



# ZOO LABS

**LEARN + FUND + MENTOR + COMMUNITY**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION AND INTERSECTION FOR THE ARTS**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ELIGIBILITY

- 1. My team operates multiple music businesses. Can we apply for funding for each one?**  
Teams that operate multiple businesses can request funding for only one business. See FAQ #8 for additional insights.
- 2. I live in an eligible Bay Area county, but members of my team do not. Are we eligible to apply?**  
For the 2023 grantmaking round, all team members must be full-time residents of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, or Sonoma County. However, if all team members were living in an eligible Bay Area county as of March 1, 2020, but have been displaced as a result of the pandemic, the team is eligible to apply.
- 3. Some of the team members have received funding through other CCI grant programs, are we eligible to apply for Zoo Labs: FUND support?**  
Funding through another CCI grant program has no bearing on the team's eligibility to apply for or receive grant funds through this opportunity.
- 4. Are alumni of past (2013-2022) Zoo Labs programs eligible to apply? What about previous Zoo Labs: FUND grantees?**  
Participation in a past Zoo Labs program has no bearing on the team's eligibility to apply for or receive grant funds through this opportunity. Similarly, previous Zoo Labs: FUND grantees may apply for funding so long as their final report has been submitted and approved, and their mentorship requirements have been fulfilled.
- 5. What do you mean by "music business?"**  
By "music business," we mean that the business' key feature involves music as a product, program, service, or art form/cultural expression. We are open to a range of music businesses that conform to this description, such as groups/ensembles, recording studios, music festivals, vinyl record presses, record labels, music technology, music-based healing services, and music education nonprofits, to name a few examples.
- 6. My team is getting ready to *launch* a music business. Can we apply?**

So long as all other eligibility criteria are met, then yes, you can apply! Zoo Labs: FUND is open to businesses at all stages of development, including those that are nearing an official launch.

**7. Just so I'm clear, who *isn't* eligible for funding consideration?**

Ineligible applicants include solo artists and individuals who have an idea for a music business, but no team. In addition, teams will be considered ineligible if they reside outside of the eligible nine Bay Area counties (an exception will be made to those who have been displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic—see FAQ #2); are not BIPOC or BIPOC-led; and/or have a conflict of interest (i.e., a familial or active financial relationship) with Zoo Labs, CCI, or Intersection for the Arts. And remember, if any team members are 18 years old or younger, CCI must be contacted to discuss eligibility.

**8. I'm a music producer/music production company representative who works with more than one team of artists. Can I be listed as a team member on more than one application?**

Yes, you can be listed as a team member in more than one application. However, we recommend that each team identifies *only* those members who are core to the business and its operations. To assess whether a member is “core” to the business and its operation, the team can think about their response to the pitch video prompt, “Who are the team members, and why are their roles critical to the business?”

Additionally, per the Zoo Labs: FUND guidelines, teams (i.e., groups of the **same** two or more individuals) that operate multiple businesses may request funding for only one business. This does not apply to an individual (such as the example above) who is cited as a member of several different teams, as long as each team is composed of different members and represents a unique standalone business.

**AWARD TIERS**

**9. What are the award tiers?**

The award tiers refer to the funding amounts that teams can request, and each tier is associated with a different set of criteria. Teams will choose the award tier—\$5,000; \$15,000; \$25,000; and \$50,000—to be considered for and will only be considered for the selected tier. In other words, if a team is not recommended for funding, it will not be rolled into a different tier for consideration. For example, teams who request \$25,000 will only be assessed against other teams who request \$25,000.

**10. Which award tier should my team apply for?**

Teams will select the award tier to be considered for based on their alignment with its accompanying criteria. Award tiers, their associated criteria, and the approximate number of awards available are:

- **\$5,000** (approximately four awards available)  
**Seed Funding:** Teams that request \$5,000 are newly formed; have worked on the business for two consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or less; and are earning little to no revenue from the business.
- **\$15,000** (approximately five awards available)  
**Startup Funding:** Teams that request \$15,000 are starting to have traction; have worked together on the business for two to five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years; and are earning little to no revenue from the business.
- **\$25,000** (approximately three awards available)

**Self-sustaining Funding:** Teams that request \$25,000 have traction; are on the cusp of realizing self-sustaining, revenue-generating activities; have worked together on the business for five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or more; and are earning some revenue from the business.

- **\$50,000** (one award available)

**Next Level Funding:** Teams that request \$50,000 are established; are ready to expand or further innovate; have worked together on the business for five consecutive (i.e., back-to-back) years or more; and are earning a steady stream of revenue from the business.

## APPLICATION

### 11. How does my team apply for funding?

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

The online grant application can be accessed at:

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

### 12. We're a team of three people. Do we each apply for support?

Only one application will be accepted per team (i.e., individual team members cannot submit separate applications). Teams will identify a lead applicant who will serve as the primary contact for the application. Information about the other team members will be collected in the application.

### 13. Is the application different for each award tier?

The application is uniform across award tiers, with the exception of a handful of financial questions directed only at \$25,000 and \$50,000 applicants.

### 14. What is the business matrix?

Teams **must** use the [provided one-page matrix template](#) (available as a fillable .pdf and as a .docx on CCI's website, and can be uploaded to Submittable as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file) to describe their business. The provided template is a helpful tool for organizing multiple aspects of your business in a clear and concise way. Responses should be brief—they may be incomplete sentences—but should be clearly understandable. In addition, an 11-pt font or larger must be used, and the completed matrix cannot exceed one page.

If you do not have Microsoft Word, we recommend using [Google Docs](#) to prepare the business matrix. Alternatively, we have prepared a fillable .pdf version. To use this template, you must have Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded [here](#).

#### NEED HELP WITH THE PITCH VIDEO OR BUSINESS MATRIX?

Visit [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#) for in-depth guidance on preparing these application components and watch this 3-minute video on [Pitching to Zoo Labs](#) for tips and techniques.

### 15. What is the pitch video, and how do we prepare it?

The pitch video is another tool for communicating aspects of your business in a clear, concise, and compelling way. For the Zoo Labs: FUND application, the pitch video cannot exceed two (2) minutes in duration. It can be recorded on a phone, tablet, camera, or even through a platform like Zoom if the team is unable to be in the same physical location together.

**The entire team must participate in the video, and one or more members will need to address the following prompts:**

1. What is the name of the music business, and what does it do?
2. Who are the team members, and why are their roles critical to the business?
3. How does the business reflect or further the team's artistic, creative, craft, or cultural practice?
4. Who does the business serve?
5. Has the business had traction?
6. How does the business contribute to the Bay Area's arts and culture ecosystem in positive ways?
7. How is this moment a critical juncture for the business, and how will funding be used?

**16. Do you have any tips for preparing a compelling pitch video?**

We're glad you asked. Teams are encouraged to visit [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#) for in-depth guidance and watch this 3-minute video on [Pitching to Zoo Labs](#) for tips and techniques. We also recommend avoiding the use of promotional content in the video if it replaces responses to the required prompts.

**17. Some of the team's members go on temporary hiatus, then return to the business. Should we include them in the pitch video? Also, our team has 15 members! Do we need to include and introduce each person?**

The team members referenced in the pitch video, and in other sections of the application, should be core to the business and its operations. If itinerant members fit this description, then please include them in the pitch video and any other applicable areas.

For large groups, please have all team members involved as best you can. Teams might have each member say their name and role only, or the lead team member might cluster roles, ex. "Joining me are Musicians A, B, and C; Producers D and E; and Manager F." Contact CCI if this is a challenge—we'll figure out a solution!

**18. How many work samples are required, and what types are accepted?**

Only one work sample will be accepted. Panelists will review up to 5 minutes total of a video or audio sample OR up to 5 pages of text/image-based materials. Like the pitch video and business matrix, the work sample is another format for presenting information about your business in a compelling and dynamic way. In general, it is best to select examples of recent work (2019 or later) and to avoid samples that have poor visibility or audio quality. For samples that are lengthy, you may opt to cue your work to a specific starting point or to edit it. Finally, a one to two-sentence description of the work sample must be included. If applicable, include playback instructions in the description. *Note: the field to enter your work sample description will appear AFTER your upload your sample. It is otherwise not visible.*

**Examples of work sample descriptions**

- *Documentation of our music collective's live-stream performance presented in February 2022 as part of the XYZ Festival. Start sample at 00:05:03 and play until 00:08:18.*
- *Entitled, "510707," this is the second track from our team's second EP (2019 debut).*
- *Excerpt of pitch deck created in 2020 for app development. o Images of teaching artists providing on-site music instruction in 2022 to K-2 students.*

### File Formats

- **Video:** .avi, .mp4, .mov, and .mpg files accepted. If your sample is more than 5 minutes, include the desired start/end times in the work sample description. If none are provided, panelists will view the first 5 minutes of the sample. **If the business creates, produces, records, and/or performs music, we strongly encourage a video sample.**
- **Audio:** .aiff, .wav, .m4a, and .mp3 files accepted. If your sample is more than 5 minutes, include the desired start/end times in the work sample description. If none are provided, panelists will listen to the first 5 minutes of the sample.
- **Text/Image-Based Materials:** .doc, .docx, and .pdf files accepted. Up to five (5) letter-size (8.5 x 11 inches) pages of ephemera may be combined to create a single text/image-based work sample. Examples of this work sample type include marketing materials, press, and presentation decks.

Regardless of file type, the work sample must be uploaded directly to the Submittable platform. We will not accept a document that links to an outside platform such as Vimeo, YouTube, Issuu, etc., nor will we review samples that are password-protected.

## EVALUATION

### 19. What will the review process be like? Who reviews the applications?

Two grant review panels comprised of established music practitioners, entrepreneurs, and community leaders will be convened following the application deadline to make recommendations to CCI on final grant recipients. Additional field experts may be used to advise on technical proposals or to assess artistic practice, context, or work settings.

### 20. How are applications evaluated?

Panelists will evaluate applicants' Pitch Video, Business Matrix, and Work Sample against the criteria listed in the grant guidelines, and we encourage you to review these closely. In addition, panelists will aim to ensure that recommended grantees represent the Bay Area's diverse arts and culture ecosystem. To that end, the panel will seek to balance the final grantee pool across factors, which include: communities served, geography, business focus, arts and cultural form and/or tradition represented, and other descriptive demographics.

### 21. What makes a competitive application?

The most competitive applications are the ones that are clearly written, generally brief and to the point, and demonstrate a strong alignment with each evaluation criterion. For application support, we encourage you to visit [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#) for in-depth guidance and watch this video on [Pitching to Zoo Labs](#) for tips and techniques.

Additionally, we recommend that applicants:

- **Provide metrics and/or specificity whenever and wherever possible.** For example, instead of stating that you had a "successful year," quantify the activities that rendered the year successful such as generating \$X amount in sales, hiring X# of individuals, increasing your digital audience to X amount from Y amount, and so on.
- **Focus on impact.** Zoo Labs: FUND supports businesses that contribute to the Bay Area's arts and culture ecosystem in positive ways. Center the ways that your business is accomplishing this.
- **Have a defined business versus a one-time "project."** Your business may be getting ready to launch, in the early stages of development, more established, or an anchor

institution. Each of these stages is competitive for funding and reflected by Zoo Labs: FUND's award tiers. However, if your work is more project-like in nature, such that it is temporary or not meant to exist beyond a certain outcome (e.g., a team of artists who need support for a one-time collaborative project), it will not be competitive.

## NOTIFICATIONS

### **22. The notification date has passed, and I haven't heard from CCI. Does this mean I didn't receive a grant?**

All applicants will be notified regarding their application status. If you haven't heard from CCI by the promised notification date and time, check your spam folder. You can also view your application status by logging into your Submittable account.

To ensure the timely delivery of all communications, please safelist [notifications@email.submittable.com](mailto:notifications@email.submittable.com). See [here](#) for instructions by email service provider.

### **23. If I'm declined for funding, will you offer feedback on my application?**

Yes, CCI will provide feedback to declined applicants via a 10-15-minute pre-scheduled phone call. Instructions for scheduling a call will be included in the declination notification. The feedback offered will be a compilation of panelists' comments.

## GRANTEES

### **24. What kinds of businesses/teams have been supported in the past by Zoo Labs: FUND?**

Since launching in 2021, Zoo Labs: FUND has awarded \$460,000 to 27 Bay Area music businesses. You can learn more about past recipients by searching CCI's [recipient database](#) and selecting "Zoo Labs" from the menu of Program options.

### **25. How can grant funding be used?**

Grant funding is unrestricted and can be applied in whatever way is most needed by the team and their music business. However, grant funding, or any portion thereof, may not be used for lobbying, political campaigns, voting efforts, or in a manner inconsistent with CCI's charitable purpose under IRS Section 501(c)(3). Further details are provided in the Zoo Labs: FUND grant agreement.

### **26. If grant funding is unrestricted, why are you asking what the team will use it for?**

Great question. We ask what funding will be used for because we're interested in knowing how it will support the business and/or the team members behind it. Because it's unrestricted, we don't have limits on what funding can be applied towards, nor do we require a line item budget.

### **27. If my team is awarded a grant, what will be required of us?**

If awarded a grant, the full team is required to participate in a grantee orientation meeting, to be held virtually on October 18, 2023, at 6 PM PT, wherein grantees will meet one another and learn more about Zoo Labs and its mentorship resources. The full team is also required to participate in a 1-hour, one-on-one session (virtually or in person) with a business mentor. Mentor pairings will be curated by Zoo Labs staff based on each team's needs, interests, and availability. Zoo Labs staff will also support mentorship logistics and scheduling. As a final requirement, the lead team member must complete a brief final report that describes the impact and use of funding (i.e., line item expenses). Reports will be due in September 2024. CCI

will provide further instructions, including how to submit the report through Submittable, in the grant agreement.

Lastly, our creative ecosystem relies on the sharing of knowledge; to this end, \$25K and \$50K grantees are invited to serve as Zoo Labs mentors in order to give back and grow Zoo Labs' as well as the Bay Area's music community. This is an optional opportunity.

**28. Can you tell me more about the award's mentorship component?**

In addition to receiving an unrestricted cash grant, Zoo Labs: FUND recipients will have access to a suite of mentorship resources through [Zoo Labs: LEARN](#), including on-demand entrepreneurial courses, virtual group learning and networking sessions, and a curated pairing with a business mentor. Grantees who are awarded \$25K or \$50K will also have access to strategy sessions with Zoo Labs Co-Founder, Vinitha Watson.

Zoo Labs staff will coordinate mentorship logistics and curate pairings with business mentors based on each team's needs, interests, and availability. Needs will be assessed based on the online application question regarding mentorship needs and through the grantee orientation meeting that will be held virtually on October 18, 2023, at 6 PM PT.

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**29. If my team is awarded a grant, how will payment be made?**

If recommended and approved for a grant, the team will designate a recipient for the funds (i.e., the "grantee"). The recipient may be the lead team member, another member of the team, the business (i.e., a nonprofit or for-profit), or another entity such as a fiscal sponsor. This information will be collected in the application to support CCI in preparing the grant contract and processing the award payment, and will not factor into the application's evaluation.

As far as method of payment, grantees have the option of receiving payment via ACH (i.e., direct deposit) through Tipalti.com—CCI's secure, third-party accounting software platform—or through a mailed check. In either case, CCI will issue the award in two payments: The first installment will be 90% of the grant funds. The remaining 10% will be paid upon fulfillment of the mentorship requirements and receipt and approval of the final report by CCI. Processing times will depend on the method of payment chosen and, in the case of the first installment, the grantee's return of an electronically signed grant agreement.

We understand that fund disbursement may impact disability-related community support or other social benefits; therefore, we will structure options that work for each grantee's unique financial situation. CCI cannot, however, make payments to multiple team members, nor will CCI assume responsibility for any due diligence regarding the team's membership.

**30. Are grant awards considered taxable income?**

Zoo Labs: FUND grant awards may be taxable as ordinary income. We recommend that you consult a qualified tax advisor for further information.

**31. Will you announce the names of grantees?**

The names of Zoo Labs: FUND grantees will be announced via a press release that is shared on CCI's website (issued on or around October 1) and in CCI's Annual Report, an online publication produced each fiscal year (July 1 - June 30) and made available for download on our website. In addition, grantees may be highlighted through CCI's and Zoo Labs' communication platforms, including each organization's e-newsletters, social media channels, and websites.

**32. Our team received a 2023 Zoo Labs: FUND grant! We have a few questions; do we contact CCI or Zoo Labs staff?**

Congratulations on your award! Depending on the type of question you have, you'll contact either CCI or Zoo Labs staff, as described below.

For questions regarding the grant contract, payment processing or status, tax forms, communications and announcements, or final report, contact CCI at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) with the subject heading, "Zoo Labs: FUND" or give us a call at 415.288.0530 during our office hours on Monday and Wednesday from 10 am to 2 pm. 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.

For questions regarding the award's mentorship activities (e.g., virtual grantee orientation, mentor pairings, group sessions, or on-demand content), contact Zoo Labs staff at [hello@zoolabs.org](mailto:hello@zoolabs.org) with the subject heading, "FUND mentorship".

**SUPPORT**

**33. I'm having issues with Submittable (e.g., lost password, error messages, trouble uploading) and need help. What should I do?**

For technical assistance (e.g., password or upload issues), request support from Submittable 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.

**34. I still have questions. What should I do?**

CCI staff are here to help! For questions about the FUND's guidelines or application, email us at [grants@cciarts.org](mailto:grants@cciarts.org) with the subject heading, "Zoo Labs: FUND" or give us a call at 415.288.0530 during our office hours on Monday and Wednesday 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.