



Press Release

For Immediate Release
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Center for Cultural Innovation in Partnership with Zoo Labs Announce Inaugural Fund Recipients

San Francisco Bay Area – The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced the inaugural Zoo Labs Fund grant recipients. Fourteen unrestricted grants ranging from \$5,000 - \$50,000 were awarded to Bay Area BIPOC-led artist teams with music-based projects or businesses that are contributing to the region’s arts and culture environment in positive ways. In addition to receiving a cash award, grantees will have access to mentors with expertise in a range of business topics and industries.

A total of 156 eligible applications were received across the four award tiers. Of these, the fourteen business/project recipients and the Bay Area counties they represent include:

\$50,000

Storefront Records (Alameda)

\$25,000

Castles and Crowns (Alameda)

Honey Gold Jasmine (Alameda)

Planet Futurelic (Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Solano)

\$15,000

The Autonomous Region (San Francisco)

Being Creative For Us (Contra Costa)

Mindful Voices: Music & Heart Practices for the Soul (Alameda)

René y Familia - Canciones, Emociones, y Poder (San Francisco)

TaikoPeace (Santa Clara)

WŌC (San Francisco, San Mateo)

\$5,000

Desmond O'Shea and Davis O'Shea/Lil Shlurp Shlurp (Alameda)

Firebird School of Music and Arts (Solano)

Orchestra Gold (Alameda)

Psychic Eye Records (Alameda)

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The Zoo Labs Fund was shaped in response to the lack of financial capital available to Bay Area music entrepreneurs—especially BIPOC artists—to afford starting or scaling up their creative businesses. Grants were awarded to teams based on the potential for funding to have both a short- and long-term impact, such as seeding the launch of a project or business, accelerating a project or business’ growth, or investing in the untapped potential of an established business.

“The Zoo Labs Fund’s open application cycle affirmed that there is no shortage of profound artistry, innovation, and hustle in the Bay Area’s music sector,” shared Zoo Labs founders Vinitha and David Watson. “We are honored to recognize the businesses and projects selected for funding and grateful for their contributions to the local community.”

CCI Program Director, Laura Poppiti, continued “The inaugural Zoo Labs Fund grantees represent an exciting spectrum of music-based businesses/projects and genres in the Bay Area. We are equally thrilled to have partnered with Zoo Labs to accomplish a shared objective of getting resources into the hands of individuals in the arts, who are the backbone of our society.”

Two, three-member panels assisted CCI in reviewing Zoo Labs Fund applications and making grantee recommendations. For the \$5,000 and \$15,000 award tiers, panelists included Bosco Kante (producer, inventor, artist advocate, and founder of ElectroSpit), Quynh-Mai Nguyen (artist and creative director of Art Builds Community), and Maya Sykes (brand marketing lead for Black Joy Parade). For the \$25,000 and \$50,000 award tiers, panelists included Idris Ackamoor (multi-instrumentalist, composer, actor, tap dancer, producer, administrator, and founder & executive director of Cultural Odyssey), Nina Robinson (financial activist, capital convener, creative, and fund director at RUNWAY), and Vân-Ánh Võ (musician, composer, and artistic director of the Blood Moon Orchestra).

The 2021 Zoo Labs Fund awarded \$235,000 in unrestricted grants. The program was made possible by Vinitha and David Watson, in addition to the support of individual donors.

About Zoo Labs

Since 2013, Zoo Labs has been building an ecosystem that values art, ideas, and people. Their programming helps empower artists to own and amplify their creations, breaking down the roadblocks between art and business. Complimenting the Zoo Labs Fund is the recent launch of [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#), a new suite of free artist-tailored entrepreneurship courses. The curriculum taught in these self-paced online courses is tried and true - tested over Zoo Labs’ eight years of serving an extensive alumni community and helping them level up their artistic business practices. For more information about Zoo Labs and Zoo Labs: LEARN, please visit www.zoolabs.org.

About the Center for Cultural Innovation

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to promote knowledge sharing, networking, and financial independence for individuals in the arts by providing business training, grants, and incubating innovative projects that create new program knowledge, tools and practices for artists in the field, and conditions that contribute to realizing financial self-determination. For more information about CCI, please visit www.cciarts.org.

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