



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION AND INTERSECTION FOR THE ARTS

Guidelines

(effective May 15, 2024)

Zoo Labs empowers Black, Indigenous, and people of color to own and amplify their music business through entrepreneurial training, resource exchange, focused mentorship, and community building. In 2024, Zoo Labs: FUND will make available \$225,000 in unrestricted grants to Bay Area BIPOC and BIPOC-led artist teams with a music business.

To address both the marked lack of capital for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) artists, as well as the lack of practical and affordable business education that cultural innovators need in order to begin and scale their creative businesses, Zoo Labs evolved its West Oakland-based, in-person programming to reach a broader audience in the Bay Area and beyond. In 2021, Zoo Labs introduced [Zoo Labs: FUND](#), a competitive grant opportunity that supports BIPOC and BIPOC-led music businesses through unrestricted cash awards. FUND recipients also receive access to a suite of mentorship resources offered by Zoo Labs: LEARN, including on-demand artist-tailored entrepreneurial courses, virtual group learning and networking sessions, and curated pairings with business mentors.

Zoo Labs: FUND returns in 2024 for a fourth grantmaking round that will be administered in partnership with Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), a trusted nonprofit intermediary focused on the financial well-being of artists, arts workers, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs.

Zoo Labs: FUND welcomes additional support!

If you would like to help with a tax-deductible contribution, [click here](#) to donate online, or contact Stephanie Barajas, Program Officer, at stephanie@cciarts.org.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be considered for funding, applicants:

- Must be BIPOC or BIPOC-led teams of two or more people, with at least one artist member¹. Additionally, we encourage teams who are of historically marginalized communities including LGBTQIA+ and gender variant people, people with disabilities, and immigrants to apply;
- Must be launching or have an already established business with a focus on music²;
- Must reside full-time in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, or Sonoma County. This criterion applies to ALL team members.
- Can be any age, however, if a member of the team is 18 years old or younger, CCI staff must be contacted to discuss the team's eligibility;
- Can be a previous grantee³, however, first-time award recipients may be prioritized; and

- Cannot have a conflict of interest (family or financial relationship) with the board, staff, or directors of Center for Cultural Innovation, Zoo Labs, or Intersection for the Arts.

¹*Teams may consist of artists, content creators, producers, developers, engineers, managers, advisors, and other supporting roles.*

²*Music as a product, program, service, or art form/cultural expression must be the **key** feature of the business. We are open to a range of music businesses such as groups/ensembles, recording studios, music festivals or events, vinyl record presses, record labels, music technology, music-based healing services, and music education nonprofits, to name a few examples.*

³*Previous grantees must submit an approved final report and fulfill their mentorship requirements in order to be eligible for funding consideration.*

AWARD TIER CRITERIA

CCI will distribute unrestricted grants in the amounts (i.e., tiers) of \$5,000; \$15,000; \$25,000; and \$50,000. Teams will select the tier to be considered for based on their alignment with the tier’s accompanying criteria, and will *only* be considered for the selected tier. In other words, if a team is not recommended for funding, they will not be rolled into a different tier for consideration. For example, teams who request \$25,000 will only be assessed against other teams who request \$25,000.

Award tiers, their associated criteria, and the approximate number of awards available include:

\$5,000 (approximately four awards available)

- **Seed Funding:** Teams that request \$5,000 are newly formed; have worked on the business for two consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or less; and are earning little to no revenue from the business.

\$15,000 (approximately five awards available)

- **Startup Funding:** Teams that request \$15,000 are starting to have traction; have worked together on the business for two to five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years; and are earning little to no revenue from the business.

\$25,000 (approximately three awards available)

- **Self-sustaining Funding:** Teams that request \$25,000 have traction; are on the cusp of realizing self-sustaining, revenue-generating activities; have worked together on the business for five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or more; and are earning some revenue from the business.

\$50,000 (one award available)

- **Next Level Funding:** Teams that request \$50,000 are established; are ready to expand or further innovate; have worked together on the business for five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or more; and are earning a steady stream of revenue from the business.

The number of awards available in each tier may be adjusted commensurate with the number of eligible applications received. In addition to receiving an unrestricted cash grant, Zoo Labs: FUND recipients will have access to a suite of mentorship resources through [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#), including on-demand entrepreneurial courses, virtual group learning and networking sessions, and a curated pairing with a business mentor. Grantees who are awarded \$25,000 or \$50,000 will also have access to a strategy session with Zoo Labs Co-Founder, Vinitha Watson.

Only one application will be accepted per team (i.e., individual team members cannot submit separate applications). Teams will identify a lead applicant, who will serve as the primary contact for the application. Information about the other team members will be collected in the application. Additionally, teams that operate multiple businesses may request funding for only one business.

The online application ([click here for full preview](#)) is uniform across tiers, with the exception of a handful of financial questions directed only at \$25,000 and \$50,000 award tier applicants.

APPLICATION

Applications will be accepted online from May 15 - July 10, 2024, and all applicants will be notified about their funding status on September 3, 2024, by 5:30 p.m. PT. All teams will need to provide contact information, details about the business and funding request, and optional demographic survey responses, as well as the following required items which will inform panelists' assessment of applications against the evaluation criteria:

- **Budget & Budget Notes:** Budget and brief budget notes are requested to help panelists understand how funds will be used and provide insight into the team's decision-making process and prioritization.
- **Pitch Video:** A two-minute "pitch" video that involves the entire team is required. The pitch video will address specific prompts that illustrate the business' mission, team members, audience, impact, and intended use of funding. (See application preview and FAQs for specific prompts.)
- **Business Matrix:** Teams must describe their business using the [provided one-page matrix template](#) (available as a .docx and as a fillable .pdf on CCI's website). Responses should be brief—they may be incomplete sentences—but should be clearly understandable.
- **Work Sample:** Only one work sample will be accepted. Panelists will review up to 5 minutes total of an audio or video sample OR up to 5 pages of text/image-based materials.

NEED HELP WITH THE PITCH VIDEO OR BUSINESS MATRIX?

Visit [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#) for in-depth guidance on preparing these application components and watch this 3-minute video on [Pitching to Zoo Labs](#) for tips and techniques.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

CCI will invite panelists who reflect diverse cultural, gender, and experiential backgrounds to review eligible applications and make award recommendations. Panelists will evaluate applicants' Pitch Video, Business Matrix, Budget/Budget Notes, and Work Sample against the following criteria:

- **Group Strength:** the team members, through their individual roles and as a collective, are critical to sustaining the business;
- **Artistry & Craft:** the business reflects or furthers the team's artistic, creative, craft, or cultural practice;
- **Entrepreneurship:** the team has a feasible business plan (emerging enterprises) or business model (already established enterprises) and is creating traction for the business; and

- **External & Internal Impact:** the business contributes to the Bay Area’s arts and culture ecosystem in positive ways, the grant funding is arriving at a critical juncture.
 - **External Impact:** *How this is realized will be relative to the individual business and its mission—as examples, the business may be creating economic opportunities, bringing accessible educational experiences to young people, helping audiences to heal, or centering marginalized voices.*
 - **Critical Juncture & Internal Impact:** *The team is at an inflection point where an infusion of capital has the potential for short or long-term internal impact such as seeding the launch of a business, propelling a business’ growth, supporting the business’ sustainability, or investing in the untapped potential of an established business.*

Panelists will aim to ensure that recommended grantees represent the Bay Area’s diverse arts and culture ecosystem. To that end, the panel will seek to balance the final grantee pool across factors, which include: communities served, geography, business focus, arts and cultural form/tradition represented, and other descriptive demographics.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications will be accepted online ONLY through CCI’s Submittable platform and applicants MUST create an account in Submittable before they will be able to access the grant application.

Access the online grant application at:
<https://centerforculturalinnovation.submittable.com/submit>

CCI will host an information session on **Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 12:00 - 1:00 PM PT** that will provide an overview of the application, helpful tips, and a live Q&A. You must pre-register to attend the information session. If you are unable to attend, a recording will be made available on CCI’s website.

In addition, CCI will host three **virtual “drop-ins”** for applicants to ask questions and receive answers from staff in real-time on June 5 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. PT, June 13 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. PT, and June 26 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. PT. The drop-ins will not be formal presentations, nor will they be recorded.

TIMELINE

Application Opens	May 15 at 9:00 a.m. PT
Information Session	May 21 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. PT. Register Here <i>If you're unable to attend, a recording will be posted on CCI's website, along with a copy of the presentation deck.</i>
Drop-in Q&A's	June 5 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. PT. Register Here June 13 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. PT. Register Here June 26 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. PT. Register Here <i>Please note: These are not formal presentations, nor will they be recorded. The Drop-in Q&A's are an opportunity to have your questions addressed by CCI staff in real time. We ask that you review</i>

	<i>the grant guidelines, application preview, and Frequently Asked Questions in advance to ensure everyone's time is used efficiently.</i>
Application Deadline	July 10 at 11:59 a.m. (morning) PT
Panel Review	Week of August 26
Funding Notification	September 3 by 5:30 p.m. PT
Grantee Orientation (virtual)	October 2 at 6:00 p.m. PT
Period of Support	September 2024 – September 2025

GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

If awarded a grant, the full team is required to participate in the following:

- A Virtual Orientation on October 2, 2024 at 6 p.m. PT. During this convening, grantees will have the opportunity to meet one another and learn more about Zoo Labs and its mentorship resources.
- A 1-hour, one-on-one session with a business mentor. These sessions can be conducted virtually or in person, and mentor pairings will be arranged by Zoo Labs staff based on the specific needs, interests, and availability of each team. Zoo Labs staff will also assist with mentorship logistics and scheduling.

As a final requirement, the lead team member must complete a brief final report that describes the impact and use of funding. Reports will be due in September 2025. CCI will provide further instructions, including how to submit the report through Submittable, in the grant agreement.

While not required, grantees who are awarded \$25,000 or \$50,000 will also have access to an optional strategy session with Zoo Labs Co-Founder, Vinitha Watson.

Lastly, our creative ecosystem thrives on knowledge sharing. As part of this effort, recipients of \$25,000 and \$50,000 grants are invited to serve as Zoo Labs mentors. This provides an opportunity to contribute to and strengthen the Zoo Labs and Bay Area's music community. Participation is optional.

QUESTIONS & SUPPORT

CCI staff are here to help and listen. Please email us at grants@cciarts.org (include Zoo Labs: FUND in the subject line) or call 415.288.0530 for assistance. You may also schedule a time to speak [here](#). For Deaf applicants and those with hearing loss, contact CCI using the [California Relay Service](#)—our staff are trained in making and receiving these calls.

If you need technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support at: <https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter>. Submittable’s business hours are 9 am – 5 pm MT. They aim to respond within 24 business hours.

For additional application support, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [Submittable Quick Tips](#).