



CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION

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# **Ally Fund**

Trends and recommendations regarding individual donor behavior in relation to online giving and online crowdfunding platforms

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**November 2019**

Center for Cultural Innovation  
with support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation



# Overview

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With support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation from 2018 - 2019, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) set out to understand Bay Area performing artists' fundraising strategies and supporters. Called the Investing in Artists Bay Area Ally Fund (aka Ally Fund), the goals were twofold: for CCI to better understand how and from whom local professional performing artists are fundraising, and to gain the perspectives of their individual donors on motivations and vehicles for giving. In particular, CCI was interested in exploring the phenomenon of how online giving platforms (a relatively new technological innovation affecting arts fundraising) is affecting the behavior of donors to Bay Area artists.

Open to current and former grantees of the Investing in Artists program who currently reside in the Bay Area's 11 counties, the Ally Fund matched donations from an artist's prospective individual, independent donors (i.e., not family or immediate friends) or recent individual donors (after 2016). Donations were matched up to 1:1 from \$10 to \$5,000, pending CCI's ability to successfully interview past or prospective donors identified by the artist. Over the initiative's two-year span, CCI supported 13 artists with matching grant funds totaling \$60,000, in addition to interviewing 56 individual donors from across the U.S.

Summary trends and recommendations from this internal, inductive study follow.

# Major Trends

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01

## Portals & Platforms

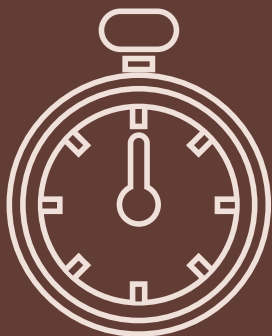
Online crowdfunding sites and membership platforms were a popular way for donors to support artists because they offer convenience and ease, have built-in security features, and are accessible to a wide, geographically dispersed, audience.



02

## People Give To People

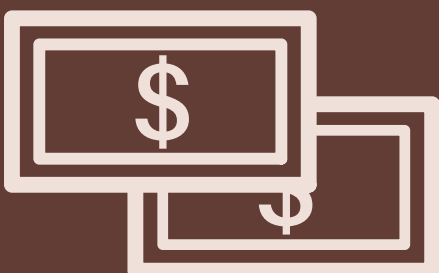
The majority of donors interviewed had a personal connection to the artist who referred them or were part of a circle of friends who knew their work.



03

## Timing Isn't Everything

Online crowdfunding appeals do not affect when a donor will support an artist. In other words, donors will give to online campaigns throughout the year.



04

## Direct Support

Online giving vehicles—whether a conventional donation portal, crowdfunding site, or membership platform—enable donors to support artists and their needs directly. Donors will take into consideration how far away artists are from their fundraising goals, and may give more to help close a gap.

# Recommendations

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01

## Online Presence

Whether through a website, social media, or crowdfunding platform, establish and maintain an active online presence. Make it easy for others to support your practice or project by providing an online donation option, and the ability to share your campaign widely.

02

## Audience Development & Stewardship

Online fundraising is most successful when appealing to established networks of friends, friends of friends, peers, and community. Make the time to build connections with new audience members and sustain relationships with existing supporters. Keep your audience engaged through project updates and new developments. Potential and already established supporters want to feel connected to your artistic efforts, including through your online platforms.

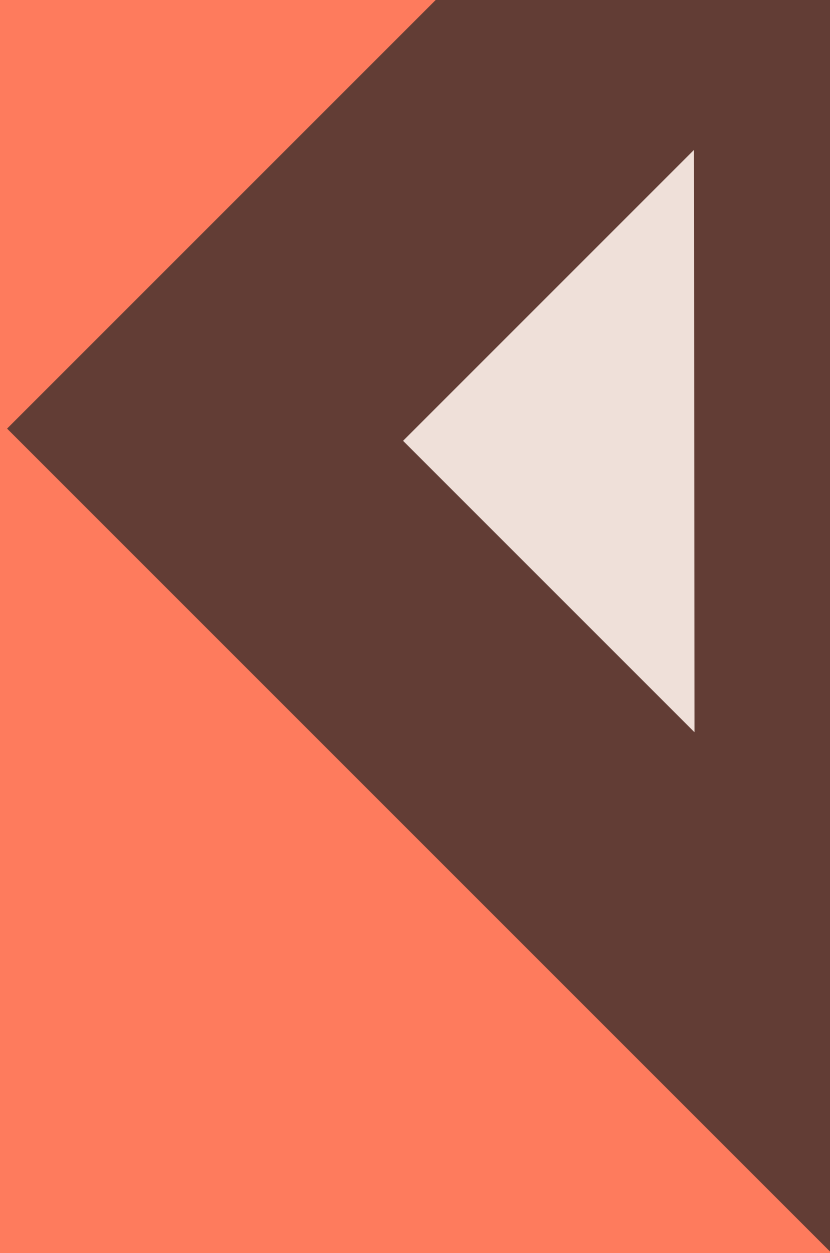


03

## Ask, Ask, Ask

Your network wants to support you; incentivize them through clear fundraising asks bolstered by samples of your work or process. Be transparent about what you need and why it's important.





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