



# VALLEJO ARTISTS MUTUAL FUND

## 2026 GUIDELINES

**The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund connects local artists and cultural leaders by empowering them to recognize and uplift those whose work meaningfully contributes to the vitality of Vallejo’s arts and culture ecosystem.**

Launched in 2026, the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund (the “Fund”) provides financial support to Vallejo-based individual artists and cultural leaders whose work meaningfully contributes to keeping the local creative community active, connected, and thriving. 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 meaningfully contributes 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 other artists within the city whose work contributes to sustaining and enriching Vallejo’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. Altogether, \$1,000,000 in funding will be fully disbursed through this process by August 2026.

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund is administered by the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), an intermediary focused on strengthening the economic and social infrastructure for creatives, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs, with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

### CONTEXT AND GOALS

This is the third round of funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, administered by CCI, as part of five years of programmatic support for artists and cultural leaders who have been integral to Vallejo’s creative vitality. Each year has been an opportunity to try and learn how to reach the anchors of the arts and culture community in as deep and broad a way as possible. In the 2026 funding round, the program moved away from a traditional, competitive grant program juried with outsiders. Competitive panel processes by non-locals can unintentionally divide individuals in a community and miss the mark in reaching the people locals deem to be the most critical to their creative communities. The challenges of such an approach are universal to nonprofit grantmaking processes. Given that Vallejo does not have a long history where this approach has been refined over time to reflect arts communities’ priorities, CCI is administering a different approach that directly empowers artists to decide where resources go so that they can recognize those whose artistic and cultural contributions have been the most meaningful to them and relevant to the region. This round’s approach also shifts authority from CCI, the program administrator, to trust those in Vallejo with decision-making power. Besides shifting authority, this approach is also meant to deepen connections amongst the people and organizations that contribute so

much to Vallejo's arts ecosystem.

Program goals include:

- Empowering artists and cultural leaders to name who and what artistic work and cultural organizations are valuable in their community;
- Keeping financial resources circulating locally;
- Fostering conditions for mutualism;
- Directly supporting artists and cultural leaders whose work is appreciated and relevant locally; and
- Providing unrestricted funding that helps artists, culture leaders, and arts organizations in Vallejo.

## HOW IT WORKS

CCI launched the process by inviting a group of community artists and cultural leaders who have acted as formal and informal advisors over the past five years. From the start, this network of Advisors has been generally (not perfectly) reflective of the diversity of Vallejo arts and culture groups and interests. This initial network of Advisors recommended 24 artists and cultural leaders whose creative work and individual commitment to Vallejo's arts and culture scene amplify visibility, strengthen artistic capacity, and enrich the city's cultural life. Their role was not to judge artistic merit, but to refer an initial pool of 24 artists and cultural leaders important to the cross-section of the City's arts and culture communities. This network of Advisors also suggested an initial list of local arts and culture organizations to receive funding. The list has been shaped over the past five years and reflects organizations whose artistic and cultural programming have sustained and enriched Vallejo's creative community. This initial list was intentionally focused so as to concentrate recommendations on organizations considered arts and culture "anchors", however, subsequent participants in the Fund will also have the option to write in additional organizations to receive funding. This step, involving the network of Advisors, helped launch the peer-to-peer referral process.

From here on out, the 24 artists and cultural leaders initially referred to the program each receive a \$7,500 unrestricted grant in recognition of their importance to the local arts and culture community. In return for receiving a grant, these 24 artists are then asked to "pay it forward" by referring another individual artist or cultural leader to honor. Each round has 24 referrals. Those who are "tapped" to receive a grant but do not pay it forward by referring someone else will not receive funding. Funding is contingent on meeting the eligibility criteria for this program, enrolling in CCI's grants platform (Submittable), and paying it forward (referring another person) until the Fund runs out. In the last round, those "tapped" will be alerted that they will not need to make a referral.

No individual can receive the award more than twice or receive more than \$15,000. This cap is because the Fund is intended to build community connections rather than to afford project financing; therefore, the number of awards to a single person is limited.

In addition, each round allocates funds to a local arts or culture organization. Referred artists, including the initial 24, are each allocated \$1,800 in unrestricted funding to select an organization providing publicly accessible arts and/or cultural programming and services to the Vallejo community. Because there is no predicting how much funding organizations will receive by the end of the referral process, the funding serves two important purposes, regardless of the final amounts: it provides some degree of financial support for organizations to continue serving the community, and it demonstrates that their

work is valued by their peers in their local arts and culture community.

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund will move through rounds of referrals, with 24 artists per round, until funding runs out, expected to be no more than 4 rounds. Participants have one week to submit referrals to CCI, and CCI has up to five business days to review and confirm each person's eligibility. Once this review is satisfactorily complete, CCI will notify each awardee of their award. While every effort will be made to maintain this timeline, unforeseen circumstances, such as difficulty reaching a referred artist, may require timeline adjustments. In such cases, CCI will make multiple attempts to contact the individual via email, phone, or other methods, and may seek assistance from the original referrer if needed. If the referee cannot be reached after multiple attempts over a two-week period, the original person who referred them will be asked to recommend another person to the referral process for the Fund to ensure the process moves forward.

Please note: The Fund is not intended to be comprehensive. It is limited in size and will not financially reach every artist in Vallejo to receive funding.

CCI will maintain the confidentiality of all grantees throughout the process, ensuring that referrers remain anonymous. However, individuals may choose to disclose their role to the artist or organization they are referring. At the conclusion of the program, a public press release will be issued, featuring the names of all grantees. All grantees are limited to two grants, totaling no more than \$15,000 in funding.

The program launched on May 7 with the first round of referrals and is expected to conclude on July 17.

## ELIGIBILITY

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; and

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<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.

- Must be an organization that is 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).

In addition, the following are **ineligible** for grant award consideration:

- Individuals who do not have a clear connection to Vallejo’s arts and culture community.
- Individuals who have already received more than two referrals or \$15,000 total through the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund.
- Organizations that do not provide publicly accessible arts, cultural, or creative-based programming.
- Incomplete referrals or unverifiable additional eligibility materials requested by CCI.
- Individuals who have a conflict of interest (such as a family or financial relationship) with the artist, culture leader, or organization that referred them. This includes spouses, family members, or employers/employees of the referring artist.
- Individuals who have a conflict of interest (family or financial relationship) with the board, staff, or directors of the Center for Cultural Innovation or the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

### AWARD DETAILS

Individuals will be awarded an unrestricted grant of \$7,500 (for a maximum of two grants, not to exceed \$15,000) in support of their role in benefiting their community. Organization funding is also unrestricted. In both cases of individuals and organizations, the grant is a one-year term. The grants are honorific—they are not restricted to any specific expectations or projects, and should be used in ways that help the individual and organization. The only restriction is that they cannot be used for political activities, lobbying, or illegal activities; must comply with applicable laws; and should be used in alignment with the program's public-good mission. For organizations, grants must be used toward organizational mission-related objectives and not for private individual benefit. In both cases—individual and organizational grantees—10% of the awarded amount will be held back and released upon satisfactory completion and submission of a final report.

All grantees must complete a brief final report describing the impact and use of funding (i.e., line-item expenses—no receipts required) on their individual artistic practice or organizational arts and cultural programming. Reports will be made available within 12 months of the CCI Grant Agreement being signed. Additional details are available in the Frequently Asked Questions [here](#).

### Example Use of Funds

<p><b>Individuals:</b> Funds are unrestricted and may be used in ways that support the artist’s ability to continue their practice to the benefit of their community, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purchasing art supplies or equipment</li> <li>● Covering the cost of production</li> <li>● Rent or living expenses</li> <li>● Paying down debt (e.g., student loans)</li> <li>● Savings and financial stability</li> </ul>	<p><b>Organizations:</b> Funds are unrestricted and may be used in ways that support the organization's ability to continue benefiting the local arts and culture community, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marketing and communications</li> <li>● Covering event production costs</li> <li>● Rent and staff salaries</li> <li>● Paying down organizational debt</li> <li>● Cash reserves</li> </ul>
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## TIMELINE

<b>Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund Opens</b>	May 7, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. PT
<b>Notifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Round 1 - May 7 by 5:00 p.m. PT</li><li>○ Round 2 - May 21 by 5:00 p.m. PT</li><li>○ Round 3 - June 9 by 5:00 p.m. PT</li><li>○ Round 4 - June 25 by 5:00 p.m. PT</li></ul> <p>Organizational recipients will be notified by 5:00 p.m. PT on July 10.</p>
<b>Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund Closes</b>	July 17, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. PT
<b>Period of Support</b>	<p>May 2026 - May 2027</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Round 1 (notified on May 7, 2026)</li><li>○ Round 2 (notified on May 21, 2026)</li></ul> <p>June 2026 - June 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Round 3 (notified on June 9, 2026)</li><li>○ Round 4 (notified on June 25, 2026)</li></ul> <p>July 2026 - July 2027</p> <p>Organizations notified on July 10, 2026.</p>

## SUPPORT

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 via the [California Relay Service](#)—our staff is trained to make and receive these calls.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

The Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund evolved from a previous program, the Vallejo Arts Fund, which was guided by the leadership, insight, and artistic vision of individuals deeply rooted in Vallejo. We extend our gratitude to the following individuals whose contributions influenced what the Fund is today (ordered by last name): Claudia Alick, Alison De La Cruz, Lori Herrera, Chelsea House, Kerby Lynch, ser marin luna, Maia Mills-Low, Suilma Rodriguez-Rizzo, September Thorton, and Maria Tucker. We also recognize the many community members whose participation in focus groups, surveys, and ongoing conversations, particularly throughout 2025, has also informed this work.

In addition, we are grateful that the Vallejo Artists Mutual Fund is made possible with support from:

