



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Center for Cultural Innovation Opens New Research & Advocacy Lab for Arts Workers

**Los Angeles** – The Center for Cultural Innovation (**CCI**) is excited to announce the launch of the [Rustle Lab](#), a new program dedicated to labor, economic, and social policy gains for arts workers and all those who share their challenging conditions.

With support from a \$1.6 million grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Rustle Lab fills a gap for a research and advocacy center working on behalf of the arts, culture, and creative labor industries. The Hewlett Foundation has been an anchoring supporter and partner of CCI, most recently in the foundation's support of CCI-commissioned research on the impact of California's AB 5 independent-worker legislation on artists and other types of freelancers similarly facing financial precarity. The outcome of the collaboration was the report, [Arts Workers in California](#) (2021), authored by the Urban Institute. In the near term, this funding will enable Rustle Lab to activate recommendations from that report; over time, the Lab becomes a vital resource for arts workers to be seen and heard on issues related to their support systems, rights, and benefits.

“As a longtime supporter of the performing arts, we recognize that the larger infrastructure of artists and their communities is critical if the arts are to thrive,” said Jessica Mele, Program Officer of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. “CCI’s advocacy on behalf of the diverse people who make up the arts sector is needed, especially at a time when our whole society is rethinking who and how our social safety nets are protecting. The pandemic made even clearer how much those systems have been failing independent arts workers--lack of access to unemployment insurance, employer-conferred benefits, affordable health care, and savings to afford families or retirement; inability to access affordable capital; crushing debt loads; and impediments

to collectivizing for political influence. We are proud to support CCI's work in providing research and advocacy on these important issues."

Rustle Lab uses research, advocacy, field-building, and funding strategies to offer solutions for social and economic conditions characterized by arts workers. By looking at the challenging conditions of all types of industries with shared characteristics, it will focus on systemic change opportunities. The name of the Lab alludes to many things, such as the sound of leaves as a metaphoric indicator of changing seasons and conditions; the sometimes quiet work of being an intermediary organization; as well as the willingness to snatch and replicate good ideas for the benefit of all.

This new line of work intentionally builds on CCI's strong track record of issuing critical research in the arts sectors, reports such as [Arts Workers in California](#) (2021) and [Creativity Connects](#) (2016). The Rustle Lab also takes advantage of CCI's [AmbitioUS initiative](#), a strategic, time-limited investment and incubation program aimed at increasing economic self-determination for BIPOC cultural communities and its artists, which provides CCI with the ability to recognize patterns and trends for moving movements and policies forward. The Lab's launch takes CCI's commitment to research a step further by making social inquiry a permanent line of work with staff expertise. Each research project spearheaded by the Rustle Lab will have an arc of activities anchored by empirical research that includes advocacy work, field building, and investments in experimental solutions.

"As a group that popularized the notion of 'gig work', artists have a stake in unconventional solutions to new forms of collectivized power and expanding the social safety nets to finally include them," explained CCI President and CEO, Angie Kim. "Whether they work as freelancers or underpaid arts employees, we seek to improve their lives and will do so by adding bench strength to already good efforts and supporting good ideas that need to be tried."

Learn more about Rustle Lab by visiting, [www.cciarts.org/rustlelab](http://www.cciarts.org/rustlelab), joining [CCI's mailing list](#), or by contacting founding director [Angie Kim](#).

### **About the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI)**

The Center for Cultural Innovation 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. For more information, please visit [www.cciarts.org](http://www.cciarts.org).

**About The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation is a nonpartisan, private charitable foundation that advances ideas and supports institutions to promote a better world. For more than 50 years, it has supported efforts to advance education for all, preserve the environment, improve lives and livelihoods in developing countries, promote the health and economic well-being of women, support vibrant performing arts, strengthen Bay Area communities and make the philanthropy sector more effective. A full list of all the Hewlett Foundation's grants can be found [here](#).

**A select sample of previous CCI research efforts and reports is available [here](#).**