



SCI ARTIST- INNOVATOR FUND

With support from the [Craig H. Neilsen Foundation](#), the SCI Artist-Innovator Fund spanned three years, from 2021 to 2023. The Fund offered ten grants of up to \$8,500, for a total of \$85,000, to individual artist-entrepreneurs with spinal cord injuries who are inspired to innovate by the possibilities and benefits that are offered through the experience of pursuing a creative practice and living with spinal cord injury.

Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) recognizes that having the unique perspective of living with challenging circumstances and applying a creative practice can yield meaningful solutions not only for the innovator but also for the benefit of society. This opportunity to recognize the powerful combination of SCI populations, craftsmanship and creative practice, and positive social impact is made possible by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, whose founder lived with SCI and whose legacy is as an entrepreneur.

The SCI Artist-Innovator Fund was first offered in 2019 and has since awarded \$150,000 to 20 grantees with SCI. The 2023 funding round has increased the total award amount to \$8,500 from \$7,500. In addition, CCI has partnered with the [Minneapolis College of Art & Design's Entrepreneurial Studies](#) program to provide SCI Artist-Innovator Fund grantees with opportunities to test their ideas, build their networks, and seek guidance from practitioners and peers. Grantees may participate in individual and group online coaching sessions with Minneapolis College of Art & Design (MCAD) faculty to address specific business needs and questions around their developing project. Grantees may also present their projects and solicit feedback/ideas from MCAD faculty and students from Entrepreneurial Studies (and potentially other programs). Participation is optional.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must:

- be an individual living with spinal cord injury. CCI uses the definition used by the program's funder, the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation: We consider those with SCI to be individuals with neurological and functional impairment due to traumatic SCI, degenerative disease primary to the spinal cord (transverse myelitis), or damage to the spinal cord due to tumors and surgery. Individuals with spinal dysfunction, paralysis, or pain syndromes caused by other disorders are not eligible (e.g.,

multiple sclerosis, ALS, Chiari malformation and other developmental disorders, primary orthopedic disorders, and peripheral nerve injury). (SCI applicants may be part of a team, but only if the applicant is the primary owner or lead);

- live and work in the USA or its territories; and
- self-define as an artist, maker, creative, or culture bearer, or whose project reflects deep and sustained refining that reflects a craft, cultural, or artistic practice.

Eligible projects:

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

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

NEWS

[SCI PRESS RELEASE FOR 2023 GRANTEES](#)

[SCI PRESS RELEASE FOR 2021 GRANTEES](#)

[SCI PRESS RELEASE FOR 2019 GRANTEES](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The SCI Artist-Innovator Fund is generously supported by:



The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation's funding is dedicated to supporting both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those affected by and living with spinal cord injury.

CCI also wishes to thank program partner, the Minneapolis College of Art & Design.

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