provided by Seed Commons that was guaranteed by AmbitioUS, and 3) cooperative-specific business and technical assistance provided by Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative. The Grant & Loan Fund provided \$150,000 in general operating support grants of up to \$25,000 each to six creative-industry cooperative enterprises. To support Seed Commons' loan product, AmbitioUS provided a loan guarantee of up to \$75,000 to de-risk their lending to artist cooperatives in the start-up phase. If less than \$75,000 is lent, CCI will back the full loan amounts with any remaining funds used by Seed Commons to support general operations. Finally, CCI contracted with Uptima to help grantees advance from the start-up phase and build the capability to pay back their debt. Although not a condition of eligibility, CCI sought opportunities wherein a combination of a \$25,000 grant from CCI, a loan from Seed Commons, and technical assistance from Uptima would be catalytic in the cooperative's further development.

In total, from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, AmbitioUS awarded \$1,590,100 in grants, investments, and professional services agreements.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

AMBITIOUS BENEFICIARIES: A NATIONAL GLANCE

AMPLED (\$25,000; Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): Ampled is a cooperatively owned web platform based in **New York City** that supports musicians by providing them with an online vehicle to share unique content for audiences, collective ownership of the platform, and predictable and recurring payments. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided Ampled with a one-year general operating support grant. Due to Ampled already receiving technical support and not needing a loan, AmbitioUS support was structured to only provide a grant.

ARTIST RESOURCE COMMUNITY (ARC) CHICAGO (\$30,000; Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): ARC Chicago is an artist-owned, cooperatively-run organization based in **Chicago, IL**, that provides resources for artists in disenfranchised communities so they may choose art as a viable career path and make a liveable wage. ARC Chicago offers artists equipment, knowledge, networks, and opportunities to continue making art. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided ARC Chicago with a one-year general operating support grant, technical assistance from Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative, and they are under review for a loan product from Seed Commons. ARC received an additional \$5,000 to their \$25,000 award for added support as they look into acquiring permanent property.



Ampled members, 2020. Ampled, New York City. Photo by Collin Lewis.



Artist Resource Community Chicago members. (Pictured from left to right: Andrew Tschiltzsch, Nathaniel Green, Kwirabura Intwari.) 2020. Artist Resource Community Chicago. Photo by Marcus Green.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

BLACSPACE COOPERATIVE (\$25,000; Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): BlacSpace Cooperative is an early-stage cooperative based in **Oakland, CA** that leverages the Black Arts Movement tradition to build a supportive ecosystem where Black arts, business, ownership, and culture can thrive. The vision of BlacSpace is to build a networked infrastructure of programming, cooperative business practice, democratic governance, and a city-wide marketing plan that sustains a network of cultural spaces throughout Oakland. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided BlacSpace Cooperative with a one-year general operating support grant and technical assistance from Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative.



BlacSpace Cooperative members. (Pictured from left to right, top to bottom: Ayodele Nzinga, Zakiya Harris, Nomi Session, Carolyn Johnson, Anyka Barber, Anna Shneiderman.) 2020. BlacSpace Cooperative, Oakland.

BOSTON IMPACT INITIATIVE'S FUND-BUILDING COHORT (\$75,000 renewal; Trailblazer category): This project supports a cohort-based training program that will federate nationally the development of locally governed, integrated capital funds. These funds will invest in Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other marginalized entrepreneurs' startups and businesses to help close the racial wealth divide. AmbitioUS provided a one-year project support grant to Boston Impact Initiative for its Fund-Building Cohort.

BOSTON UJIMA PROJECT (\$100,000 renewal; Trailblazer category): The Boston Ujima Project, a project of the Center for Economic Democracy, is raising capital for their democratically controlled loan fund that finances small businesses, real estate, and infrastructure projects in the **Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan neighborhoods of Boston, MA**. AmbitioUS provided one year of support for the Ujima Fund, a democratically governed investment fund controlled by and investing within neighborhoods of color that have been underserved by conventional systems of government, commercial, and nonprofit support.

COMMON FUTURE (\$100,000 renewal; Trailblazer category): AmbitioUS provided a forgivable loan to **Oakland, CA**-based Common Future and its Character-Based Lending Fund, which will distribute capital to communities of color more directly. Funding will support this trailblazing effort to transform current lending practices that rely on exclusionary practices, like the 5C's of Credit, to a more relationship- and character-based approach to lending. The Fund will work with BIPOC-led organizations to offer loan products to BIPOC entrepreneurs in three communities across the country.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY OF NEW WEST JACKSON (CO-OP NWJ) (\$30,000 renewal; Asset Ownership category): Co-op NWJ is a grassroots effort to rebuild socio-cultural cohesion and create real financial opportunities that rely on residents retaining home ownership and improving their neighborhood. AmbitioUS provided a one-year general operating grant to support Co-op NWJ and its leaders who are using place-based community development in ways that lead to ownership and financial sustainability for a historically marginalized African American neighborhood of **West Jackson, MS**.

CRUX (\$100,000 renewal; Asset Ownership category): The digital realm offers new opportunities for artists to create and share art, but many of the existing platforms neither confer artists ownership nor fairly provide distribution. This is particularly an issue for people of color who are a minority in the technology industry. CRUX is the first to experiment with a cooperative business model that gives Black creative content producers control, ownership, and profit, and this support comes at a critical start-up moment, made more challenging by the COVID-19 related economic recession. AmbitioUS provided a one-year unrestricted grant to support CRUX's artist-owners who will develop their own distribution platforms, have collective negotiating power, and share profits that will be eventually generated.

DOWNTOWN CRENSHAW RISING (DCR) (\$100,000 first-time grant; Asset Ownership category): DCR is a people-powered effort to purchase and rehabilitate an active mall that is on 43 acres of land in the heart of **South Los Angeles**—an African American community that is rapidly being gentrified. They have an opportunity to purchase this property from a non-local developer and to do so in a way that

will enable local Black community members to cooperatively own and develop the space in a way that builds shared cultural identity, economic opportunity, and strong social ties through shared commerce. Regardless of whether or not DCR is able to purchase the property, AmbitioUS provided a one-year general operating support grant for DCR to afford pursuing this opportunity, which is giving this community the opportunity to strengthen and practice their cooperative power.

EAST BAY PERMANENT REAL ESTATE COOPERATIVE (EB PREC) (\$175,000 grant renewal; Asset Ownership category): EB PREC is taking land and property in **Oakland, CA** off the speculative market in order to put ownership in the hands of African American community members. Their displacement as a result of gentrification would not just be a problem for Black Oaklanders, it would be a loss of cultural identity for all Americans. AmbitioUS provided a one-year renewal grant to support EB PREC with its cooperative ownership structure that benefits and retains African American communities in Oakland and their shared cultural identity.

EAST BAY PERMANENT REAL ESTATE COOPERATIVE (EB PREC) (\$125,000 investment; Asset Ownership category): EB PREC is the first real estate cooperative that qualified for a national Direct Public Offering (DPO), which allows local community members to invest in and own equity shares in culturally significant properties that will be purchased through a capital campaign, making cooperative-owners and investor-owners one and the same. These efforts are significant in supporting Black Oaklanders' cultural identity. AmbitioUS purchased investor-owner shares and waived our rights to receive dividends in order to support EB PREC fully.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

ETHER COLLECTIVE (\$25,000 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): Ether Collective LLC is a Talent and Management Agency based in **Nashville, TN**, that is currently undergoing the process of transitioning to a cooperative business. The vision of Ether is to use Hip Hop as a tool to create social and economic opportunities for minority communities, independent artists, and youth. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided Ether Collective with a one-year general operating support grant and technical assistance from Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative.



Ether Collective members. (Pictured from left to right: Joseph Bazelaïs, Candice Evans, Ashley Seay, Ivan Andrews, Roy Kelly, LaTaavia Berry) 2020. Ether Collective, Nashville. Photo by Joseph Patrick.

FASHION THAT WORKS PRODUCTION (\$25,000 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): Fashion that Works Production is a cooperative based in **New York City** that provides ethical garment production services for local fashion businesses and across the U.S. The vision of Fashion that Works Production is to use the cooperative model to provide equitable employment and ownership opportunities for immigrant women creatives from low-income backgrounds. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided Fashion that Works with a one-year general operating support grant and technical assistance from Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative.

HISTORIC CLAYBORN TEMPLE (\$50,000 first-time grant; Asset Ownership category): The Historic Clayborn Temple is a nonprofit based in **Memphis, TN**, and is officially recognized as a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Clayborn Temple was the base of operations for the Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968 where civil rights and labor activists organized together to demand better working conditions and higher pay. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined their protest efforts and gave a speech at the Temple on March 18, 1968. Clayborn Temple is now the site of community development and artistic production, and a space for African American community members to exercise voice and collective decision making. AmbitioUS provided a two-year general operating support grant to contribute to the Historic Clayborn Temple's community development efforts in ways that cultivate community governance to achieve self-determination and a renewed sense of a collective cultural expression.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

MOXI (\$25,100 first-time equity investment; Asset Ownership category): MOXI is a financial technology tool that is helping freelancers, many of whom are artists, be more easily paid. MOXI addresses a pain point among artists, and by extension other independent workers, for greater control of their transactions with clients. The mobile app eases the process of invoicing and receiving payments from clients, thus creating conditions that reduce wage theft and empowering freelancers to maintain financial wellness. AmbitioUS provided a Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE) investment to MOXI's WeFunder campaign for the startup of the mobile app.

NEXUS COMMUNITY PARTNERS (\$75,000 first-time grant; Trailblazer category): Nexus is a nonprofit organization that focuses on the intersection of community building and community development for communities of color, with particular focus on the historically African American community of **North Minneapolis, MN**. AmbitioUS provided a one-year grant to support Nexus' Community Wealth Building work and its Alumni Fund, which incubates the development of and provides ongoing support for cooperative enterprises.

O POSITIVE FESTIVAL (O+) (\$25,000 first-time grant; Trailblazer category): O+ is a nonprofit organization that responds to the healthcare needs of artists and musicians. The Kingston festival—O+'s flagship event—is an annual weekend-long celebration in October in **Massachusetts**, during which uninsured (i.e., those without insurance) and under-insured (i.e., those with insurance but at a cost that is too expensive to use) artists and musicians create and perform for the community in exchange for a variety of services donated by local healthcare providers. AmbitioUS provided a one-year grant for O+'s overall efforts to help artists access healthcare through a barter system, which has become more urgently needed in light of the global pandemic.

RUNWAY (\$75,000 renewal; Trailblazer category): RUNWAY (formerly known as The Runway Project) addresses the lack of capital (investments, loans, grants) that Black creative entrepreneurs face in trying to start and run successful small businesses in **Oakland, CA and Boston, MA**. AmbitioUS provided RUNWAY with a one-year general operating support grant towards ongoing efforts to build financial opportunities for Black business owners and investors in Oakland and Boston through their Friends and Family Loan Product, the launch of their new integrated capital fund, and their ongoing operations.

SABORYARTE (\$25,000 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives recipient): Saboryarte is a food business based in **Santa Ana, CA** that is currently undergoing the process of transitioning to a cooperative business. The vision of Saboryarte is to preserve ancestral, pre-Hispanic foods and Mexican culture while generating income for their worker-owners and serving the Latinx community. Through the 2020 Grant & Loan Fund for Early-Stage Arts, Creative, and Cultural Cooperatives, AmbitioUS provided Saboryarte with a one-year general operating support grant and technical assistance from Uptima Entrepreneur Cooperative.



SaboryArte members. (Pictured from left to right: Luz Maria Martinez, Alexis Perez, Rosalva Hernandez.) 2020.

GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES LAW CENTER (SELC) (\$75,000 renewal; Trailblazer category): SELC is a nonprofit law center in **Oakland, CA** that specializes in developing cooperatives and innovating sources of new capital that will benefit underserved communities. AmbitioUS provided one year of general support for SELC's cooperative development efforts that, in this COVID-19 economic recession, are focused on preventing displacement of people of color and supporting efforts to help people of color own property collectively. Additionally, AmbitioUS funding supports SELC's Next Egg project, which is building a new market for individual retirement accounts to be invested locally and not through Wall Street.

U.S. FEDERATION OF WORKER COOPERATIVES'S GUILD (\$200,000 renewal; Asset Ownership category): Freelance workers of all types (informal gig work to independent contractors) lack access to employer-conferred benefits and protections. AmbitioUS funding will support the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC) to incubate Guilded, a new platform-based business that is owned and governed by a membership of independent workers who can collectivize their purchasing power and receive payment advances for contracts, which addresses freelancers' problem of wage theft. If taken to scale nationally and across labor segments, Guilded has the potential to be a private-market deliverer of portable independent-worker benefits. AmbitioUS provided a one-year, project-restricted grant to USFWC to support Guilded's general operations and its reserve, guaranteed-payment fund.

YO MAMA'S HOUSE (\$5,000 renewal; Asset Ownership category): Yo Mama's House is the work of Amoke Kubat who is an important

cultural anchor for the **Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul** and the North Minneapolis African American community. Its services foster social bonds among mothers of wide-ranging ages, backgrounds, and cultural communities by using artmaking and healing practices. With the support of AmbitioUS last year, Yo Mama's House acquired a residential property to house its founder and permanently anchor its activities. This year, AmbitioUS provided a one-year grant to support Yo Mama's House's mortgage payments and property taxes so that it can weather the COVID-19 shutdown of arts and culture businesses.

AMBITIOUS RESEARCH

ARTS WORKERS IN CALIFORNIA

In 2019, California passed A.B. 5, which clarified and tightened existing legislation by establishing a stricter test to determine who is considered an employee. In doing so, it broadened access to the rights, benefits, and protections provided to employees. The net effect of A.B. 5 has been to require many employers to convert their independent contractor workforce to employees by creating a more rigorous and clearer legal standard. In the arts, A.B. 5 brought attention to longstanding issues of worker misclassification in parts of the sector that are heavily reliant on the lower cost labor of independently contracted workers. When A.B. 5 went into effect on January 1, 2020, many arts organizations and artists struggled to understand and comply with this new law. Then, three months later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and unemployment skyrocketed.

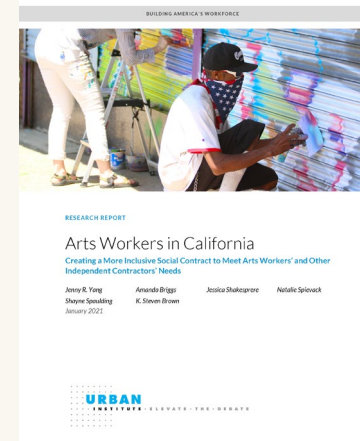
GRANT FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

The economic shutdown as a result of COVID-19 has demonstrated how precarious the circumstances of employment for independent contractors can be in the event of a prolonged pause in income. Without access to social insurance programs and worker protections designed for those with employee status, this segment of the workforce (10.6 million workers nationwide) is made increasingly vulnerable. A.B. 5 and its subsequent legislation, A.B. 2257, coupled with the lack of adequate safety nets in the wake of COVID-19, have created a moment to reimagine labor policies and practices to better fit the reality of today's workforce. Independent artists and arts workers have long exemplified what it looks like to work outside of employment protections. They provide a case study in the ways current labor policies, such as A.B. 5, impact the real lives of workers. A fairer system for arts workers would point the way toward an improved and updated system with more protections and support for the many different and emerging kinds of workers who are earning income and need to be included in labor laws.

Because the work of AmbitioUS is about realizing systemic change, CCI, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, commissioned the Urban Institute to examine how the nature of artists' unstable work calls for ways to expand the social safety net for all those with shared work characteristics. The research resulted

in a new report titled, ***Arts Workers in California: Creating a More Inclusive Social Contract to Meet Arts Workers' and Other Independent Contractors' Needs***, to help arts advocates, labor advocates, and policy makers create more inclusive systems that expand protections and benefits for all types of workers. The report outlines the working arrangements of California's arts workers and sheds new light on the challenges and issues they face, particularly when working as independent contractors. It also identifies policy shifts to update systems, for those in California or nationally, that could be more inclusive of artists and those who similarly operate outside the traditional bounds of employment. Such protections include collective bargaining power for all types of workers, access to health insurance, family leave, anti-discrimination, and savings toward retirement.

To view or download the report, visit the Urban Institute's website ([urban.org](https://www.urban.org)).



Courtesy of Urban Institute. Cover of "Arts Workers in California" report. 2021. Photo by Nicole Glass Photography.

New solutions are needed that include independent workers in social insurance programs, so as to protect artists, reduce barriers to entry to arts work by people of color, and enable arts workers to move more freely across hiring entities that struggle to afford employing them. Solutions that work for artists will work for millions of others. –Arts Workers in California Report

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Since its inception, CCI's professional development training programs and workshops have helped thousands of California artists acquire current and necessary business skills to help them advance their artistic careers. Featuring a roster of successful arts and business experts with experience working with artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits, the program continues to contribute to the sustainability, financial viability, and productivity of individual artists throughout the state. In response to restrictions on gatherings and travel due to the pandemic, CCI began offering workshops and presentations online in spring 2020.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FY'21 INCLUDE:

Photo courtesy of Brunch & Budget. Flyer for The Credit Hustle workshop, presented online by Brunch & Budget (Pamela Capalad and Dyalekt). April 2021.



- » CCI presented **16 webinars** including **How Much? Your Art, Your Value, Your Price; Becoming Independent; Tax Tips for Artists; Simplifying Your Business in 2021; Designing Your Artist Website; The Credit Hustle; Financial Wellness for Creative Individuals; Creative Cooperatives in Practice; Creative Cooperatives Toolbox**; and **Introducing the FARE Contract**, an online sales contract template for visual artists. Fifteen webinars were offered for free or on a sliding scale.
- » CCI's webinars brought together **484 live participants from California and beyond** in real time, with presenters calling in from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Eureka, New York, Philadelphia, Ohio, and New Mexico. Those who could not participate were able to watch recordings of the webinar presentations.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

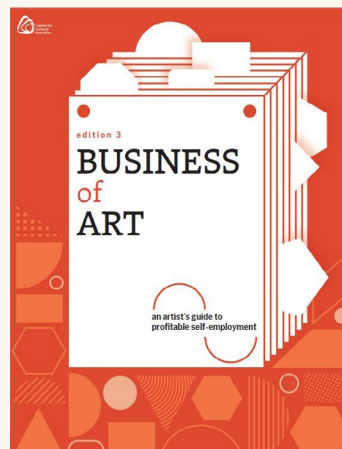
Courtesy of Kristi Schultz. Kristi Schultz directs Antigone at Capshaw-Spielberg Center for Arts and Educational Justice, Santa Monica, CA. 2013. Photo by Jim Frohna.



"I gained the perspective to reframe my views on time and money management, social media, and marketing my business. I learned to narrow my focus toward tangible goals that will support a

more sustainable practice. Throughout the program, I felt uplifted and supported by Allison [Wyper, Artists Knowledge Manager at the Center for Cultural Innovation], the fellow participants, and the guest teachers. It was validating to work with peers on problems and issues that resonated with all of us, knowing that we are not alone on this adventure toward creating our artistic dreams, even in the midst of the pandemic. While the experience was virtual and participants were from many different areas in California, there was a true sense of community and solidarity. I needed that."

-Kristi Schultz, Business of Art participant and Quick Grant recipient



Cover of *Business of Art: An Artist's Guide to Profitable Self-Employment* (3rd edition). Center for Cultural Innovation, 2020.

» CCI published a third edition of the publication ***Business of Art: An Artist's Guide to Profitable Self-Employment***. Included in the third edition is a new chapter on Business Models, and updated sections on business entity types, insurance, and time management. Contributing authors included CERF+, Sabrina Dépestre, Katrina Frye, Elaine Grogan-Luttrull, Amy Kweskin, Amy Smith, Casey Summar,

Judith Teitelman, Greg Victoroff, Nancy Walch, and Sue Bell Yank.

"I live in rural CA so the fact that this was available virtual means I had access to connect with others."

-Olivia Rodriguez, Business of Art participant

» In Fall 2020, CCI's eight-week virtual **Business of Art** connected 22 artists representing a range of disciplines and career stages from across the state of California. The series utilized webinars, an online toolkit, and the updated *Business of Art* workbook to support virtual cohort-style learning with greater accessibility for rural artists and artists with disabilities and transportation challenges. With the workshop's virtual format, CCI was able to host presenters from across the country, who workshop participants would otherwise be unlikely to encounter outside of a national conference.

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Flyer for The Business of Art Entrepreneurial Training for Artists workshop series, presented online. Fall 2020.



The Business of Art
Entrepreneurial Training for Artists

Join us online from Sept 29 - Nov 19, 2020! Sign up at cciarts.org.

The Business of Art is a QUICK GRANT eligible activity. Apply by August 15 at cciarts.org/quick_grant.htm.

- » In winter and spring 2021, CCI presented **Business of Art** content for the cities of **San José** and **West Hollywood**, convening cohorts of local artists in virtual space. These months-long programs provided a place for artists to learn, exchange ideas, and support one another despite pandemic conditions.
- » CCI partnered with The Ink People on **Cultivating Resilience**, a two-day symposium for Humboldt County and North Coast arts and culture practitioners. The symposium centered arts and culture as strategies for adaptation, response, and renewal. Workshops included Sustaining Your Art Business and Equity Takes Practice.

"I ask the producers of this series to consider having online sessions at times [even after the pandemic] — because some artists like myself do not have the capability to go to physical presentations. This [remote workshops] has been invaluable. And my personal goal is to assist in bringing this information to more hearing/visual/mobility/cognitive challenged artists."

—Rd Plasschaert, WeHo Artist Bootcamp participant

"This year has really taken a toll... No matter how vulnerable or under-prepared or overwhelmed I've felt, I've come in and shared that... and it's always been mirrored back in a way that's made me feel not alone during the year when I have felt the most alone. I want to say how invaluable that was for me, to keep going when even to picture tomorrow was difficult... I no longer feel like my career is a thing that's just going to happen to me. My career is a thing that I control."

—Natalie Nicole Dressell, WeHo Artist Bootcamp participant

TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

IN-COMMON: TO EXCHANGE, TO SURVIVE, AND TO SUSTAIN CONVENING

On September 26, 2020 CCI presented **In-Common: To Exchange, To Survive, and To Sustain**, a daylong convening that highlighted promising alternatives to conventional economic systems and institutions that have done more to divide than unify people in the arts. Invited speakers centered real solutions for building ownership, strengthening local economies, reducing debt, and advocating for better systems that work for all.

Originally intended to be a statewide event hosted in Los Angeles, In-Common took place online due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Over 150 guests attended with 51 attendees, who indicated having a financial need, receiving a stipend. Given the financial hardship so many were facing as a result of COVID-19, and in the spirit of sharing resources afforded due to cost savings on travel and catering, CCI provided \$100 stipends to registered attendees who were California residents and who indicated having a financial need in the convening registration form.

In-Common presented plenary conversations and breakout sessions, followed by virtual networking. Keynote speakers included Eli Feghali, Co-Director, New Economy Coalition; Rodney Foxworth, CEO, Common Future; and Angie Kim, President & CEO, Center for Cultural Innovation. "Spark" presenters, who provided 10-minute "lightening" presentations that were later followed by deeper dive breakout sessions, were Laura Hanna, Co-founder, and Dawn Lueck & Ami Schneider, Members, Debt Collective; Gregory Jackson, Board President - Governance Director, East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative; David Jette, Legislative Director, Public Bank LA, and Debbie Notkin, Board Member, Public Bank East Bay; Ana Siria Urzua, Co-Founder, Cooperación Santa Ana and Luz Maria Martinez, Founder, Cooperativa SaboryArte; and Lauren Ruffin, Co-Founder, CRUX.



"The actively future-minded and progressive speakers from each organization delivered genuinely hopeful ideas. Simply presenting the idea of alternative economies and the fact that people are doing the work, was inspiring. It gave me hope for the future and a starting point for looking at new models for economic survival."

-In-Common Attendee

In-Common: To Exchange, To Survive, and To Sustain was generously supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

In total, CCI provided 52 hours of programming to approximately 750 artists and cultural workers in FY'21.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE



ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

Center for Cultural Innovation continued its pattern of prudent management in fiscal year 2021, with income of \$16,920,797 received against program and operating expenses totaling \$6,714,085. This year CCI received several significant grants—a multi-year grant from an anonymous donor for future spending and funding from various sources for COVID-19 related regranting. Expenses were significantly higher than usual due to CCI administering multiple relief fund grant programs to support the financial needs of arts workers during the coronavirus-related economic shutdown.

For further information on CCI's audited financial statements for FY'21, please contact our Administrative Office at:
244 S. San Pedro Street, Suite 401, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

CCI WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT SUPPORTED OUR PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS IN FY'21:

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Anonymous
Barr Foundation
California Arts Council
California Community Foundation
The Chicago Community Foundation (anonymous donor)
City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs
City of Oakland, Cultural Affairs Division
City of San José, Office of Cultural Affairs
City of West Hollywood
Craig H. Neilsen Foundation
Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
The Field Foundation of Illinois

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass
Kenneth Rainin Foundation
The Kresge Foundation
Lambent Foundation (Tides Center)
Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture
McKnight Foundation
The Nathan Cummings Foundation
San Francisco Arts Commission
San Francisco Grants for the Arts
Surdna Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
William Penn Foundation

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

CCI WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS IN FY'21 TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION AND RELIEF FUNDS:

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David Ahle

Masha Albrecht

Jim Alexander

Nahshon Anderson

Kathryn Arnold

Art Scene West

Betty Avila

Benevity Fund (*anonymous donors*)

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Mike Blockstein

Matthew Bogert

Denise Bohart Brown

Jean Colin

Karen Constine

Jan Cothran

Carpena Diem

Sally Jo Fifer

Richard J. Forde, MD

Anna Friesen

Helen R Goldsmith

Anna Gurl

Edgar Hirst

Jeff Holgate

Christine M. Janklow

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Angie Kim

Lorna Lathram

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Peggy Madani (WITH MATCHING SUPPORT FROM SALESFORCE)

MadKat Inc

Destiny Muhammad

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Janet Wilson

San San Wong (WITH MATCHING SUPPORT FROM BARR FOUNDATION)

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Angie Kim

PRESIDENT AND CEO, CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION



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