

A SMALL INVESTMENT WITH AN OUTSIZED RETURN

An Evaluation of the
Quick Grant Program and its Impacts



Center for
Cultural
Innovation

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Prepared by Diane Sanchez with the Center for Cultural Innovation

ABOUT CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION

Founded in 2001, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 organization headquartered in Los Angeles, California. Its mission is to support individuals in the arts—artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs—to realize greater self-determination so as to unfetter their productivity, free expression, and social impact, which contributes to shaping our collective national identity in ways that reflect the diversity of society. In concert with this mission, CCI works—often with and through cross-sectional networks—to incubate new paradigms of cultural, economic, and political empowerment that can enable financial sustainability and financial self-determination for all.

ABOUT DIANE SANCHEZ

Diane Sanchez has over 30 years of experience in the corporate and philanthropic sectors. She served as the director of community investment at the East Bay Community Foundation, where she developed and implemented the foundation's giving strategies and community development goals, in addition to engaging a range of donors in supporting both arts organizations and the work of individual artists. Throughout her career, she has served on numerous public and private boards and commissions, including as president of the Open Circle Foundation Board; treasurer of the Grantmakers in the Arts Board; chairwoman and member of the East Bay Community Foundation Board; executive committee member of the Latina Giving Circle of the Latino Community Foundation; and, from 2018–2023, she served as chair of the City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Commission.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 4
Methodology	Page 5
Program Partners & Pooled Fund Structure	Page 7
Impact	Page 8
<i>Access</i>	Page 9
<i>Career</i>	Page 10
<i>Community</i>	Page 10
<i>Reliability</i>	Page 11
Post-Covid-19 Artists' & Arts Workers' Conditions	Page 12
Other Patterns In Artists' & Arts Workers' Conditions	Page 14
<i>Priorities</i>	Page 14
<i>Philanthropic Support</i>	Page 15
<i>Intellectual Property & Artificial Intelligence</i>	Page 15
Recommendations	Page 16
Conclusion	Page 18
APPENDIX A: Quick Grant Evaluation - Online Survey Questions	Page 19
APPENDIX B: Quick Grant Evaluation - Interview Protocol	Page 23



“Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) and its funding partners recognized the need to address the enduring impacts of the recession on artists and the arts community. We saw a pressing need for an efficient and low-barrier-for-entry mechanism to provide grants for professional development to individuals and arts administrators. Thus, the Cultural Capacity Fund, which later evolved into the Quick Grant program, was conceived. From its inception, it has been a collaborative effort, designed not only to enhance the administrative capabilities of the arts community but also to disseminate information on the challenges faced by artists and the arts sector to funders and the wider field.”

-LAUREN BAILEY, CCI MANAGING DIRECTOR AND STAFF MEMBER SINCE 2001

Many artists, creatives, cultural practitioners and producers, and arts administrators are stretched thin, required to produce increasing amounts of work with diminishing resources. While these creative professionals are amazingly adept at juggling many responsibilities, they often lack access to the training and professional development resources that they need to do their jobs and succeed. In addition, professional development budgets at arts organizations are minimal or altogether nonexistent. Arts organizations ultimately suffer due to the high rate of staff burnout and turnover, creating a drain on human resources that affects the entire arts field. These creative professionals are passionate about their work and hungry for information that will allow them to excel in its delivery. Launched in 2009, the Quick Grant program was established so that these individuals can apply for financial support through an easily accessible, centrally administered program to pursue educational opportunities that will enable them to manage their work and careers.

The Quick Grant program awards funding to California artists, creatives, cultural practitioners, cultural producers, and San Francisco and San José nonprofit arts administrators¹ for professional development activities. Program support is made possible by a pooled fund, wherein foundations and local arts agencies combine their resources in order to reach the maximum number of diverse California artists and arts workers who are seeking professional development. The Quick Grant is “quick” by way of its swift timeline—applications are accepted on the 15th of every month, with a one-month response turnaround—and simple application. Designing Quick Grant for speed and ease has enabled it to be responsive to applicants’ emergent career needs and accessible to a wide spectrum of artists and arts workers, particularly first-time grant seekers.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Quick Grant, in 2024, CCI commissioned an outside evaluator to tell the story of how a relatively small investment—in this case, a micro-grant of up to \$600—can have an outsized impact on an awardee. This resulting report examines the impacts Quick Grant has had on California artists and arts workers who want to increase their entrepreneurial skills and administrative capacity, expand their professional and peer networks, and achieve a greater sense of agency in their financial future. From there, the report describes artists’ creative and financial conditions in a post-COVID-19 landscape and culminates with recommendations for how Quick Grant can continue to impact artists and arts workers, helping them to better manage their careers and organizations, and ultimately strengthen the arts sector as a whole.

¹ CCI uses the terms “artist,” “cultural practitioner,” “creative,” “cultural producer,” and “arts administrator” throughout Quick Grant materials to capture a full array of ways to describe these individuals’ practices and roles in the field. The intention is for prospective applicants to “see” themselves in the Quick Grant program. However, this report uses “artist” and “arts worker” as inclusive of the variety of roles represented.

Consultant Diane Sanchez was engaged by CCI to evaluate the impact of the Quick Grant program, beginning with a landscape scan of professional development grant programs for artists and a desk review of Quick Grant (current guidelines, FAQs, and online application, and a 2012 evaluation report) and CCI's previous annual reports and research publications. In collaboration with CCI staff, Sanchez prepared an anonymous 20-question online survey that asked Quick Grant award recipients about their experience with the program, career trajectory, and their creative and professional needs. Sanchez also conducted 25 one-on-one interviews. Interviewees were chosen from a pool of 149 survey respondents who indicated having an interest in being interviewed by the evaluator, and represented a wide geographic range, field of artistic practice, professional role, and career stage.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The Quick Grant online evaluation survey was distributed in October 2023 to 2,338 current and former grantees, with 467 respondents, for a 20% response rate. Observations about the respondent pool track with both Quick Grant's shift from a regional² (2009–2017) to a statewide (2018–present) program, and its historical demographic data patterns regarding gender expression, identity, career stage, income, and discipline.

At 81.29%, survey respondents were overwhelmingly from urban areas, including Los Angeles County (34.62%), Alameda County (20%), San Francisco County (18.92%), and the South Bay Area counties of San Mateo and Santa Clara (7.75%). Of the remaining respondents, 15.99% were spread across 28 other California Counties, and 2.37% no longer lived in California. These data correlate to shifts in Quick Grant's geographic eligibility: From 2009–2017, the program was limited to Los Angeles County and Bay Area artists and arts workers; in 2018, Quick Grant was expanded statewide.

Consistent with Quick Grant's historical demographic trends, the respondent pool primarily identified as female at 75.71%, followed by males at 17.62%. In terms of identity, nearly half the respondents (47.14%) identified as White/Caucasian, followed by 15.95% who identified as Latin American, Latino/a, or Latinx; 12.38% as African or African American/Black; 12.38% as Asian or Asian American; 9.29% used the prompt's "Write-in Option" to describe their identity; 6.9% identified as Indigenous, Native Alaskan, or Native American; 6.67% opted not to state their identity; 6.43% identified as Sephardic or Ashkenazi Jew; and the remaining 3.58% identified as Arab, Arab American, Asian Indian, Asian Indian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. While the majority of respondents identified as White/Caucasian, CCI has observed incremental progress toward diversifying the Quick Grant recipient pool in recent years. This has been attributed both to the program's statewide reach and CCI's increased visibility from administering several financial relief grant programs for artists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than half the respondents (54%) described themselves as mid-career, followed by 25% who identified as being at the emerging stage of their career. The majority (50%) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54. Regarding respondents' highest level of education, 89% received an undergraduate degree or higher. This data point tracks with research commissioned by CCI that resulted in the publication, *Arts Workers in California: Creating a More Inclusive Social Contract to Meet Arts Workers' and Other Independent Contractors' Needs*, which found that artists have higher levels of education attainment compared with the overall workforce.³

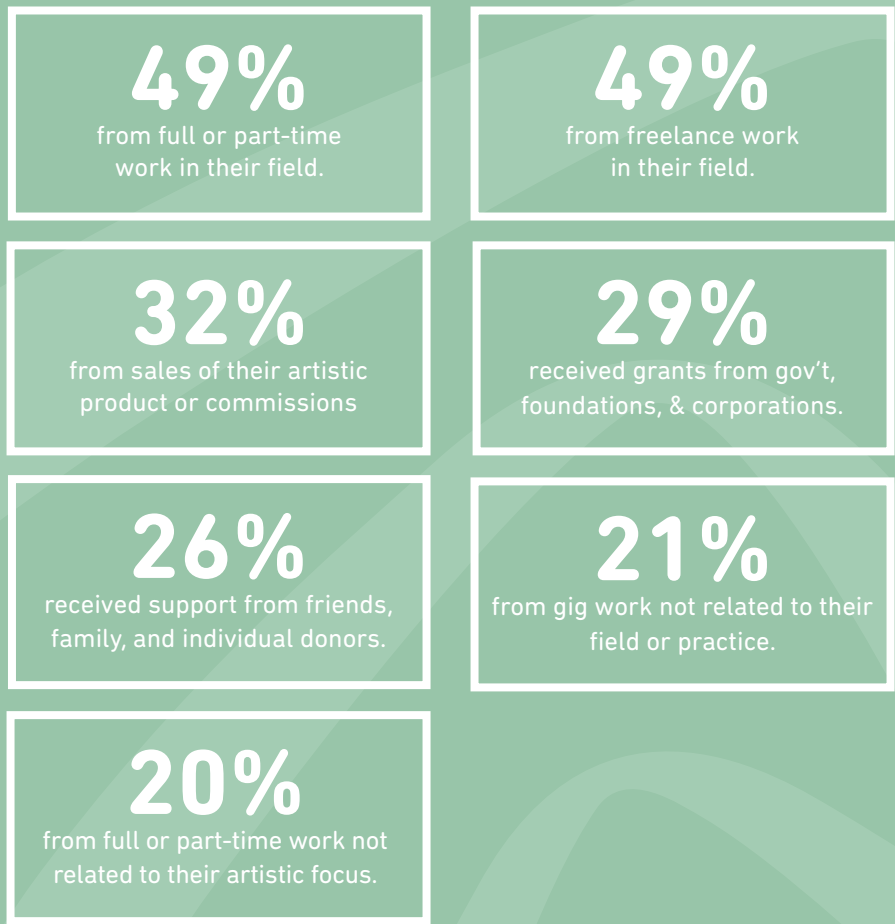
² From 2009 to 2017, eligible Quick Grant regions included the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County.

³ From *Arts Workers in California: Creating a More Inclusive Social Contract to Meet Arts Workers' and Other Independent Contractors' Needs*, by J.R. Yang, A. Briggs, J. Shakesprere, N. Spievack, S. Spaulding, and K. S. Brown, January 2021, https://www.cciarts.org/Arts_Workers_in_California.html

Relatedly, it's noted in another CCI-commissioned research publication, *Creativity Connects: Trends & Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*, that academic settings are not adequately providing artists with the entrepreneurial and business skill training needed to launch, sustain, and grow their art careers.⁴ Filling this gap often comes post-graduation, as they find that their practice demands a whole other set of skills beyond artistic vision and technique.

When asked about their annual household income, at 37%, more than one-third of respondents had incomes at or below \$49,999. This speaks to the financial difficulties survey respondents face, especially those living in metropolitan areas of California, which accounted for 81% of survey respondents. Discipline-wise, many of the respondents (44%) selected more than one discipline or area of cultural production in which they work. This is consistent with how today's artists and creatives often see their work as cross-disciplinary instead of being defined by a single practice or medium. Finally, most survey respondents used their creative skills to piece together an income through project-based freelance work or part-time work with a creative organization.

Survey respondents indicated that they supported their creative practice through a patchwork of income sources since 2020, including:



⁴From *Creativity Connects: Trends & Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*, Center for Cultural Innovation, September 2016, https://www.cciarts.org/_Library/docs/Creativity_Connects_Report-FINAL.pdf

In 2009, the United States was still grappling with the economic aftermath of what the Federal Reserve labeled the Great Recession. The financial crisis of 2007–2009 was profound and long-lasting. By the middle of 2009, the economy had hit its lowest point, causing significant economic distress. The creative sector, for one, had been hit hard on many levels and recovery would take years.

CCI HAS PARTNERED WITH 18 FUNDERS TO SUPPORT THE QUICK GRANT PROGRAM OVER ITS 15-YEAR HISTORY. FUNDERS INCLUDE:

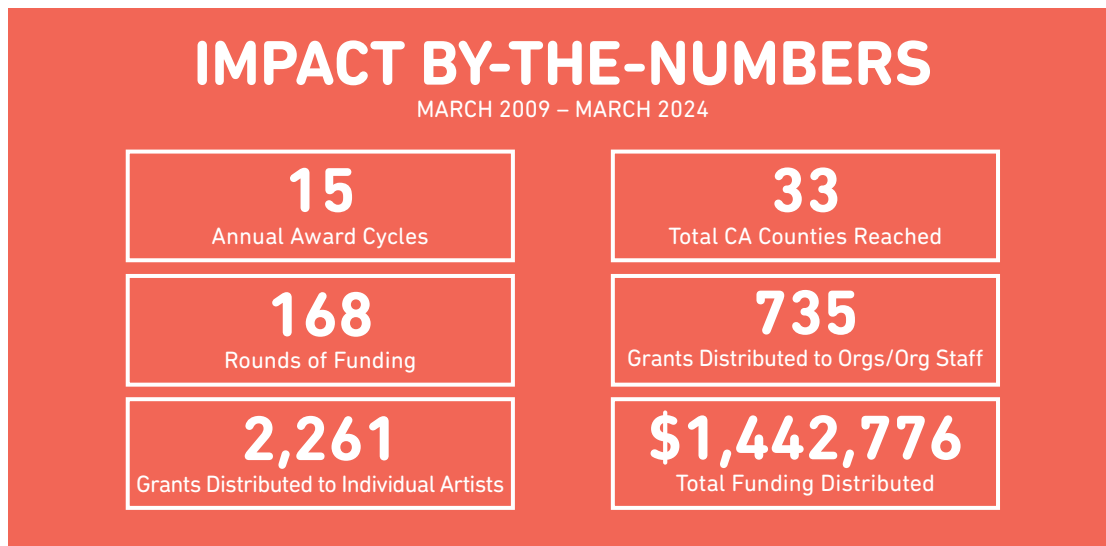
- Bloomberg Philanthropies
- California Arts Council
- California Community Foundation
- City of Los Angeles Dept. of Cultural Affairs
- City of San José Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs
- Entrekin Family Foundation
- Fleishhacker Foundation
- LA County Department of Arts & Culture
- Lia Fund
- Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation
- San Francisco Arts Commission
- RSF Financial
- San Francisco Foundation
- San Francisco Grants for the Arts
- Walter & Elise Haas Fund
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation

The Quick Grant program was launched in March 2009 by CCI and two Bay Area funders—the San Francisco Arts Commission and San Francisco Grants for the Arts—in direct response to feedback from arts professionals at their grantee organizations who were seeking greater access to professional development opportunities and capacity-building resources in order to build resilience to current, and anticipated, future economic challenges. The program gained further support when the city of San José’s Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs and the San Francisco Foundation joined in July 2009. Together, these regional funders pooled together to have a greater and more coordinated impact on the administrative, leadership, and business potential of individual artists and arts workers.

From the beginning, funders were partners with CCI and each other in these efforts to support artists and arts workers in increasing their administrative capacity and business skills. By working with an intermediary like CCI, one that both artists and funders trust, the pooled fund has had the additional benefit of enabling its participants to support the sector in ways they might not be able to through their grant structures, thus increasing both their local and statewide impact.

The longevity of Quick Grant’s pooled fund is a critical element of the program’s success, having provided a stable, reliable, and much-needed opportunity for professional development to artists across California. In addition, it has generated unique longitudinal data and insights into the professional development needs of California artists. At-the-moment field scans are also available through monthly docket reports, prepared by CCI staff and circulated among the pooled fund participants. Through these, funders have their finger on the pulse of professional development needs and trends, as well as a more nuanced understanding of the challenges artists face in sustaining their practices and earning a living.

Regarding the satisfaction level with Quick Grant, data from the online survey mirrors results from previous surveys and evaluations, which show that people are *extremely satisfied* or *very satisfied with the program*. In fact, this is a beloved program. In addition to the impacts that this report will describe, many hold Quick Grant in high esteem because of the sincere care and technical assistance they have received from CCI staff. This value-add cannot be quantified but has ensured that applicants feel seen and heard.



To understand programmatic impact, the survey—both its quantitative data and open-ended responses—was analyzed in combination with the interviews and desk review. From these sources, four patterns emerged in how grantees described their experience with Quick Grant and its impacts. These patterns are organized into the following categories:

ACCESS • CAREER • COMMUNITY • RELIABILITY

“I received partial scholarship funding from Americans for the Arts as an emerging leader in public art. I was able to complement that funding with a CCI Quick Grant to participate in their Americans for the Arts national conference, including the Public Art Network pre-conference in Washington, D.C. The costs of flying from Los Angeles to D.C. and having lodging for three days in D.C. were very significant financially for me at the time. The CCI grant made it possible for me to take advantage of the funding opportunity that had come from Americans for the Arts and develop my public art leadership.”

– SARA DALEIDEN, LOS ANGELES, 2023

ACCESS

Greater access to professional development opportunities is the *raison d’être* for Quick Grant. Sara Daleiden’s quote illustrates this very quality in describing how Quick Grant funding provided the financial linchpin that enabled her to pursue a timely professional development opportunity. In her case, and for many others, registration fees and travel costs can be prohibitive. Quick Grant sometimes fills this gap entirely or helps offset some of the financial burden artists have to bear. Along with addressing financial barriers to accessing professional development, Quick Grant has made ongoing efforts to reduce or remove structural barriers to entry, such as translating program materials into Spanish and Mandarin; expanding geographic eligibility to include all of California; transitioning to a more user-friendly online application platform; distributing 100% of awarded funds upon receipt of a grantee’s signed agreement, as opposed to distributing awarded funds on a reimbursement basis; and providing best-in-class technical assistance. The program’s simple application underscores this intention and levels the playing field between those who are new to grant-seeking and those who are more seasoned. Further, individual artists can apply for and receive Quick Grant funding without needing a fiscal sponsorship or nonprofit affiliation, which is often a requirement of grant opportunities offered to artists. It’s no wonder, then, that grantees often cited access among the primary impacts of their award.

By enabling grantees to access the skills and networks that would have been otherwise unavailable to them—83% of survey respondents indicated they would not have participated in the activity at all because it would have been too expensive—access to the Quick Grant program itself and its accessible design are critical. Consider the alternative: What might have been the net impact on California’s arts and culture ecosystem if artists and arts workers *hadn’t* participated in their supported activities?

“I feel so thankful for the grant, it had a profound impact. I really appreciated being able to choose the consultants and coaches I worked with. This empowered me to work with people where there was alignment around skillset, and also important for me, [were] shared core values and compatible engagement styles. The grant was transformational both for my business and for me as a creative artist – it helped water the seeds for how I want to show up in my life and foster a values-based business.”

– KIRTHI NATH, OAKLAND, 2023

CAREER

It should come as no surprise that an impact of Quick Grant is grantees’ acquisition of business, administrative, and other skills that support or advance their careers. Grantee Kirthi Nath describes this impact as transformational—she could work with a coach/consultant who aligned with her values and acquire the skills needed to nurture her filmmaking business. Kirthi’s quote also echoes a common theme among award recipients who worked with someone one-on-one: the ability to select consultants and coaches was highly valued, and suggests that some grantees prioritize receiving more customized, unique support than what may be offered in a group setting or through independent learning. The work of consultants was seen as especially beneficial when artists and arts workers had professional development needs that were specific, time sensitive, personal, or a combination of any one these circumstances in relation to their careers. As examples, were grantees who needed legal support to determine the best values-aligned business structure, fundraising support for an upcoming project or milestone, and planning support to help balance a caregiving schedule with artmaking. Accommodating grantees’ learning style and availability were also cited as benefits of working with a consultant or coach.

Career validation was a strong theme in the 2023 survey and in speaking with survey participants. For many artists, Quick Grant’s investment in their potential made them feel that their life choices, their needs, and their work were being recognized. Interviews with BIPOC artists revealed that their Quick Grant award was particularly significant as they continue to face institutional barriers to entry. One grantee mentioned that various entities only sought their work during culturally specific holidays and observances. This comment further highlights the ongoing struggle for artists to gain consistent recognition and inclusion in systems that determine whose art is seen and valued. In the arts and culture sector, where “getting the grant” can feel critical to one’s success, the accessibility of applying for a Quick Grant—and the greater likelihood of receiving at least one award—has become an important source of both financial support and validation.

COMMUNITY

In understanding grantees’ experiences with Quick Grant and its impacts, the theme of community frequently emerged. The quote by 2023 recipient Samuel Cortez Balderas speaks to this, where he describes how, through his grant-supported activity, the benefits he acquired extend to the dancers and students he works with. “Community” took on many meanings. Sometimes, it referred to a place or identity-based group, sometimes to the grantees’ peers or clientele, and other times to the community writ large. The importance of community was particularly evident among arts administrators, whose supported activities had multiplier effects as they bolstered the individual grantee’s professional development and contributed to

“I received a quick grant for a trip to Mexico and have been utilizing the knowledge gained from it continuously. What may appear as minor support has been incredibly beneficial and lasting. I work with over 100 families at the academy, directly with 36 dancers in the main company and 18 more in the youth company. These families are the ones who have been positively influenced by the support from the CCI grants.”

– SAMUEL CORTEZ BALDERAS, SAN JOSÉ, 2023

their organization’s health and resilience. Community impacts were also highlighted through the important networks that grantees could access and cultivate as a result of their award. To this end, survey data demonstrated that the most popular activity sought by grantees was networking, a data point that tracks with annual trends and suggests that people, above all, value their connections and relationships as a tool for professional growth and opportunities.

RELIABILITY

Fifteen years is a long time for any grant program and for those that do endure, it’s likely that they have undergone periodic tweaks and changes to stay relevant and resonant. Quick Grant, conversely, is an outlier—its design has remained relatively unchanged since its 2009 inception. The exceptions have been when Quick Grant increased the maximum award amount to \$600 from \$500, in 2017; expanded the nomenclature for “artist”; and made eligible all California counties (not just San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the city of San José), in 2018; and eliminated the award reimbursement policy in 2023.

“I really appreciate that CCI has been there for so long. I know that we can reach out if a staff member wants to go to a leadership training or an arts conference or a meeting. CCI has been truly supportive to the field.”

– LINDA LUCERO, SAN FRANCISCO, 2023

With so much economic, political, environmental, and technological change (to name just a few fronts) occurring in the past 15 years, it is significant that Quick Grant’s monthly funding rounds have been offered almost uninterrupted since March 2009.⁵ This level of reliability and continuity has allowed grantees to address emerging challenges or capitalize on successes through timely skills acquisition, field learning, network building, and other opportunities. No other moment proved this more than Quick Grant’s ability to support artists in responding to COVID-19, which is discussed in the next section.

Findings about impact revealed a common sentiment that Quick Grant funding is seen as “personal” support rather than “project” support, and that it invests in the recipient’s potential versus a promised thing or outcome that they will produce. The program allows recipients to gain skills and knowledge and enables networking that produces essential career connections. This equips members of the arts and culture ecosystem with new knowledge and networks and strengthens the community. Finally, Quick Grant validates individual artists’ needs and desire for agency in the achievement of both their creative and financial goals in an ever-changing environment. Simply put, the Quick Grant program provides a consistent support structure to the field that no other grant or similar-type resource offers.

⁵ Since March 2009, the only interruption to Quick Grant’s monthly funding rounds was in June 2023, when the program transitioned from one online application platform to another.

During a period of severe disruption and uncertainty, the Quick Grant program remained a stable resource, helping artists and arts workers find and pivot to new business models and practices.

The devastation wrought by COVID-19 was severe. In-person public participation in the arts stopped almost overnight, and individuals and organizations scrambled to determine how to adapt to new circumstances, which was both challenging and frightening. Funding patterns changed and earned income evaporated. Artists working freelance with organizations or on individual projects that were canceled were suddenly left unemployed and without access to benefits.

The pandemic did not interfere with Quick Grant's monthly application and funding rounds, and CCI, with the pooled funders, responded to the crisis with temporarily updated guidelines that encouraged applicants to work with consultants who could help them pivot to new business models and platforms and become facile with their use. This resulted in the development of new high-quality online artistic experiences, reimagined uses of websites, and new outreach and engagement strategies for current and new audiences. In addition, CCI staff worked with current grantees who were mid-cycle in their funded project to mitigate the impact of prepaid expenses, select or retool planned activities, or defer their award. This level of individual attention and support, when needed, is often mentioned in feedback from grantees and is one of the reasons that grantees feel that Quick Grant understands their needs and supports them as individuals.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

In the survey, it was important to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on how artists managed their practice. Participants were asked if they had pivoted to having more of an online presence and about their use of online tools and platforms during the pandemic.

Survey results indicated that 80% of respondents had made this pivot, and many had invested a great deal of time to determine the best use of digital platforms for reaching audiences, presenting their work, and collaborating with peers.

Most of these grantees are still using online platforms and channels such as Twitch and YouTube Live, FilmFreeway and Xerb, ArtPlacer and Kunstmatrix, Spotify and SoundCloud, as well as Tiktok, Instagram, and Discord.

Survey respondents provided positive feedback about these platforms' ability to create partnerships with like-minded practitioners across the United States and globally. However, several survey respondents indicated that the amount of work that it takes for them to stay current on these platforms, in terms of both content creation/presentation and technological expertise, was difficult. Importantly, an insignificant number of grantees were able to significantly monetize the use of these platforms directly, but felt that the exposure they garnered *did* generate opportunities.

Grantees also shared that they are now expected to use these platforms to build and maintain audiences, market their work, and stay visible. While the cost of using these platforms is not necessarily prohibitive, some artists had to invest in video and editing equipment to present their work professionally. The shift from using social media as a visibility tool to a source of income demands significant time and effort. For some, this demand negatively impacts other aspects of their creative and personal lives. Perspectives on this issue varied by age; early and mid-career artists, who often used various channels in multiple ways before the pandemic, found the transition easier. In contrast, established artists had a more challenging time with maintaining an active presence beyond a basic website or Facebook page.

Although the height of the COVID-19 health crisis has passed and the restrictions put in place by government and private organizations have been lifted or are optional, the economic impact is still unfolding. The creative sector, especially presenting organizations and artistic companies, is still experiencing lower attendance, reduced season subscription rates, and fundraising challenges, while individual artists continue to be under pressure to pivot and retool how they create, present, and monetize their art and apply their skills. Institutions and individuals are also grappling with higher costs and increased expenses, neither of which show any signs of abating. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) funding, which is a tax on the stay at hotels, motels, and other lodgings, is still at an all-time low in many places, and reports of pending budget shortfalls at the city, county, and state levels will and are already impacting arts funding directly. Consequentially, understanding, tracking, and adjusting to COVID-related changes over the next couple of years will be essential to keeping the arts and culture sector alive and well across California.

Evaluating the Quick Grant program presented the added opportunity to assess conditions affecting individual artists and arts workers. From the report's survey and one-on-one interviews, patterns emerged regarding respondents' priorities, financial precarity, and concerns about the impacts of technology on their artistic work and careers.

PRIORITIES

From March 2020 to September 2022, CCI administered 10 COVID-19 financial relief funds in support of California artists and arts workers. Rather than requesting a final report, CCI distributed an online survey to relief fund recipients that asked about the impact and use of funding. One survey question asked recipients to select the top three items needed to sustain their creative life and work from a list of options. The 2023 Quick Grant evaluation survey also asked respondents about their prioritized needs. The options that were most selected, in order of frequency, included housing assistance, access to affordable healthcare, unemployment insurance, and paid family leave.⁶ The following contextualizes each of these domains as they relate to individual artists.

HOUSING: The highest priority among survey respondents was housing assistance. According to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, "Since January 2020, California housing costs—especially the costs of purchasing a home—have grown more than California wages...From January 2020 to September 2024, the growth in monthly payments for a mid-tier home (75 percent) and bottom-tier home (80 percent) has far exceeded growth in average hourly wages (22 percent). Rents have also grown more quickly than wages. Over the same time period, rents grew 34 percent."⁷ In a market where wages have not kept pace with housing costs, and with more than one-third of survey respondents (37%) reporting incomes at or below \$49,999, it's unsurprising that housing assistance would be among grantees' highest priorities. Relatedly, survey respondents and interviewees noted that finding space to create, practice, and perform was becoming increasingly difficult. Public spaces, such as parks, libraries, schools, and plazas, have started to require complex permitting processes that include various expensive insurance coverages. Church and club halls also seem to have increased risk concerns, and the costs, in many cases, have become prohibitive. Warehouses and previous light manufacturing spaces or commercial spaces are no longer affordable options, even when artists come together to cover the cost of the space.

HEALTHCARE: Access to affordable healthcare was another top priority, and, per many of the survey respondents' comments, having access to portable healthcare benefits is essential. There are governmental programs like Covered California (established under the Affordable Care Act) that connect those looking for healthcare to providers in the healthcare marketplace. There are options to choose from in terms of the providers who participate in the program. Still, some providers have geographic limitations, and many plans are not equal to those of their commercial counterparts. The cost of these plans to the consumer can range from 10% to 40% of the covered healthcare cost, which can still leave many grantees without affordable healthcare, as it consumes too much of their income. In addition, grantees who have been

⁶ From the surveys administered by CCI from 2020 to 2022, the options that were most selected, in order of frequency, were (a) food/housing assistance; (b) access to affordable healthcare; and (c) unemployment insurance.

⁷ From "California Housing Availability Tracker (3rd Quarter 2024)," by A. Bentz, October 23, 2024, California Legislative Analyst's Office.

covered by healthcare plans in part-time or full-time working situations, and who then move back to independent work, want their employer-sponsored plans to be portable, meaning they would receive the same level of benefit for the premium they paid as employees.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE & PAID FAMILY LEAVE: Unemployment insurance and paid family leave were high-ranking priorities among grantees. Both benefits serve as vital components of the social safety net and are crucial in stabilizing people's financial situations during times of change. However, independent workers are often excluded from these benefits, despite facing economic challenges during unemployment and undue financial strain when taking time off is needed to care for a child or other family members. As COVID-19 brought into sharp relief, addressing these disparities and expanding safety net benefits to encompass all workers, regardless of their employment classification, is essential, not only for artists and arts workers, but also for society at large.

PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT

As shared earlier in this report, survey data showed that grantees have supported their creative practice through a patchwork of income sources since 2020, including 29% of respondents who received grants from government agencies, foundations, and corporations. As a follow-up question, grantees were asked if they had received any general operating or project support from a list of 25 current and past funders of CCI. More than half (53%) had not received support from any of the listed funders. Of the organizations that grantees had received support from, California Arts Council was selected by 23% of respondents, followed by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Oakland Cultural Affairs Division, Los Angeles County's Department of Arts and Culture, San Francisco Arts Commission, and San Francisco's Grants for the Arts, all of which were selected by respondents in the single digits, percentage-wise. As a grantmaking intermediary with a focus on individuals, these statistics suggest a known reality: Resources often flow from institution to institution, and rarely trickle down to the individual; i.e., there are more grant opportunities for organizations than for individual artists. When coupled with economic realities such as stagnant wages, rising costs of living and doing business, inflation, debt burdens, extractive capital markets, and a still-recovering arts ecosystem, the availability of philanthropic support for individuals in the arts is even more urgent.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Technology has significantly transformed how people interact with and perceive the world, affecting cost structures, delivery systems, and creative processes. The pandemic further accelerated this reliance on technology, highlighting concerns related to intellectual property (IP) and technology. During one-on-one interviews, issues such as responding to IP theft and ensuring proper attribution were frequently discussed. Among the interviewees, there was growing apprehension about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on artists' creative work and employment.

With technology permeating every aspect of daily life and limited federal regulations on privacy and attribution, artists need to be well-informed about their rights and the steps necessary to protect their work. Despite their efforts to safeguard their creations, artists are often left struggling when faced with misappropriation. Additionally, survey respondents, like workers in other fields, expressed worries about how AI might affect their jobs.

Participants in the survey and interviews conveyed a sense of unease and lack of preparedness for navigating these new challenges. As the digital landscape evolves and IP rights become increasingly difficult to enforce, technical training will be crucial. Workshops and one-on-one guidance on topics such as copyrighting work, accessing legal recourse, and implementing proactive protections (e.g., anti-scraping measures) will be vital to address these concerns and adapt to the changing environment.

The Quick Grant program is, as the expression goes, spot-on in addressing artists' and arts workers' needs for professional development. Still, based on the learnings from the survey and one-on-one interviews, the following recommendations are suggested to continue the program's long-lasting impact on the arts and culture ecosystem.

Further, these suggestions seek to ensure that Quick Grant funding continues to help California artists seek professional development now and in the future, enable their voices and participation in policy discussions on benefits and protections for independent workers, and extend and deepen the impact of the pooled funders across the state and in the field.

1. Attract additional pooled fund participants, augment the support of existing participants, and secure multiyear funding commitments in order to increase the Quick Grant award threshold, which is currently set at \$600.

Survey responses showed that Quick Grant did not cover the total cost of the recipient's activity in about 70% of cases, and that any remaining balance mostly came out of the grantee's pocket. In some cases, however, the grantee received a partial scholarship, and some had the cost covered by their employer. While some grantees advocated for a larger award amount to address inflation and rising costs of professional development, any increase must align with the available resources of the pooled fund. Otherwise, the program may experience a higher declination rate and a decrease in the number of recipients. Therefore, it is recommended that CCI work independently and with the pooled funders to identify prospective fund participants and encourage their multiyear support. For the program's existing funders, it is critical that they remain a steadfast supporter and consider making an increased investment.

2. Create additional opportunities for pooled fund participants to learn and connect.

There is so much to be gleaned from Quick Grant data and much deeper connections to be developed among its pooled fund participants. On the learning end, funders have a monthly, at-a-glance scan of professional development needs that mirror current conditions in the field and beyond. Meanwhile, through its membership of government agencies and private foundations, there is a built-in network of California funders to grow and cultivate. These assets are incredibly valuable, and it is recommended that they be further activated. For example, CCI and the pooled fund partners might pitch a conference session to a membership association, like Grantmakers in the Arts, that evangelizes the design and impacts of a program like Quick Grant. Or, CCI and the pooled fund partners might organize a regional or statewide convening on a frequently cited topic or professional development need.

3. Emphasize technological skill acquisition and training as eligible activities, and encourage the pursuit of copyright registration and other IP protections.

The evaluation showed that artists and arts workers are still actively using models and platforms that came into use during COVID-19, and, importantly, that the investment of time and other resources that artists are putting into these tools does not necessarily translate into a higher earned income. Since technological tools, platforms, and strategies will only continue to evolve, Quick Grant might reintroduce a revised version of the language used during the pandemic that encouraged applicants to seek support in acquiring skills and strategies for maximizing the potential of these technologies. Along with this emphasis, Quick Grant should encourage artists to pursue the support they need to register their copyrighted work and protect its distribution.

4. Expand eligible activity-related expenses to include childcare and remove the 60-mile radius or more requirement for travel/accommodations.

In Quick Grant guidelines, eligible expenses include memberships and subscriptions; workshop/conference/festival registrations; fees to engage consultants/coaches/mentors; and travel and accommodations if the approved activity occurs outside a 60-mile radius of the grantee's primary address (i.e., residence). To remove additional barriers to the pursuit of professional development, and reflect CCI's support of the whole person, it is recommended that program materials include childcare as an additional eligible expense to normalize the pluralistic roles that artists and arts workers play, beyond their work as creatives/producers. It is also recommended that travel and accommodation expenses be made eligible regardless of distance to/from the applicant's primary address. Period. Gas, tolls, and public transit have become prohibitive enough that, without funding support, they can create an unnecessary obstacle.

5. Expand eligible activities to include advocacy training.

Advocacy training will help artists develop the skills they need to be at the "table" and be part of the decision-making that will impact how independent workers are seen and treated from a social and governmental policy perspective. As independent workers, artists must contend with precarious circumstances, such as a lack of worker protections or social safety net. They, and millions of others who work independently, must advocate for essential benefits and security. If Quick Grant is meant to support the financial resilience of their arts business or practice, enabling grantees to improve these conditions and have greater agency to determine their futures is critical.

6. Point artists and arts workers toward resources that can support their arts-based business or area of cultural production.

CCI staff should prepare evergreen resources for grantees and prospective applicants to research in their pursuit of business and entrepreneurial support. The resource list might encourage individuals to look for opportunities through the Small Business Administration and its local branches, pursue financial aid or scholarships for business workshops of interest, connect with their local arts agency, or explore curricula and training offered by trusted peer intermediaries and service providers.

Fifteen years ago, in response to a multiyear economic climate that had affected the financial sustainability of many artists' practices, threatened their livelihoods, and threatened the sustainability of arts organizations, CCI, which was at the forefront of conversations around sustainability for artists, took action.

Recognizing the need to address this critical situation, aspects of which signaled a change in the economic environment that would be felt for years, CCI worked with the support of a small group of funders to develop a grant program that made it possible for artists and arts administrators to receive professional development training. This initiative, which became the Quick Grant program, was designed to be a low-barrier-to-entry—"quick" by way of its monthly application and funding rounds—grant program. The program supported professional development opportunities and encouraged artists and arts administrators to gain the skills needed to have more agency over their financial situations. Quick Grant has continued to assist artists and arts administrators across California. The creation of a pooled fund enhanced the scope of this opportunity, while at the same time giving pooled fund members access to important information about needs and trends in the field and a vehicle to come together around these issues. The Quick Grant program has had a major and lasting impact on the artists and arts administrators it has served, as seen in the feedback the program receives, in both formal and informal evaluations.

The program's design, with its ongoing feedback loops, has allowed CCI and the pooled fund members to recognize when changes or enhancements were needed to increase accessibility to a broader range of artists. This flexibility and quick response were especially true in the program's assistance to grantees during the height of COVID-19. In addition to financial support, an often-mentioned and appreciated aspect of the program is that artists feel validated when they receive the grant, validated that a program exists that provides support and recognition of the many challenges that can come with their career choices, while also helping them gain more control over their financial circumstance through professional skill development.

Throughout the evaluation process, the data, as well as the personal testimonials from grant recipients, were uniform in that they had only great things to say about this program. Quick Grant has provided critical support over the last 15 years and is well-positioned to offer the same level of support well into the future. This is, by and large, a program whose small investment has an outsized impact. Quick Grant is unique in this approach and emblematic of CCI's vision:

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

CONNECTION IS CARE.

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE BEGETS CREATIVE SELF-DETERMINATION.

PARTNERSHIPS LEAD TO SOLUTIONS.

THIS IS THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL INNOVATION.

QUICK GRANT EVALUATION - ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your participation! The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) is asking current and past Quick Grant recipients to complete the following survey about the impact of their award, experience with the program, current conditions, and priorities for the future.

The Quick Grant Evaluation Survey should take about 15 minutes and can be completed anonymously. Any information that we share publicly, such as through an anticipated spring 2024 report, will be reported in the aggregate and without attribution to individual respondents, and any information that we provide to the field will be about how to help those in the arts.

Thank you in advance for your important feedback!

SURVEY RESPONDENT REGION

1. In what ZIP code is your home located? (Enter five-digit ZIP code; for example, 00544 or 94305)
2. In which California county do you primarily reside?
 - "I no longer reside in California" is listed first, followed by all CA Counties
3. In which California county/ies is your primary arts activity based? Select all that apply.
 - "I no longer reside in California" is listed first, followed by all CA Counties
4. In some geographic areas that this grant supports, rising costs of living have displaced individuals. Has this circumstance affected you?
 - Yes
 - You indicated that you've been affected by displacement. From where did you move?
 - Within the same city
 - From a California city to another California city
 - From California to another state
 - Outside of the country
 - Write-In Option: (100 characters)
 - Since being displaced, how long have you lived at your current residence?
 - Less than one year
 - One year
 - Two years
 - Three years or more
 - No

LOOKING BACK

5. How many Quick Grant awards have you received?
 - One
 - Two or more
 - Not sure
6. What type of activity/ies did your Quick Grant award/s support? *(Select all that apply.)*
 - Workshop/Training
 - Festival
 - Publication
 - Conference
 - Consultant/Coach/Mentor
 - Special Event
 - Write-In Option: (100 characters)
7. What topic/s did your Quick Grant-funded activity/ies explore? *(Select all that apply.)*
 - Audience development
 - Board development
 - Diversity, equity, and inclusion training
 - Field learning
 - Financial management and accounting
 - Fundraising
 - General: multiple topic business training
 - Human resources/staff transition
 - Leadership
 - Legal issues
 - Management/strategic planning
 - Marketing/communication
 - Networking
 - Technology training
 - Write-in option: (100 characters)

8. Did your Quick Grant award/s cover the full cost of your activity/ies?

- Yes
- No
 - You indicated that the Quick Grant award(s) did not cover the full cost of your activity(ies). How were the additional costs paid? *(Select all that apply.)*
 - I paid.
 - I received a scholarship/subsidy to participate.
 - My organization paid.
 - Write-In Option: (100 characters)
- Not sure

9. Would you have participated in the activity/ies if you had not received a Quick Grant?

- Yes
- No
 - You indicated that without a Quick Grant, you would not have participated in the activity. Why not?
 - Cost - The activity would have been too expensive without Quick Grant support.
 - Accountability - I wouldn't have been as motivated to pursue the activity or complete it without Quick Grant support.
 - Validation - I wouldn't have prioritized making an investment in myself and my career without Quick Grant support.
 - Write-In Option: (100 characters)

10. As a Quick Grant recipient, how satisfied are you with the program?

- Extremely satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

11. OPTIONAL: Aside from no longer being a reimbursement-based award, there have been very few changes to the Quick Grant program's design and administration over the past 14+ years. Do you have any comments or thoughts you would like to share about the program's design or administration (e.g. outreach methods, online application, Submittable application portal, funding distribution)? *Open-ended (no word limit)*

LOOKING FORWARD

12. Are you planning to apply for a Quick Grant in the next 12 months?

- Yes
- No
 - If you're not applying for a Quick Grant in the next 12 months, why?
 - I don't have enough time to pursue professional development at the moment.
 - There's nothing I'm interested in pursuing at this time.
 - The award amount isn't enough for what I want to pursue.
 - The Quick Grant application takes too long to complete.
 - I didn't receive an award the last time I applied.
 - My employer is providing professional development support.
 - Write-In Option: (100 characters)
- Not sure

13. Because of the official limitations during COVID, many artists pivoted to using various digital tools and online platforms to engage their audience, provide content, and connect with their community. Did you make this pivot?

- Yes
 - You indicated that due to COVID, you had to pivot. Are you still using more online platforms and digital tools than before COVID?
 - Yes
 - No
 - How have these products impacted your practice or profession?
 - *Open-ended (no word limit)*
 - What platforms/digital tools are you using?
 - *Open-ended (no word limit)*
- No

14. During COVID, CCI grantees prioritized needing the items below to sustain their creative life and work.

Please select the ones that are still a priority. *(Select all that apply.)*

- Housing assistance
- Unemployment insurance
- Access to affordable healthcare
- Paid sick leave
- Paid family leave
- None of these options are a priority for my creative life and work.
- Write-in option: *(100 characters)*

15. Coming out of the struggles of the past three years, how are you sustaining your practice? *(Select all that apply.)*

- Income from a full- or part-time job in my field
- Income from a full- or part-time job that is not in my field
- Various types of gig work not related to my artistic focus
- Income from freelance work in my field
- Sales of my artistic product or commissions
- Foundation/government/ corporate grants
- Individual donors/family and friends
- Write-in option: *(100 characters)*

16. The following lists current and past funders of CCI. Have you received general operating or project support from any of these funders? *(Select all that apply.)*

- Akonadi Foundation
- Bloomberg Philanthropies
- California Arts Council
- California Community Foundation
- City of Berkeley, Civic Arts Program
- City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs
- City of Oakland, Cultural Affairs Division
- City of San José, Office of Cultural Affairs
- City of West Hollywood, Arts Division
- East Bay Community Foundation
- Fleishhacker Foundation
- Kenneth Picerne Foundation
- Kenneth Rainin Foundation
- LA County Department of Arts and Culture
- Lia Fund
- Maxwell/Hanrahan Foundation
- Perenchio Foundation
- Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation
- San Francisco Arts Commission
- San Francisco Foundation
- San Francisco Grants for the Arts
- Walter and Elise Haas Fund
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Zellerbach Family Foundation
- I'm not sure.
- I haven't received support from any of these funders.

17. CCI is augmenting its research and advocacy work in the service of social and labor protections for all, including artists and arts workers. Are you interested in learning more about any of the following issues? *(Select all that apply.)*

- Removing income barriers to receipt of social benefits
- Establishment of cooperatives
- Healthcare for all
- Rent control through city and state laws
- Student debt assistance/forgiveness
- Portable benefits (i.e., benefits such as healthcare, paid time off, and retirement that are tied to & that follow you, not your employer)
- Guaranteed income
- Community economic development
- Paid leave
- Disability insurance
- Pension fiduciary responsibility (ERISA)
- Intellectual property
- Write-in option: *(100 characters)*

18. CCI's core service areas are grantmaking, producing gatherings/convenings, and research and advocacy. Help us shape our future priorities by selecting up to THREE options below that interest you most.

- Access to funding, loans, or grants
- Access to affordable spaces (e.g., studio, rehearsal, presentation)
- Access to tools & equipment
- Networking opportunities
- Equitable partnerships
- Peer-to-peer mentoring
- Business and administrative skill development
- Financial skill development
- Financial advising
- Strategic planning/goal setting
- I'm not interested in any of these options
- Write-in option: *(100 characters)*

19. OPTIONAL: Please feel free to share any additional thoughts, expand on any of your answers, and/or list any emerging issues affecting our field that CCI should discuss or consider.

- *Open-ended (no word limit)*

WAYS TO ENGAGE

We regard the confidentiality of the survey to be of utmost importance. Survey participants are able to submit their answers to this survey anonymously, or they may choose to provide their contact information to stay in touch with CCI about the anticipated fall 2024 Quick Grant report, learn about our advocacy efforts and ways to participate, or indicate their interest in participating in a one-on-one interview about the Quick Grant program.

CCI will invite 15 or more Quick Grant recipients to participate in a Zoom-based, 30-minute recorded interview with an external evaluator, at a mutually convenient time, in December 2023. Interviewees will represent a cross-section of the survey respondent pool and will be compensated for their time.

As a reminder, any information shared in this survey will be reported in the aggregate and without attribution to individual respondents, and any information that we provide to the field will be about how to help those in the arts.

Ways to engage (Select all that apply)

- Notify me when the Quick Grant Evaluation Report is released.
You indicated that you would like to stay engaged with CCI. Please share your name and email with us.
- Add me to CCI's monthly e-newsletter list.
You indicated that you would like to stay engaged with CCI. Please share your name and email with us.
- Reach out to me about the social/labor protection topics I selected in question 14.
You indicated that you would like to stay engaged with CCI. Please share your name and email with us.
- Participate in a one-on-one interview.
You indicated that you would like to stay engaged with CCI. Please share your name and email with us.
- I prefer to remain anonymous.

OPTIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

[Respondents were offered a choice of answers for each question, including "prefer not to state."]

The information requested in this section is CONFIDENTIAL and will be used for internal purposes to understand the populations of California artists and arts workers whom we serve. Please note that your responses will remain confidential with CCI. Any information shared externally will be in aggregate (i.e., without personal attribution to individual respondents) and anonymously.

1. With which gender(s) do you identify?
2. Do you identify as LGBTQIA?
3. Do you identify as a person with a disability?
4. What is your age range?
5. How do you identify?
6. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
7. What is your annual household income?
8. Do you owe any student loans currently?
9. What is your artistic discipline or area of cultural production?
10. What is your career stage?

QUICK GRANT EVALUATION - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTIONS

- Evaluator thanks interviewee for completing the survey and for their participation in the interview process.
- Evaluator shares confidentiality information and requests permission to record and/or transcribe the conversation:
 - The Zoom call will be recorded to ensure CCI staff is able to benefit directly from the interviewee's thoughts and ideas.
 - If interviewee does not want the session to be recorded, the conversation will be transcribed using Otter.ai.
 - The recording will not be preserved, and the interviewee will not be quoted directly unless permission is given. Evaluator will reach out to request permission if needed.
- Evaluator provides an overview of the evaluation project and the role of the one-on-one interviews in 1) helping to deepen CCI and the evaluator's understanding of the Quick Grant program's impact and 2) generating insights into the needs of individual artists in California and the current state of the California arts and culture sector.
- Evaluator asks interviewee if they have any questions.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- Evaluator enquires about the interviewee's past Quick Grant award(s):
 - What activity did the Quick Grant support?
 - Will interviewee apply in the future? If yes, what type of training are they looking for?
- Evaluator asks if interviewee has any feedback about the Quick Grant program:
 - Are there any updates or changes they would suggest?
 - If raising the award amount is mentioned, ask what amount they believe would be more appropriate.
- Evaluator asks for the interviewee's opinion about the state of arts funding as well as individual artists' support in California. They discuss any specific areas that the interviewee feels need more attention or support.
 - If the interviewee has received grants from other funders, the evaluator asks about the impact these grants have had on their work. The evaluator explores any significant outcomes or changes resulting from these grants.
- Evaluator asks about the interviewee's experience pivoting to online platforms/utilizing digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluator seeks deeper information about the interviewee's success/challenges, financial opportunities, and any new communities they have engaged with through their online efforts.
- Evaluator asks about the specific challenges the interviewee faces in their practice, including financial challenges.
 - If the interviewee mentions the cost of housing, the evaluator explores if they have considered moving to another location inside or outside of California as a solution.
- Evaluator discusses CCI's efforts to augment its advocacy work.
 - Based on the interviewee's survey response, evaluator asks for more information about the interviewee's listed interests and if they would be willing to join advocacy efforts in their region.
- Evaluator asks if there is anything else the interviewee wants to share or any other thoughts that are top of mind.

CONCLUSION

- Evaluator thanks interviewee for their time and insights and recaps next steps:
 - \$100 honorarium will be paid out via ACH or check (evaluator to confirm interviewee's preferred method of payment); and
 - CCI will follow-up with instructions on payment disbursement.



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Cultural
Innovation**

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