



# VALLEJO ARTISTS MUTUAL FUND

## Frequently Asked Questions

### GENERAL

#### 1. What is the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund?

Rooted in the belief that those closest to the work are best positioned to recognize it, the Fund invites Vallejo artists to participate in a local redistribution process that empowers artists to see and name the people whose work is meaningfully contributing to Vallejo's cultural landscape. Rather than awarding artists through juries of outsiders, this Fund supports artists in the city to validate and encourage one another. Artists participating in the Fund will invite artists within the city whose work meaningfully contributes to the city's creative and cultural vibrancy to receive an unrestricted grant of \$7,500, and an organization providing publicly accessible arts programming in Vallejo to receive an unrestricted grant of \$1,800. The total amount of funding available for these grants is \$1,000,000, and will be fully disbursed by August 2026.

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund is a programmatic evolution from the Vallejo Arts Fund and was established in response to long-standing inequities that have limited many artists' and cultural practitioners' access to funding. The Fund builds on the same commitment to resourcing those whose creativity is essential to the city's cultural life but often goes underrecognized or underfunded. Many of these artists continue to sustain their practices despite structural barriers, such as underrepresentation, limited institutional investment, and uneven access to resources, that make consistent support difficult to secure.

#### 2. What happened to the Vallejo Arts Fund?

For those of you familiar with earlier efforts supporting artists in Vallejo, the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund reflects a deliberate shift in approach. Previously, Vallejo Arts Fund relied on a small panel, half of whom did not currently live in Vallejo, to make funding decisions. We learned that this structure was not the right fit. Accordingly, the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund empowers the artists who live and create in Vallejo to guide how funding flows locally. Additionally, this iteration of the work aims to recognize the people, not just the projects, who meaningfully contribute to the city's cultural landscape.

#### 3. What is this approach designed to do?

The goal of this artist-to-artist referral approach is to empower artists and cultural

leaders to identify and uplift artistic work and cultural organizations in their community, circulate financial resources locally, and affirm artists' contributions to a sustained arts ecosystem, even when traditional funding sources are limited or overlook the work being done. By offering unrestricted funding, the Fund also supports and strengthens infrastructure for Vallejo's artists, culture leaders, and arts organizations to decide how best to use their grants, whether for rent, staff salaries, equipment, or venue costs, paying off debt, professional development, or other needs.

**4. How does the Artist-to-Artist referral process work?**

Artists are recommended through a community-driven referral process. To initiate the community referral process, CCI invited a small group of community artists and cultural leaders to recommend an initial cohort of 24 artists and cultural leaders who reflect the diversity and breadth of Vallejo's creative community. Each artist is recommended to receive a \$7,500 unrestricted grant and is then invited to refer another artist whose work meaningfully contributes to the local arts ecosystem. In turn, each participating artist may also direct \$1,800 to an organization that provides publicly accessible arts programming in Vallejo. The Fund continues through multiple rounds of peer-to-peer referrals—up to five rounds total—until all funding is distributed.

**5. What do you mean by work that “meaningfully contributes” to Vallejo’s arts and culture ecosystem?**

By work that meaningfully contributes to Vallejo's arts and culture ecosystem, we mean work by artists, culture leaders, or arts organizations that adds value to the local arts and culture ecosystem in ways that provide tangible, usually positive, impacts for the artists, creatives, and culture leaders who live in the city. Additionally, meaningful contributions are typically activities visible to the community and that result in real change, such as uplifting local artists' work, hosting skills-training workshops, or teaching creative classes at local venues, to name a few. Each of these engages the community and has an impact related to sustaining and enriching the local arts ecosystem in the city.

**6. Will everyone in Vallejo receive funding?**

No. The Fund is limited in size and cannot guarantee support for every artist.

**7. How long does the process take?**

The program launched on May 7 with the first round of referrals and is expected to conclude on July 17. Participants in the fund have one week to submit their referrals. CCI takes up to three business days to review and contact each artist referred to the Fund. The full process is expected to last through July 17, with up to five rounds.

**ELIGIBILITY**

**1. Who is eligible for the Artist-to-Artist Referral grant?**

To be eligible for the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund, individuals:

- Must be an individual artist or cultural leader (e.g., cultural producers, culture

- bearers, creatives, cultural practitioners);
- Artist (a person who practices any of the various creative arts, such as visual artists, craft, poets, musicians, dancers, media artists, sculptors, filmmakers, etc.); or
  - Cultural Leader (a person who is continuing to keep a cultural identity and/or tradition alive and thriving).
- Must have a current, active artistic or cultural practice that is meaningfully contributing to the vitality of Vallejo’s arts and cultural ecosystem;
  - Must be 18 years of age or older;
  - Must reside full-time in Vallejo, or commute from an immediately adjacent town or city;
  - Received at least one (and no more than two) grants, totaling a minimum of \$7,500 and a maximum of \$15,000, from the Fund; and
  - Must be able to verify eligibility if requested by CCI<sup>1</sup>.

To be eligible for the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund, organizations:

- Must primarily provide an artistic, cultural, or creative programming accessible to the general public;
- Must be based in Vallejo, or actively provide substantial arts and culture programming and services that directly benefit Vallejo;
- Must employ or contract with residents of Vallejo;
- Organizations that are a registered 501c3, fiscally sponsored project, commercial enterprise (e.g., small businesses), or a sole proprietorship; and/or in good standing with the City of Vallejo, evidenced through possession of an active Vallejo business tax certificate (aka business license, business permit).

**2. If I’ve received funding from another CCI grant program, am I eligible for a Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grant?**

Yes, you are eligible! Funding through another CCI grant program does not affect your eligibility to receive funds through the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund.

**3. What does the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund support?**

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund awards unrestricted grants of \$7,500 to individual artists whose work meaningfully contributes to the city’s creative and cultural vibrancy, and organizations providing publicly accessible arts and culture programming in Vallejo.

Grant awards are not tied to the support of a project or a proposed outcome.

However, Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grants or any portion thereof are subject to certain 501c3 tax-exempt requirements, such as limitations on political activity and lobbying, private benefit (benefiting a person rather than furthering tax-exempt purposes), private inurement (benefit to individuals affiliated with the organizations offering and managing

---

<sup>1</sup> Referrers attest to an artist’s eligibility when making a referral. If an artist is later found ineligible, CCI will contact the referrer to verify or submit another referral.

this grant), and illegal activities. In other words, funds cannot be used for political activity or lobbying, and they can't be used in ways that primarily benefit private individuals or businesses unrelated to the grant's purpose. Additionally, funding must comply with applicable laws and be used in alignment with the program's public-good mission.

## **MAKING REFERRALS**

**4. I've been invited to refer another artist, and my spouse is an artist. Can I refer my spouse?**

No. Per program guidelines, you can't refer an artist with whom you have a financial or family connection, as that would be considered a conflict of interest. However, others outside your household may end up referring each of you.

**5. I work at an arts organization in Vallejo. Can I refer my employer or team?**

No. Per program guidelines, you can't refer an organization with which you have a financial or family connection, as that would be considered a conflict of interest.

**6. How will referrals be vetted?**

After a referral has been submitted to the Fund, CCI will conduct a due diligence review of the artist, cultural leader, or organization. This review ensures that the referred individual or entity meets the program's eligibility requirements, is compliant with applicable tax and IRS regulations, is not listed on any state or federal Do Not Pay lists, and that the organization's mission aligns with the program's priorities of supporting organizations that provide publicly accessible art programming to the Vallejo community.

**7. Why are some people involved anonymously?**

During the referral process, CCI will maintain the anonymity of artists making referrals to ensure fair participation. This helps reduce potential pressure or unwanted solicitation from others in the community during the open referral period. Once all referrals have been completed and the Fund has closed, CCI will follow best practices by publicly announcing all grantees in a press release.

**8. What if someone referred to the Fund can't be reached?**

CCI will make multiple attempts to contact the referred artist. If they cannot be reached after two weeks, the original referrer will be asked to refer someone else.

## **GRANTEES**

**9. What do you mean that funding is unrestricted but subject to certain 501(c)(3) requirements?**

Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grants are unrestricted, meaning you can decide how you'd like to use the funds. However, funds awarded must be used to support and further artistic work and to contribute to broader public benefit.

Here are a few examples of how an individual artist may use funding:

- To cover living expenses while you're creating or performing your work
- To travel for artistic collaborations, exhibitions, or residencies related to your artistic practice
- For artistic training or coaching (like acting lessons, or professional development workshops that move your work forward)
- To purchase equipment or materials used in your practice (e.g., instruments, software)
- To pay for health insurance during a creative period (such as payment for COBRA during a residency).

Here are some examples of how an organization may use funding:

- To cover the rent for their performing arts building
- To pay production costs and vendor fees for upcoming performances and/or exhibitions at their venue or space
- To cover the fees associated with marketing artistic workshops, music festivals, and other events
- To cover salaries for staff or add to the cash reserves of a cultural center.

Please note that these are just some of the ways that funding can be used. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please reach out to CCI at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org).

**10. Can you share examples of expenses that are not allowed?**

Yes. While this grant is flexible, it may not be used for expenses that do not support your ability to sustain your artistic practice for the benefit of your community, including:

- Paying yourself or your team for non-artistic work (e.g., unrelated freelance work)
- Hiring a general life coach or consultant not connected to your artistic practice, discipline, or cultural production work
- Buying personal items like a car, unless clearly to benefit artistic work
- Lobbying or in support of any political campaigns, voting efforts, or in a manner inconsistent with CCI's charitable purpose under IRS Section 501(c)(3).

If you have any questions on the use of funding, please reach out to CCI at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org).

**11. How many grants will you make?**

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund includes \$1,000,000 in total funding, supporting approximately 105 individual artist grantees through \$800,000 in grants and distributing \$200,000 to organizations in Vallejo.

**12. I heard that artists are working together to "rig" the system. Should I tell CCI about it?**

It's possible that artists may conspire to recommend each other, but there are a few

ways that it would be difficult to “rig” the outcome. (a) The network of Advisors and initial recipients were deliberately selected to represent a broad cross-section of Vallejo’s varied arts and culture communities. (b) Those who receive a referral remain anonymous, so they have freedom of choice. And, (c) the unique opportunity to recognize someone they esteem makes it less likely they will squander their referral on someone simply trying to “game” the system. But, who knows! Yes, if you get word, let CCI staff know, but there may be little CCI staff can do about it. As long as recipients meet eligibility, the power is in the arts and culture communities’ hands.

**13. If I am awarded a grant, how will I receive the funds?**

If awarded a grant, the payment will be processed via ACH (i.e., direct deposit) through Tipalti.com—CCI’s secure, third-party accounting software platform. **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.** Processing times will depend on the grantee’s return of an electronically signed grant agreement and any other requested documents, such as the W-9 Form.

Individual artist grantees do not need a fiscal sponsor or other 501(c)3 nonprofit intermediary to receive funding. However, they do have the option to use their fiscal sponsor or an incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit to contract with CCI and receive the awarded funds.

For teams/groups, the lead team member will be responsible for completing all grant and payment processing requirements. If the grant recipient decides to share their award with a team of collaborators, they may do so; however, CCI is not responsible for any due diligence or disbursement of funds to different team members.

We understand 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. Please contact CCI at 415.288.0530 or [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) (include Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund in the subject line) to determine a plan that works best for you.

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

Please be aware that grant awards may be taxable as ordinary income. As CCI cannot offer legal or tax advice, grantees are advised to consult with an accountant, tax expert, and/or a benefits specialist.

We understand that fund disbursement may impact disability-related community support or other social benefits, and are willing to structure options that work for each person’s unique financial situation. Please contact CCI at 415.288.0530 or [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) (include Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund in the subject line) to determine

a plan that works best for you.

**15. If I am awarded a grant, will I need to submit a report? Are there any other requirements?**

If you are awarded a grant, you must complete a brief final report describing the impact and use of funding (i.e., line item expenses). Reports will be due within 12 months of signing the grant agreement. CCI will provide further instructions on how to access the final report form through Submittable in the grant agreement.

**16. Will you publicize the names of grantees?**

The names of Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grantees will be included in a CCI press release, made public at the close of the Fund.

**17. If I am awarded a Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grant, does that mean that CCI and its funding partners agree with or endorse my individual or organization's work?**

CCI and its funding partners do not take positions on the views, actions, or work of Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund grantees. This approach ensures that the referral and award processes remain grounded in what the community identifies as impactful, rather than reflecting the perspectives of an individual institution or its actors.

**SUPPORT**

**18. I still have questions. What should I do?**

CCI staff are here to help and listen. For assistance, please email us at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) (include Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund in the subject line) or call 415.288.0530. 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.