



## 2021 SCI ARTIST-INNOVATOR FUND GUIDELINES

**Application Deadline: Wednesday, May 26, 2021, by 12:00 p.m. PST.**

**Grant period: August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022**

### PROGRAM

The SCI Artist-Innovator Fund will offer 10 grants of up to \$7,500, for a total of \$75,000 in grants, to individual artist-entrepreneurs with spinal cord injuries who are inspired to innovate by the possibilities and benefits that are offered through the experience of pursuing a creative practice and living with spinal cord injury. CCI recognizes that having the unique perspective of living with challenging circumstances and applying creative practice can yield important solutions for not only the innovator but also for the benefit of society. This opportunity to recognize the powerful combination of SCI populations, craftsmanship and creative practice, and positive social impact is made possible by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation whose founder lived with SCI and whose legacy is as an entrepreneur.

### BACKGROUND

The spinal cord injury (SCI) community is abundant with out-of-the-box thinkers, hackers, problem solvers, and individuals creatively tackling challenges. Center for Cultural Innovation's (CCI) SCI Artist-Innovator Fund offers artists, innovators, inventors, makers, and entrepreneurs with SCI the kind of financial capital that can launch or propel artist-driven social enterprises. 2021 is the second round of this program.

Recent statistics show that self-employment rates in the US are higher among disabled people than non-disabled people (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). However, there is limited funding dedicated to developing entrepreneurial capabilities of disabled innovators that would provide pathways for financial independence. In addition, many of these available programs assume that people with disabilities are driven to become entrepreneurs primarily as a result of barriers in other sections of the workforce. CCI challenges these assumptions and recognizes that the SCI experience brings a unique perspective to innovation, which can be a force for good when driven by artists and all those with creative practices and cultural self-expression.

CCI is one of the country's few re-grantors for individual artists of all types—studio practitioners, creative social entrepreneurs, cultural producers, and community-based artists, and we know firsthand the multiplier effects that funding and validation can have on the grantee, their social-impact cause, and the communities they represent. We encourage all those who fit the eligibility criteria to apply, except those who previously received an award from this program. This is an opportunity to introduce yourself to CCI, our funders, and panelists while helping CCI make a case for why more funding needs to flow to artists with disabilities in opportunity-based ways.

We acknowledge that it takes time and energy to apply to these opportunities. For those serious about pursuing their innovation, we have structured the grant proposal

requirements as a way to help you articulate your value proposition, business plan, and financials. For those who have already submitted other proposals, feel free to copy and paste (where relevant); and for those who are in the early stages of their innovation, use this submission to apply for more opportunities!

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must:

- Be an individual living with spinal cord injury. (We use criteria set by the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation, which considers those with SCI to be individuals with neurological and functional impairment due to traumatic SCI, degenerative disease primary to the spinal cord (transverse myelitis), or damage to the spinal cord due to tumors and surgery. Individuals with spinal dysfunction, paralysis, or pain syndromes caused by other disorders are not eligible (e.g., multiple sclerosis, ALS, Chiari malformation and other developmental disorders, primary orthopedic disorders, and peripheral nerve injury).
- SCI applicants may be part of a team, but only if the applicant is the primary owner and lead;
- Live and work in the USA or its territories; and
- Self-define as an artist, maker, creative, or culture bearer, *or* whose project reflects deep and sustained refining that reflects a craft, cultural, or artistic practice.

Eligible projects:

- are a product, service, or innovation inspired from your SCI experience;
- can be in the “idea phase” ready to come to life or a work-in-progress needing funding to move forward;
- have the potential to develop into self-sustaining revenue-generating activities;
- enable the applicant to deepen an artistic, creative, artisanal, or cultural practice; and
- have a positive social impact upon a specified place-based and/or identity-based community or population.

Priority will be given to entrepreneurs with demonstrated need for capital, with compelling projects backed by feasible business plans, and with clear intentions of how to popularize their innovation. The program also prioritizes projects that hold promise for improving applicant’s financial sustainability; artistic, creative, or cultural practice; and social or end-user impacts. As a secondary-level consideration, we will also consider how projects may hold promise for shifting popular perception of those with disabilities positively.

Who can apply:

- Artists (a person who practices any of the various creative arts such as visual artists, musicians, dancers, media artists, sculptors, filmmakers, etc.);
- Cultural practitioners (one who is continuing to keep a cultural identity and/or tradition alive);
- Makers (creators of new devices or reimagining existing ones, DIYers, self-made life hackers in fields ranging from food to crafts to technology); or
- Someone who does not self-define as an artist but whose innovation reflects sustained refining much like a craft, or artistic practice would, and whose practices are a form of creative self-expression.

- Previous applicants to this program who did not receive an award.

Funds are not eligible for:

- Organizations or non-profits.
- Enterprise development or businesses without a social impact purpose.
- Anyone living and working outside the U.S. and its territories.
- Previous grantees of the SCI Artist Innovator Fund

## GRANTS AWARDED

Ten grants of up to \$7,500 will be awarded to individual artist-entrepreneurs with spinal cord injuries that meet eligibility criteria for a total of \$75,000 awarded nationally.

NOTE: This funding may be taxable. Grantees are advised to consult with an accountant or tax expert. We understand that fund disbursement may impact disability-related community support, and CCI is willing to work with grantees on an individual basis to determine best options. Unless otherwise agreed upon, CCI will distribute awards as follows: 90% upon execution of the grant agreement and the remaining 10% upon satisfactory submission of final deliverables.)

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by panelists with various backgrounds and expertise. They will reflect diverse cultural, gender, and experiential backgrounds, such as an artist with a SCI; creative, social, and business entrepreneurship; investor; or someone with community development expertise. A panel of independent reviewers will assess proposals by asking:

- Is the project innovative?
- Does the project reflect or further the applicant's artistic, creative, craft, or cultural practice?
- Does the project have a feasible business plan?
- Does the project have the potential to develop into self-sustaining revenue?
- Will the project have a positive social impact?

## TIMELINE

**Application Opens:** Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 12:00 p.m. PST.

**Application Deadline:** The application must be received by CCI by **Wednesday, May 26, 2021, by 12:00 p.m. PST.**

**Review Process** (June 2021): A selection panel of individuals with SCI and with experience in the arts and enterprise development will adjudicate applications. This process will be administered and facilitated by CCI to ensure that panelists provide thoughtful assessment, fair judging criteria to all proposals, and reflect the diversity of the applicant pool.

**Notification** (July 2021): Applicants will be notified of the status of their proposals.

**Online Networking Event** (August 2021): Awardees will be connected to each other and other program participants via an online gathering hosted on Zoom.

**Grant Period** (August 1, 2021- July 31, 2022): Period in which Awardees will be restricted to spending award support for the proposed project.

## DELIVERABLES

Upon completion of the grant, recipients of the SCI Artist-Innovator grant are expected to submit a final report detailing the use and impact of the funds. Reporting components will include:

- A narrative report detailing how the funding was used, what your next step will be at the conclusion of this grant, and any unexpected outcomes or challenges.
- Final financial accounting of how you used CCI's funds.
- High-resolution photographs in JPEG form and a link to any online videos documenting the impact of your project as a result of CCI's SCI Artist-Innovator support.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applicants who meet the program eligibility must submit an online application by **Wednesday, May 26, 2021, by 12:00 p.m. PST.**

The *SCI Artist-Innovator Fund* online application can be accessed at:  
[www.centerforculturalinnovation.submittable.com](http://www.centerforculturalinnovation.submittable.com)

Applications will be accepted online **ONLY** through CCI's Submittable platform.

All applicants **MUST** create an account in Submittable before they will be able to access the grant application. If you require an alternative format for the application process, please contact us at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org).

## NARRATIVE

**INNOVATION DESCRIPTION.** Describe the innovation for which you are seeking support in 1-2 sentences. Be clear and concise. (Maximum 75 words)

**HOW WILL YOU USE THE FUNDS?** Describe what you are seeking to do with funding, and how funding would advance your goals for your innovation (i.e., get you to the next level). Be specific on what you intend to accomplish with CCI support during the funding period. (Note: funding must be used within CCI's grant period of August 1, 2021- July 31, 2022.) (Maximum 500 words)

**YOUR PRACTICE.** First, describe how and if you self-define as an artist. If you do not self-define as an artist, you may instead describe how your proposed innovation is a reflection of artistic or creative practice. Next, explain your process of making the product/service, with an emphasis on describing the aspects of creativity, problem solving, and process of refinement that make your proposed innovation a unique artistic, cultural, or creative expression. (Maximum 500 words)

**SOCIAL IMPACT.** Describe what social impact you will achieve through your innovation, including its impact on your community(ies). Include in your response who this innovation is meant to help or serve, and how you will know if your innovation is having a positive social impact. (Maximum 500 words)

**FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE.** Describe how this project will realize revenues, and how this project will develop into a self-sustaining source of income. (Maximum 500 words)

**FRIENDS AND NETWORKS.** Describe the types of people you have that will support your vision and help you reach your goals. (You can include names *or* identify types of people anonymously.) Share enough to give us an understanding of your personal, professional, and social networks that may be helpful in realizing your innovation. (Maximum 300 words)

**BIOGRAPHIES.** Provide a brief narrative bio of yourself and the project team describing their roles and qualifications for this project. (Maximum 500 words)

## VIDEO

We want to get to know YOU and what inspired your innovation. Create a short video (no more than 90 seconds) explaining the following:

- Describe the innovation for which you are seeking support. Is it a product or service (or something else)?
- Address what stage your innovation is in (prototyping, licensing, production, expansion of business, etc.), and how long you have been working on this.
- What impact will your innovation have on your communities?
- Why and how are you the right person uniquely able to solve the problem your innovation is meant to tackle? (Feel free to brag!)
- Include how this innovation reflects your SCI perspective and what inspired your innovation.

### [Tips on how to create your video.](#)

Please note that no more than 90 seconds of your video will be played, so as to give all applicants the same amount of review time.

## ATTACHMENTS

**BUSINESS PLAN MATRIX.** (Required, and must not exceed 1 page). Please describe your business plan using the provided matrix. Responses should be brief, they may be incomplete sentences or bullet points, but should be clearly understandable. [Business Plan Matrix](#)

**PROJECT BUDGET.** (Required) Submit a Budget including Projected Expenses and Projected Income. Include anticipated additional sources of funding, if applicable. The listed item categories are suggestions, please update to fit your project. [Budget Template](#)

**LETTERS OF SUPPORT.** (optional and no more than 2) Letters of Support may include notes of intended commitment from: investors, partners, or key stakeholders; as well as professional recommendations from: community leaders, neighborhood council representatives, or local businesses associations that can speak to the merit of your qualifications, the value of proposed project, and/or the impact of the proposed outcomes.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS.** (optional, maximum of 4 pages total). You have the option to include additional materials, including images of your innovative product, a due diligence report on your enterprise, or certificate from your local neighborhood association attesting to your contributions.

## RESOURCES

Applicants can access a '[Frequently Asked Questions](#)' document on our [website](#).

Examples of competitive projects and 2019 Program Grantees:

[Examples of Competitive Profiles](#)

[2019 Program Press Release](#)

If you have additional questions about the application process, contact [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) or (213) 687-8577.