



INVESTING IN ARTISTS

ARTISTIC INNOVATION

Frequently Asked Questions

(effective February 24, 2026)

ELIGIBILITY

1. Which Bay Area counties are eligible for support?

For the 2024 – 2026 award cycle, artists residing in *select* Bay Area counties will be eligible to apply for an Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant. Funding rounds and their corresponding eligible counties are:

- 2024: Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco
- 2025: Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Mateo
- **2026: Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma**

2. Who can apply for this grant? Is this opportunity only for performing and media artists, or can visual and literary artists apply?

The Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant program is designed to support diverse working artists in the performing and media arts, which includes the disciplines of dance, music, musical theatre, opera, theatre, video, film, and animation, to name a few. Performing and Media artist applicants must also live in the current award cycle's eligible Bay Area counties (see Question 1) at the time of application and for the duration of the grant period (June 2026 – June 2027).

Artists who propose visual, craft, or literary works are not eligible to apply. Playwrights are eligible if the proposed project results in a confirmed performance event for a public audience.

3. How do you define “Performing and Media Arts”?

The Performing and Media Arts category includes the disciplines of dance, music, musical theatre, opera, theatre, video, film, animation, and the like. If you have any questions about other disciplines eligible for this grant, please reach out to CCI at grants@cciarts.org or call 415.288.0530.

4. I’m developing a multidisciplinary work with *some* performing and media arts components. Am I eligible to apply?

Individual artists who request support to develop a new multidisciplinary work and meet all other eligibility criteria can apply for an Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant, so long as the performing and/or media arts components are the **primary** features of the work. In other words, the performing and/or media arts must be *central* to the work’s realization, not ancillary or supplementary. The proposed work will not be competitive if the performing and/or media arts are an add-on or background element.

5. How do you define “working artists”?

For the purposes of this grant program, eligible “working artists” are defined as adults who have received training in an artistic discipline or tradition; spend ten or more hours a week on their artistic practice; self-define as professional artists; and attempt to derive income from work in which they use their expert artistic practices and skills. Full-time and matriculated students are not eligible to apply.

6. Are previous grantees eligible to apply for grants in the 2024–2026 funding rounds?

Previous Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation (formerly known as just Investing in Artists) grantees residing in the 2026 eligible counties are eligible to apply for the 2026 application round. This eligibility criterion may be updated in future cycles.

7. Are organizations, companies, or collectives eligible to apply?

Only individual artists may apply for this grant. Applications will not be accepted from organizations, companies, or artist collectives. Artists with 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations or fiscally sponsored projects may apply, but they must apply as individuals.

8. What about collaborative artist groups? Can this grant support more than one artist?

Grants are intended to support the work of one artist and will only be awarded to individual artists. Further, this grant is not intended to support group performances or other group-based projects. While we understand that individual artists may need the support of collaborators, the application should be written from the perspective of the specific artist applying and highlight their personal experience, work, and role in the proposed project.

In rare circumstances, we will accept applications from long-standing artist collaborators. To be considered, the collaborators must be joint creators of work, have an established track record of working together, and have developed their artistic career and reputation as a team. If applying as a collaborative, the application should be submitted by one individual member who will receive the funds and be responsible for administering those funds. Grants will not be made to multiple members of the same group, nor can collaborative members submit separate applications as individuals.

Additionally, applicants who identify as long-standing artist collaborators should contact CCI first to discuss eligibility before applying.

9. Can bands, ensembles, or commissioned collaborations apply for this grant?

As mentioned previously, this grant is intended to support the artistic growth, unique vision, and experimentation of individual artists. If your work involves group performances or is based on someone else's concept (e.g., scoring a dance piece), you may not be eligible.

Please contact CCI for guidance if you are unsure whether your project meets the eligibility criteria. We are happy to help you determine if your project qualifies for this grant opportunity.

10. I’m a music producer working with an artist on their new album. Am I eligible to apply?

Individual artists who request support to develop a new work and meet all other eligibility criteria can apply for an Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant. While important to the creative process, individuals playing a supportive role in developing an individual artist’s work, such as curators, producers, designers, technicians, fabricators, and advisors, are not eligible to

apply. In these instances, we encourage the artist to apply for funding and to name their supporting collaborators in the application narrative.

11. I need support for an ongoing project. Is the Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant program a good fit?

Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation supports artists in creating **new work** that pushes the envelope of their creative process, explores new artistic collaborations, and/or supports artistic growth and experimentation that extends the boundaries of their art-making. If your project is ongoing or will be completed before the start of the grant period in June 2026, this program may not be a good fit for you at this time.

12. My new work will take longer than 12 months to complete. Should I apply?

We recognize that developing a new work often takes more than 12 months to complete. For this reason, your timeline should express the aspects or stages of the work that will be supported during the 12-month grant period. For some, 12 months may be all the time needed to take a work from concept to reality. For others, the grant period will support the work's early-stage benchmarks or its final stages of development. Whatever the case, you'll want to address this in the narrative.

13. I work with immersive technologies. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, individual artists working with Extended Reality (XR) technologies, including Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Mixed Reality (MR), are eligible to apply. If your project incorporates immersive tools, we encourage you to clearly describe how these technologies support artistic growth and experimentation that extends the boundaries of your art-making.

14. I'm experimenting with generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in my creative process. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, individual artists using emerging technologies, such as generative AI, in their projects are eligible to apply. However, applicants must clearly describe the project components being created by generative AI, along with a clear description of their process and any other pertinent details, such as ethical and intellectual property considerations. This grant encourages innovation, but the core of your proposed project must be guided by your creative vision and not fully outsourced to technology. The use of technology should serve as a tool to help deepen or expand your art-making, not as a substitute for it.

Applicants using generative AI and other emerging technologies in their projects should contact CCI first to discuss eligibility before applying.

APPLICATION

15. Is it okay if I don't have a venue/exact date(s) confirmed for the presentation of my new work?

It's OK if you haven't confirmed an exact venue or performance/screening/installation dates at the time of your application submission. In lieu of this information, you can estimate presentation dates and identify the *types* of venues you might work with based on their location, audience capacity, production resources, or other factors.

16. What should I submit as a work sample?

The work sample is critical to the application and should represent your artistic work in the best possible light. When deciding how to present your work, please remember that the panel will

have at most five minutes to review your sample(s). Therefore, you should pick the strongest work and/or work segment to present first. It is a disservice to your application if the panel has to spend three minutes flipping between different formats or forwarding through the credits to see the work.

At least one work sample, and no more than three, must be uploaded and submitted with the online application. **We strongly recommend at least one video work sample. Unless your work is best represented through audio or text-based materials, we strongly encourage submitting video documentation of your work sample(s).**

Please note that **manuscripts** will only be accepted from theatre artists applying as playwrights. We will not accept manuscripts from any other applicant type. Though we strongly prefer receiving video samples from all applicants, if you primarily identify as a playwright and believe that a text sample will show your work in the best context, you may upload a text sample for review.

The [application preview](#) includes acceptable work sample formats and specific instructions on accepted formats. **You are encouraged to prepare and upload work sample(s) well in advance of the deadline.** Should you wait until the day of the deadline and encounter technical difficulties with file formats, the upload process, or other application components, the ability to receive technical assistance to resolve issues will be significantly limited.

EVALUATION

17. What will the review process be like? Who reviews the applications?

A grant review panel consisting of established performing and media arts practitioners will be convened following the close of each application round to review applications and make recommendations to CCI on final grant recipients. Additional field experts may advise on technical proposals or conduct site visits with applicants to assess artistic practice, context, or work settings.

18. How are applications evaluated? What makes a competitive application?

Panelists will evaluate applications against the following artistic innovation criteria:

- **Readiness:** Clarity, rationale, and readiness of proposed project, including identification of specific work plans, timeline, and collaborators (if applicable) required to carry out the project;
- **Critical Juncture:** Evidence that funding is coming at a “critical juncture” in the artist’s career and has the potential for long-term impact. Meaning, the proposed project provides a significant opportunity to “push the artistic boundaries” of their art-making, and funding is arriving at a pivotal time to support the artist’s artistic growth, experimentation, and long-term goals. *Applicants must provide a compelling rationale as to why the funding is needed at this particular moment in their artistic career;* and
- **Artistic Achievement:** Demonstrated record of artistic achievement and quality of work.

The most competitive applications are clearly written, generally brief, and to the point, and demonstrate a strong alignment with each criterion.

Panelists will also aim to ensure that recommended grantees reflect the Bay Area’s diverse cultural communities and performing and media arts landscape. To that end, the panel will seek

to balance the final grantee pool across factors, which include: geography, disciplines, communities served, and cultural form and/or tradition represented.

19. What does the term “critical juncture” mean?

Critical juncture typically refers to a significant point in time that often marks a crucial turning point in a process, moment, or series of events. As part of the review criteria for artistic innovation, applications must show that funding will come at a critical point in the artist’s career. This means that you need to address how your proposed project would significantly impact your creative process, lead to artistic growth, and extend the boundaries of your art-making. In other words, *why is this the right time* to undertake this project in your artistic career? Demonstrating a clear and significant critical juncture is important in order to put forth a competitive application.

20. Is preference given to emerging or established artists? Does career stage matter?

Artists face new and evolving challenges as they move through their careers. For this reason, CCI does not give preference to particular career stages. Competitive applications must demonstrate the proposed project’s impact on the artist’s career at the current point in time. Quality of artistic work and track record will also be factors in determining who receives a grant.

21. If I’m using AI or immersive technologies in my project, how should I describe that in my application?

Applicants using generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Mixed Reality (MR), or other emerging technologies are encouraged to describe their tools and processes in clear, accessible language. Avoid technical jargon when possible, and instead focus on explaining the artistic intent, how the technology is used, and what creative decisions you’re making. Keep in mind that panelists come from a wide range of artistic backgrounds and may not have specialized knowledge of these tools, so your ability to communicate your vision clearly will help them fully understand the scope of your project.

NOTIFICATIONS

22. The notification date has passed, and I haven’t heard from CCI. Does this mean I didn’t receive a grant?

All applicants will be notified regarding their application status on June 2, 2026, by 5:00 p.m. PT. If you haven’t heard from CCI by the promised notification date and time, please check your spam folder. You can also view your application status by logging into your Submittable account.

To ensure the timely delivery of all communications, please safelist notifications@email.submittable.com. For instructions by email service provider, see [here](#).

23. If I’m declined for funding, will you offer feedback on my application?

Depending on the volume of applications, CCI may provide feedback through a webinar that addresses panelists’ general application observations or through one-on-one phone calls with applicants. Details will be provided when notifications are shared on June 2, 2026.

GRANTEES

24. How many grants will you make?

We anticipate making up to eight grants in each round of funding from 2024 – 2026, but the actual number of grants awarded will depend on the quality of the applications received and on the financial requirements of the funded projects.

25. If awarded a grant, how will funding be disbursed?

CCI will issue the award in two payments: The first installment will be 90% of the grant funds, which will be paid once the grant agreement is signed and returned. The remaining 10% will be paid once all grant requirements have been met and a final report has been submitted and approved by CCI.

The payment will be processed via direct deposit through Tipalti—CCI's secure, third-party accounting software platform. Processing times will depend on the return of your electronically signed grant agreement, along with any requested documents, such as the Form W-9. Grantees also have the option to use a fiscal sponsor, LLC, or an incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit to contract with CCI and receive the awarded funds on their behalf.

We understand that individuals may have a unique financial situation and that direct deposit may not be an option. CCI also understands that fund disbursement may impact disability-related community support or other social benefits; therefore, we will structure options that work for each person's unique financial situation.

26. If awarded a grant, how can funding be used?

Funding awarded through the Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant program may be used in whatever ways support the grantee's realization of the proposed new work, such as personal compensation, collaborator fees, supplies, equipment, and travel, to name a few examples. However, funding, or any portion thereof, may not be used for lobbying, political campaigns, voting efforts, or in a manner inconsistent with CCI's charitable purpose under IRS Section 501(c)(3). Additionally, all funds awarded must be used in support and furtherance of your artistic work and contribute to a broader public benefit. Further details are provided in the Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant agreement.

27. If I am awarded a grant, is it considered taxable income?

Artists who receive funding through the Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation grant program should know that grant awards may be taxable as ordinary income. We recommend that you consult a qualified tax advisor for further information.

28. What are the grantee requirements?

Grantees must complete a brief final report describing the impact and use of funding (i.e., line item expenses). Reports will be due at the end of the grant period in June 2027. CCI will provide further instructions in the grant agreement, including how to submit the report through Submittable.

SUPPORT

29. I need help preparing my application. What do you recommend?

We're glad you asked. We recommend preparing your application in Word or Google Docs and sharing your draft with a friend or peer for feedback. From there, copy and paste your responses into the Submittable online application and upload the required items (budget, résumé, work

sample). Test the uploaded items to ensure they're working properly; if they are, you're ready to submit your application!

30. I'm having issues with Submittable (e.g., lost password, error messages, trouble uploading) and need help. Who do I contact?

For technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support from Submittable 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.

31. I still have questions. What do I do?

CCI staff are here to help and listen. For assistance, please email us at grants@cciarts.org (include Investing in Artists—Artistic Innovation in the subject line) or call 415.288.0530. 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 is trained in making and receiving these calls.