



SAN JOSÉ CREATIVE ECONOMY FUND

Investing in the success of small arts, cultural, and creative businesses in San José

An initiative of the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs,
administered by the Center for Cultural Innovation

2023 GUIDELINES

The Creative Economy Fund will award project grants to arts, cultural, and creative-based commercial businesses that are located in the City of San José and involved in the production or distribution of the arts, including manufacturers, service providers, presenters, and designers, among others. Funding will support projects and activities aimed at building successful arts, cultural, and creative-based small businesses in San José. A total of \$40,000 is available.

Grants of up to \$8,000 will be awarded through a competitive grant application process. Competitive applicants will contribute to the City's cultural vibrancy, demonstrate readiness for project implementation, grow and achieve greater financial resilience, and demonstrate economic impact in San José. Competitive applicants will also reflect the City's diverse cultural communities and creative-based commercial landscape.

The Creative Economy Fund is an initiative of the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA). The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), a nonprofit intermediary focused on the economic security of individuals in the arts, is partnering with OCA to administer the Creative Economy Fund.

BACKGROUND & GOALS

The [City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs](#) (OCA) is the lead agency for supporting the development of a rich arts and cultural environment for this diverse city's one million residents and its many visitors. The arts and culture are essential elements in the character and quality of life in the vibrant San José community. As the largest city in northern California and the capital of Silicon Valley, San José is the hub of a wide array of arts and cultural opportunities.

Through public art, grant opportunities, special events, and cultural facilities, OCA fosters the City's cultural and creative vitality. Among its initiatives is the Creative Entrepreneur Project (CEP), which enhances support for creative entrepreneurs and the commercial creative sector in San José. Under this initiative, from 2013 – 2020, OCA partnered with CCI to administer the Creative Industries Incentive Fund (CIIF), which supported projects aimed at sustaining or building successful small arts businesses in San José and arts businesses in San José serving as cultural anchors and catalysts in their neighborhoods. Over eight rounds of funding, CIIF awarded a total of \$327,000 to 69 recipients.

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OCA is pleased to re-ignite its investment in creative entrepreneurs and their small businesses through the Creative Economy Fund.

The goals of the Creative Economy Fund are to:

- Enhance San José's creative economy.
- Bolster the growth and financial resilience of small arts, cultural, and creative-based businesses in San José.
- Provide financial support to artists and creative entrepreneurs (across all disciplines in both the non-commercial and commercial arenas).

Along with the Creative Economy Fund, OCA is partnering with CCI to offer the **San José Business of Art**, a 10-week workshop series that enhances the business skills of artists and entrepreneurs working across creative disciplines.

Learn more about this opportunity [here](#).

Note: If you are interested in enrolling in Business of Art, you must complete a separate application; the Creative Economy Fund application is for grant funding consideration only.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Creative Economy Fund consideration, businesses must meet the following criteria:

- Be a commercial enterprise, including small businesses (defined by the City of San José as businesses with 35 employees or less) and sole proprietorships (Note: businesses do not have to be brick and mortar; they can be online storefronts or nomadic enterprises);
- Be based in San José;
- Provide a cultural, creative, or arts-related service or product;
- In good standing with the City of San José, evidenced through possession of an active San José business tax certificate (aka business license, business permit)* and fulfillment of OCA or any other City department's funding requirements, if applicable; and
- Cannot have a conflict of interest (family or financial relationships) with the boards, staff, and directors of CCI or OCA.

*Applicants will be required to upload a copy of their active San José business tax certificate. To register your business or renew your business tax certificate, visit the City of San José’s website [here](#).

In addition, businesses can apply only once. In other words, businesses cannot submit multiple applications for different projects. Similarly, individuals who own or operate multiple businesses may apply only once for only one business. We will not accept multiple applications from the same proprietor. This is so we can support as many unique applicants as possible in a competitive application process.

The following are ineligible for funding consideration:

- Nonprofits;
- Individuals, organizations, or projects that will use a fiscal sponsor to receive grant funds if funding is approved;
- Businesses that are not arts, culture, or creative-based;
- Projects that are already funded through another Office of Cultural Affairs grant program;
- Projects that have already taken place (funding can only be applied to expenses accrued during the grant period); and
- Incomplete Creative Economy Fund applications.

OPPORTUNITY

Award Range: \$1,000–\$8,000

Funding Available: \$40,000

Period of Support: September 2023 – September 2024

The Creative Economy Fund will support arts, cultural, and/or creative-based small businesses whose proposed projects:

- Contribute to San José’s cultural vibrancy;
- Show evidence or “signs of readiness” for project launch or implementation;
- Grow and achieve greater financial resilience; and
- Demonstrate an economic impact (e.g., attracting visitors, generating sales tax, creating jobs) in the City of San José.

Examples of competitive projects and activities (*Note: You define your creative business needs; projects are not limited to these examples*):

- Storefront or other commercial space improvements that enhance a business’s curb appeal, safety, and/or economic vitality
- Seed money for a marketing launch for a particular arts-related service or product
- Hiring additional staff/team members to support the holiday season
- Purchase of a new HVAC to address safety protocols
- Hiring a mentor, coach, or consultant for capacity-building, strategic/business planning, or marketing support to grow an enterprise or build financial resilience
- Purchase of equipment or technology products to bring business to the next level

- Production of pop-ups, festivals, or other events that center local artists/arts-based micro businesses

Examples of Project Expenses:

- Artist, collaborator, and designer fees at or above a living wage
- Space improvement costs or capital expenditures
- Equipment, fixtures, signage
- Salaries and benefits for project-related staff
- Project-related administrative costs
- Professional services (e.g., strategic planning, bookkeeping)
- Marketing, public relations, and promotions
- Accessibility costs such as language translation or disability supports

Learn about previously supported San José creative entrepreneur projects by searching CCI's online Past Recipient Directory [here](#) and selecting "Creative Industries Incentive Fund - San José" from the dropdown menu of Program options. You can also read the [2020 Grantee Press Release here](#).

REVIEW

Project support will be awarded to San José-based businesses through a competitive application process that includes a peer review panel. CCI and OCA will invite panelists with various backgrounds and expertise in the arts, arts-based business development, and related fields in San José to review eligible applications and make award recommendations.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Panelists will evaluate businesses and their proposed projects by their ability to:

- Contribute to San José's cultural vibrancy;
- Show evidence or "signs of readiness" for project launch or implementation;
- Grow and achieve greater financial resilience; and
- Demonstrate an economic impact (e.g., attracting visitors, generating sales tax, creating jobs) in the City of San José.

Panelists will also aim to ensure that recommended grantees reflect the City's diverse cultural communities and creative-based commercial 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.

APPLICATION

To inform panelists' assessment of the review criteria, the following application sections are required:

1. Business Information
2. Primary Contact Information
3. Proposal Details
4. Narrative

5. Budget
6. Support Materials
7. Award Administration Information
8. Application Certification

A full **Application Preview** is available [here](#) (.doc and .pdf versions available), and we encourage you to review this in advance to prepare your narrative responses and the requested materials. The application preview also includes important details such as word limits, work sample instructions, and accepted file types.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications will be accepted beginning May 31 at 9 a.m. PT and accepted until July 12 at 12 p.m. PT (Noon). Complete applications must be submitted by the deadline—no exceptions will be made. In addition, applications with missing or inaccessible content (e.g., corrupted or password-protected files) will not be reviewed.

The Creative Economy Fund online application can be accessed at:

<https://centerforculturalinnovation.submittable.com/submit>

Applications will be accepted online ONLY through CCI’s Submittable platform, and applicants MUST create an account in Submittable before they can access the grant application.

Businesses with more than one owner, principal, et al., will select a single representative (i.e., a lead applicant) to create a Submittable account and apply, and if funding is approved, this individual will be responsible for fulfilling the grant requirements.

If you need technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support 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.

Learn more about using Submittable [here](#).

TIMELINE

Application opens	May 31 at 9 a.m. PT
San José Opportunities Information Session	June 7, 12 – 1 p.m. PT Register Here <i>Learn about the Creative Economy Fund and San José Business of Art! If you're unable to attend, a recording will be posted on CCI’s website, along with a copy of the presentation deck by June 9, 5 p.m.</i>

Drop-in Q+A	June 14, 12-1 p.m. PT Register Here <i>Please note, this is not a formal presentation, nor will it be recorded. The Drop-in Q/A is an opportunity to have your questions addressed by CCI staff in real time. So that everyone's time can be used efficiently, we ask that you review the grant guidelines, application preview, and Frequently Asked Questions in advance!</i>
Application Deadline	July 12 at 12 p.m. PT (Noon)
Panel Review	Week of August 14
San José Arts Commission Meeting (per approval of recommended grantees)	September 18
Notifications	September 19 by 5 p.m. PT
Period of Support	September 2023 – September 2024

GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS

Grantees must complete a brief final report describing the impact and use of funding (i.e., line item expenses) and provide documentation of the activities supported, such as high-quality images, URLs to relevant press, or video recordings. Reports will be due in September 2024 through Submittable. Further details will be provided in CCI’s grant agreement.

QUESTIONS & SUPPORT

Answers to **Frequently Asked Questions** are available [here](#). CCI staff are also here to help! Email us at grants@cciarts.org or give us a call at 415.288.0530 during our office hours on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm. (Office hour appointments are not required but encouraged! Find a time slot [here](#).) For Deaf applicants and those with hearing loss, contact CCI using the [California Relay Service](#)—our staff are trained in making and receiving these calls.

If you need technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support 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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Creative Economy Fund is an initiative of the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the Center for Cultural Innovation. Additional support is provided by the Adobe Foundation.

