



Center for
Cultural
Innovation

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

WELCOME MESSAGE

DEAR FRIENDS,

We are pleased to present the Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024/2025, a summary of our continued efforts to support artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs in shaping a more equitable and resilient arts ecosystem.

Since our founding in 2001, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) has worked to advance self-determination, equity, and social impact for artists—particularly those from historically marginalized communities. In a time when systemic inequalities are deeply entrenched, our mission remains as vital as ever: to empower artists and creatives to thrive, not only as individuals but as leaders driving cultural change.

This report highlights some of our key programs like the Grants Program, AmbitioUS, and Research to Impact Lab, which continue to support the needs of creative communities. While we're proud of the progress we've made, there's still a lot of work ahead. The challenges artists face are deeply connected to the social, political, and economic conditions they live and work in. With growing divides in society—especially around race, income, and social issues—our commitment to supporting creative communities is more important than ever.

We know that artists and culture bearers play a crucial role in shaping an inclusive and diverse national identity. We're firm in our belief that for our cultural ecosystems to thrive, we must tackle the bigger structural inequalities at play. Our goal is to provide resources and opportunities that help artists at every stage of their careers, no matter their background or identity—not just to get by, but to shape the future of our shared cultural expression.

None of this would be possible without the support of our partners, funders, and community. Your commitment helps ensure that the voices of those most underrepresented in the arts continue to be heard, valued, and supported.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership. Together, we will continue to build a more just and sustainable future for the arts. We are looking forward to celebrating our 25th anniversary in 2026.

With gratitude and solidarity,



Lauren Bailey
Managing Director

MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. 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 2000, a major study was commissioned by 38 funders nationally, resulting in a 2003 benchmark report produced by the Urban Institute in Washington, DC titled *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists*. The Urban Institute study showed, and CCI's field experience has affirmed, that artists have significant needs in multiple domains, including training and professional development, material supports, access to markets, public validation, information, and participation in larger communities and networks. In 2016, capping a 2-year national research effort in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts, CCI released an updated report on U.S. artists, *Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*, to understand artists' support systems in a technology-enabled era and to recognize how the very definition of "artist" has been expanding. In response to the report's findings, CCI has changed in two significant ways:

1

CCI has shifted from helping artists realize financial sustainability to include helping them realize financial self-determination. By prioritizing self-determination, CCI is attending to the needs of each artist as a whole person and not just a producer of art. This requires CCI making a difference in the conditions of artists' lives, which we are doing in common cause with other sectors that are also addressing shared issues of low wages, lack of worker protections, high debt, and few assets.

2

CCI has expanded our reach to create opportunities for all. The *Creativity Connects* report called out the inequities that are built into conventional systems of arts support and highlighted the opportunity to support the diversity of cultural expressions in the U.S. This lens of opportunities-for-all prioritizes supporting those who have been traditionally marginalized so as to accelerate their impact in the arts and unfetter their contributions in society.

Over the years, CCI has been a key infrastructure organization in a number of ways and, with these shifts, CCI continues to play an important role in society by:

- Validating and serving the needs of artists, culture bearers, arts administrators and workers, artisans, makers, and creative entrepreneurs—in other words, individuals who comprise the larger creative workforce. Individuals are at the heart of the arts, and CCI is a conduit for resources and opportunities to flow directly to them rather than by trickling down through institutions.

MISSION, HISTORY, & NOW

- Acting as a bridge builder bringing together funders, artists, arts workers, researchers, field practitioners, and other innovation partners across sectors on specific problem-solving projects. Many of CCI's regranting, advocacy, funder collaborative, and research projects are incubated efforts to rise to the challenge of particular problems informed by our unique knowledge and set of principles.
- Generating new knowledge: We commission primary research that expands understanding of artists and their needs.
- Serving as a platform for change to improve support systems for those who have not been well served by conventional nonprofit funding and private lending or financing systems—individual artists and arts workers, junior-level professionals, creative entrepreneurs, and community-based cultural anchors.
- Being a leader in the field articulating a vision for the value of supporting individuals in the arts, which is particularly timely in this moment of re-writing social contracts for increasingly contingent American workers.

CCI operates with a vision that by linking the natural creativity and tolerance for risk of artists and creatives of all types to the latest professional practices and tools, new financial resources, and to one another, CCI helps artists and arts workers realize greater financial self-determination, which unfetters their productivity and social impact. In addition, by acting as a cross-sector incubator with an informed point of view, CCI advances efforts to improve conditions for artists and all those who share artists' conditions of low wages, high debt, and too-few assets.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. CONNECTION IS CARE.

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE BEGETS CREATIVE SELF-DETERMINATION.

PARTNERSHIPS LEAD TO SOLUTIONS.

**THIS IS THE
CENTER FOR CULTURAL
INNOVATION.**

OUR WORK

GRANT PROGRAMS

CCI provides direct funding to individual artists and arts workers to enhance their self-determination and unfetter their productivity, free expression, and social impact. CCI recognizes that artists across all disciplines and at every stage of their careers require direct support to develop their creative practices. Therefore, we continuously evolve, research, and refine our grant programs and establish beneficial partnerships, enabling us to swiftly address emerging needs and offer critical support to artists in areas where other funding sources may be limited.

CALI CATALYST

The CALI Catalyst program provides grants of \$7,500 in unrestricted funding to California changemakers who are creating a tangible impact on the arts and culture sector by shifting power and influence to underrepresented voices. In FY25, 12 CALI Catalyst grantees received \$90,000 in grants, and 12 CALI Catalyst Giving Circle grantees received \$12,000 in grants. In addition to receiving grants, the grantees attended grantee gatherings, co-facilitated by Rashmi Guttal.

INVESTING IN ARTISTS: ARTISTIC INNOVATION

The Investing in Artists: Artistic Innovation program provides project support grants of \$9,000 to individual Bay Area performing and media artists at critical moments in their creative process. In FY25, eight grantees received \$72,000 in grants.

INVESTING IN ARTISTS: TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

The Investing in Artists: Tools and Equipment program provides up to \$5,000 in project support grants to individual craft artists to purchase artistic tools, materials, or equipment that support their ability to make object-based work. In FY25, 15 grantees received \$60,000 in grants.

QUICK GRANT

The Quick Grant program provides up to \$600 in professional development grants to California artists, creatives, cultural practitioners, cultural producers, and San Francisco/San José nonprofit arts workers. In honor of Quick Grant's 15th anniversary in 2024, CCI commissioned an outside evaluator to tell the story of how a relatively small investment (a \$600 microgrant) can have an outsized impact on an awardee. In FY25, 418 grantees received \$221,295 in grants.

SAN JOSE CREATIVE ECONOMY FUND

The Creative Economy Fund provides up to \$8,000 in project support grants to arts-based commercial businesses located in the city of San José. In FY25, seven grantees received \$40,000 in grants.

SONOMA ARTISTS FREEDOM FUND (PA'LANTE ARTIST GRANTS)

The Pa'lante Artist Grants from the Sonoma Art Fund, in partnership with Kimzin Creatives and On the Margins, provided \$30,000 in unrestricted funds, peer collaboration, and professional development support to arts and culture workers residing in Sonoma County. In FY25, five grantees received \$30,000 each in grants.

VALLEJO ART FUND

The Vallejo Arts Fund (VAF) provides grants to Vallejo-rooted artists, cultural bearers, collectives, and organizations from diverse backgrounds who support arts and cultural practices in Vallejo, CA. The VAF is guided by the priorities of Vallejoans and is facilitated by Great Leap and Calling Up Justice.

Phase Three of the VAF program focused on capacity-building workshops aimed at helping artists gain practical tools to improve their practices and expand professional opportunities. Over 5 weeks, the workshops covered important topics such as creating professional materials, establishing online presence, and developing strategies for artistic sustainability, providing a structured and progressive learning environment. Additionally, this phase also created inclusive, participatory spaces for artists and community members to engage in dialogue, build capacity, and address common challenges through events and gatherings across Vallejo.

Phase Four of the VAF program will emphasize a participatory process for distributing \$1,000,000 in funding from 2025 to 2027 to support arts and culture in Vallejo and to address structural inequities that have impacted historically excluded artists, culture bearers, arts organizers, and their communities. The Fund will support artistic and cultural work across the performing arts, visual arts, digital and media arts, traditional folk arts, and oral/written storytelling.

ZOO LABS: FUND

Zoo Labs: FUND provides mentorship, educational resources, and up to \$50,000 in unrestricted funding to Bay Area music creators and entrepreneurs. In FY25, 14 grantees received \$225,000 in grants.

OUR PROGRAMS

AmbitioUS

AmbitioUS, a time-limited initiative, was predicated on the likelihood that significant disruptive events would necessitate the deployment of new economic, social, and cultural systems, particularly those focused on collectivization and shared ownership. Over the last 6 years, we have experienced and continue to experience destructive events, such as the COVID-19 global pandemic, environmental disasters, and the dismantling of important institutions. The system never worked well for most people, and the continual pressure test has further exposed cracks and vulnerabilities that are not sustainable. The good news is that for years, and even decades, those individuals most extracted from and harmed by the current system have been reimagining economic systems centered on abundance, collective well-being, and care for one another and the Earth.

AmbitioUS also partnered with Urban Institute on the research report *Community Ownership and Self-Determination* in May 2025.

Here is what the future has in store for us: The organizations in both the Economic Trailblazer and Artist Ownership portfolios are building new worlds where concepts of shared ownership and stewardship deepen people's sense of interconnectedness and expand their voice and influence towards cultural and economic self-determination. These two portfolios demonstrate that effective mutualistic efforts are tailored to communities and their needs and can take many legal and organizational forms. AmbitioUS views this diversity in organizational structure, program design, and meaning-making as a sign that the culturally rooted economic systems movement is strong, growing, and resilient in its diverse approaches. A paradigm shift is underway, from a profit-at-all-costs framework to one that centers holistic and collective well-being. It is right on time and precisely what is needed.

IN FY25, SEVEN ARTIST OWNERSHIP OF ASSET INVESTEES RECEIVED \$555,000 IN GRANTS, AND 12 ECONOMIC TRAILBLAZERS INVESTEES RECEIVED \$795,000 IN GRANTS AND \$31,500 IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.



The Research to Impact (R2i) Lab, which builds on what we are learning through AmbitioUS, is the first permanent CCI program established since Angie Kim's appointment as CEO. Through R2i Lab, we employ research, advocacy, incubation, and investments to advance new systems and structures that work for everyone, regardless of work status or wealth. Our core projects at this moment are the

Cookie Jar Collective, a tech-enabled mutualistic savings platform for artists and freelancers; the Artist Research Project, investigating how much of the U.S. population would engage in creative expression if certain conditions were met; and the Work//Shift Fellowship, currently in the design phase, intended to provide a platform for activists and organizers of gig workers across industries to develop a "world-building" mindset and build political power. In addition, R2i Lab is developing a tool to track the impact of federal, state, and local policies on freelancers and their communities.

OUR PROGRAMS

Other key activities included the Cookie Jar Collective, an early concept for a technology-enabled system for artists and independent workers to pool their savings and collectively decide how and where to spend, loan, or invest. R2i Lab team conducted over 50 meetings to prepare for our co-design session on July 15, 2025.

IN FY25, R2I LAB GRANTED \$50,000 TO METAGOV FOR A PUBLIC AI SEMINAR FOR CREATIVES.

R2i Lab also created Chat CCI, an AI developed on Slack, which was fed CCI publications and writings as part of an internal experiment to learn how AI tools might be useful to CCI staff.

R2i Lab partnered with the Stanford University's Juelsgaard Intellectual Property and Innovation Clinic from January 2024 to May 2025 on the report *Navigating the Copyright Claims Board: A Guide for Creators*.

R2i Lab partnered with Justice Funders and Rachel Fagiano from January 2025 to July 2025 on the report *Reenvisioning Retirement: A Spectrum of Interventions and Community Care* (a Follow-the-Money Toolkit).

BUSINESS OF ART SUNSET

Since our founding in 2001, CCI has been committed to providing entrepreneurial training to individual artists and arts workers. The roots of how we engage in this work can be found in our seminal publication *Business of Art: An Artist's Guide to Profitable Self-Employment*, which was developed and tested in the field in 2006 and published in 2008. This publication sprouted our cornerstone Business of Art Training Series, which has become a steadfast resource for artists and creatives.

OUR WORK IN CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP HAS MANIFESTED AS THREE EDITIONS OF THE *BUSINESS OF ART: AN ARTIST'S GUIDE TO PROFITABLE SELF-EMPLOYMENT BOOK* AND AS IN-PERSON PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, FROM THE CITY OF SAN JOSÉ TO WEST HOLLYWOOD, WITH INTENSIVE BOOT CAMPS AND CASUAL OFFICE HOURS. ALL TOLD, WE'VE BUILT AN ALUMNI POOL OF NEARLY 400 ARTIST ENTREPRENEURS.

As our work evolved and the landscape of entrepreneurial training for artists and creatives grew, so did our Business of Art Training Series program. In fall 2024, we hosted our final Business of Art 10-week training program. Although this was the last CCI-produced Business of Art Training series, the content and heart of this curriculum have continued to appear in other areas of our work.

To commemorate the conclusion of this chapter of our work and to make a lasting investment in creative communities across the United States, we are launching the *Business of Art: A Guide for Facilitators* in FY26. The guide provides an overview of each chapter of the Business of Art workbook and tips for using it in a cohort learning context. We are excited for this curriculum to reach new communities in new ways, as users of this guide take their own unique approach to teaching the skills that can cultivate creative passions as entrepreneurial enterprises.

CCI-PRODUCED EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

WE ARE DEEPLY PROUD

of all the events we produced and hosted in the past year. Each gathering, from panels and webinars to workshops and celebrations, has reflected our commitment to empowering and uplifting artists and cultural innovators. Through these events we've created meaningful connections, shared vital resources, and elevated creative voices across communities. The energy, collaboration, and impact we've witnessed reaffirms our belief in what's possible when artists and supporters come together to imagine, build, and thrive.



Figure 1. Evil Genius Strategy Sessions (attendees not listed out of preference for anonymity); 06 October 2024; Center for Cultural Innovation, Chicago, Illinois; photo by Cate Fox.

EVIL GENIUS STRATEGY SESSIONS (EGSS),

AN EXPERIMENTAL CONVENING EVENT FROM (OCTOBER 6–8, 2024) IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), AmbitioUS, and the National Performance Network (NPN) hosted the Evil Genius Strategy Sessions (EGSS; see figure 1), an experimental convening event held October 6–8, 2024, in Chicago. These sessions brought together economic trailblazers, movement leaders, and funders from around the country to unpack the meaning of trying to create a more just cultural economy, to discuss pressing issues, to become more informed about each other's work, and to determine whether there were actions that we might want to take together. The convening was scheduled to coincide with the annual Grantmakers in the Arts National Conference in Chicago, making it easier for arts funders (and our AmbitioUS funders) to participate.

PAINTING THEIR OWN REALITY: THE POWER OF ARTIST OWNERSHIP, SESSION FOR GRANTMAKERS IN THE ARTS 2024 (OCTOBER 8, 2024) IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Artists get it done! Artists, culture bearers, and creatives are essential to systems change work, from influencing hearts and minds, to helping people connect with each other, to reimagining economic structures so that they work for all people. And yet, many artists live a tenuous existence, often living paycheck to paycheck. Could investing in artist ownership (that is, their intellectual property, physical assets, economic systems) be a game-changer in advancing artistic and financial flourishing? We explored this question at Painting Their Own Reality: The Power of Artist Ownership (see figure 2). Nathaniel Green from HAZ Cooperative; Erin Harkey, Former Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, City of Chicago; Tiffany Mikkell, Fifteen Cents Ventures; and Patton Hindle of Artadia shared their experiences with ownership, debated what role ownership plays in artist self-determination, and discussed what philanthropy's role is in advancing ownership strategies



Figure 2. Painting Their Own Reality: The Power of Artist Ownership; 08 October 2024; Haz Cooperative Studios, Chicago, Illinois; photo by Center for Cultural Innovation.

CCI-PRODUCED EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



Figure 3. Vallejo Vibe 707 Art Week produced by the Vallejo Arts Fund; 12 October 2024; Enthaloop; photo by Remy Smith Batha.

VALLEJO ARTS FUND: VALLEJO VIBEZ: 707 ARTS WEEK (OCTOBER 10–12, 2024) IN VALLEJO, CA.

A vibrant 3-day celebration of Vallejo's arts community, 707 Arts Week (see figure 3) showcased the talents of Vallejo artists across multiple venues, including film screenings, art installations, live performances, and interactive workshops.

LA ARTS COMMUNITY FIRE RELIEF FUND

THE PALISADES AND EATON FIRES OF JANUARY 2025

were a federally declared disaster that burned nearly 37,500 acres, destroyed more than 16,000 structures, and displaced over 186,000 people. In response, a coalition of arts organizations and philanthropies led by the J. Paul Getty Trust established the LA Arts Community Fire Relief Fund and tapped CCI to administer it. The Fund offered rapid, non-taxable financial support of up to \$10,000 to artists and arts workers whose homes or studios were affected by the fires.

Guided by a commitment to act quickly, inclusively, and with utmost care, CCI designed and implemented the Fund to meet urgent needs while also working with intention to facilitate community-building and highlight the interconnectedness of LA County's arts and culture sector. By May 2025, a total of \$16.4 million in relief had been distributed to 1,689 artists and arts workers affected by the fire.

In line with the Fund's spirit of community and care, CCI hosted a closing "signing party" at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, where recipients gathered to pick up checks, enjoy wellness and art-making activities, and express their gratitude in person.



Figure 4. CCI Staff at LA Arts Community Fire Relief Fund Technical Support and Community Gathering (from left to right: Lorena Moreno, Nadia Chrisanto, Lauren Bailey, Angie Kim, Stephanie Barajas, Katherine Bray-Simons, Brian Dang); 13 March 2025; The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles.



Figure 5. LA Arts Community Fire Relief Fund Technical Support and Community Gathering produced by CCI; 13 March 2025; The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles; photo by Katherine Bray-Simons.

FY25 HIGHLIGHTS

511

grantees across CCI's grant programs received **\$2,181,795** in grants

1,689

artists and arts workers received **\$16,400,000** from the Los Angeles Arts Community Fire Relief Fund

189

Business of Art: An Artist's Guide to Profitable Self-Employment publications were sold

1,392

individuals were served through **31** CCI-produced activities/workshops

4

research reports/publications were produced by CCI

“The Quick Grant was critical in making this opportunity possible. The streamlined process enabled me to move quickly when the invitation arose, and the support directly translated into meaningful business development, new contracts, and expanded global networks. I am grateful for CCI's investment in artists like myself who work across disciplines and borders. No suggestions at this time—this program is already having a powerful impact on my practice and community.

– Chelsea Tikotsky, 2024 Quick Grant Recipient

I love that CCI consistently creates space to ask big questions and explore new possibilities in the company of creative thinkers and makers. We don't often get to exist within the space of dreaming up new ideas within a space that welcomes interrogation and the possibility of the final answer being, ‘this might not actually be the right idea or approach right now, or ever.’ I think new solutions come from spaces where you can dream big, even if it ends up being an impossible outcome or an eventual ‘no’.

– Tempestt Hazel, Cookie Jar Collective Convening Participant

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

The Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) continued its pattern of prudent management in FY25, with an income of \$24,901,349 against program and operating expenses totaling \$23,461,225. CCI's practice of recognizing multi-year restrictions and commitments within the same budget year in which they are received can create the appearance of a financial imbalance, but one that is in strict adherence to income restrictions for future spending.

For further information on CCI's audited FY25 financial statements, please contact the CCI Administrative Office: 244 S. San Pedro Street, Suite 401, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

CCI salutes the following foundations and government agencies for their generous programmatic and operational support during FY25:

ANONYMOUS	MELLON FOUNDATION
BARR FOUNDATION	NATHAN CUMMINGS FOUNDATION
CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS	SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION (DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS)
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION	SAN FRANCISCO GRANTS FOR THE ARTS
FUNDING GOOD CHAOS	SAN FRANCISCO ARTS COMMISSION
KENNETH RAININ FOUNDATION	SURDNA FOUNDATION
THE KRESGE FOUNDATION	WALTER AND ELISE HAAS FUND
LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE	WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION
MAXWELL / HANRAHAN FOUNDATION	

CCI is grateful to the following individuals for their generous commitment to CCI's mission and programming in FY25:

ANONYMOUS	HENRY LIU DESIGN, LLC	LOIS SPADA
ABDIEL LOPEZ	HONEY G. JASMINE LLC	LORNA LATHRAM
ANGIE KIM	IN HONOR OF GARY PALMER	LOUISE JOANES-ALLEN
BRIAN QUINN AND	JEFFREY DEYOUNG	NEGAR PIROOZ
NINA SAMARGULIANI	JEROME SMALL	PACIFIC CHORALE
CHANTHAPHONE SIMMALA	JESSE POLLAK	PRISCILLA CHAVEZ
DAMON TAYLOR DRUMMER	JESSICA RUBY DESIGNS	REGEN PROJECTS
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GIANT ROCK STUDIOS	LAVASTIAN V. GLENN	WILLIAM LEWIS
HELEN GOLDSMITH & PAUL HELLER	LISA HOFFMAN	

CCI appreciates the following organizations and individuals for their generous support of the LA Arts Community Fire Relief Fund in FY25:

ANONYMOUS	ARTS AND CULTURAL RACIAL JUSTICE	BRUSHFIRE RECORDS
ANONYMOUS FUND AT THE	FUND AT THE EAST BAY COMMUNITY	CATHY KIMBALL
GREATER MILWAUKEE	FOUNDATION	DEBORAH RICKS
FOUNDATION	BELGRAY ECKLER GIVING ACCOUNT	EDRINGTON AMERICA (MATCHING GIFT FOR MADRONE ART BAR, SF)
THE AHMANSON FOUNDATION	BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES	ELSIE SIMS
ALEX HANSEN AND RENU BHAT-HANSEN	'BODYSUIT' BY SHARON EYAL AND	FERRELL/PAULIN FAMILY FOUNDATION
AMY HANNIS-KING	GEORGE ROUY, COMMISSIONED BY	FLORA FAMILY FOUNDATION
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ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

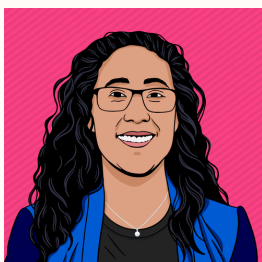
FRANK AND SUSAN FIELD CHARITABLE
GIVING FUND
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JESSICA AND SAMUEL FISHER
JOCELYN JENKS (IN MEMORY OF PETER
SIMON)
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KATE CAPSHAW AND STEVEN
SPIELBERG/THE HEARTHLAND
FOUNDATION
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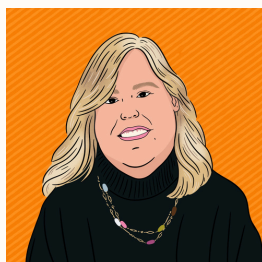
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THE TALENTED ARTISTS IN ALTA ARTS,
WHO LOST THEIR HOMES!)
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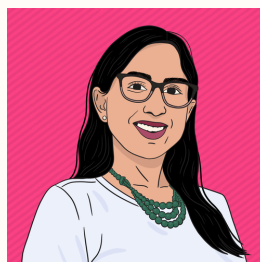
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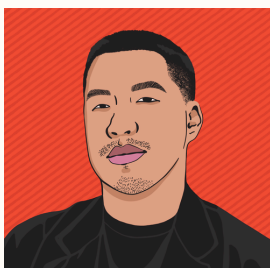
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CCI IN THE WORLD WITH PURPOSE & GRATITUDE

THIS YEAR, WE ARE PROUD

to represent CCI at a wide range of events, convenings, and conferences. Engaging with artists, funders, and creative leaders across the field allowed us to exchange ideas, share our work, and stay connected to the evolving conversations shaping the creative economy. These experiences not only expanded our reach but also reaffirmed the importance of collaboration and community in advancing meaningful support for artists and cultural workers.



Figure 6. CCI Staff at PEAK Conference Reception in Mardi Gras World (from left to right: Nadia Chrisanto and Lorena Moreno); 24 March 2025; Mardi Gras World, New Orleans.

PEAK2025

(MARCH 24–26, 2025) IN NEW ORLEANS, LA

Operations Manager Nadia Chrisanto and former Systems and Grants Manager Lorena Moreno traveled to New Orleans, LA, to attend the PEAK2025 Grantmaking Conference (see figure 6). There's something truly special about being surrounded by a community of dedicated grantmakers in a city as resilient as NOLA. We deep-dived into sessions exploring international grantmaking practices, utilizing AI in our day-to-day operations, and data-driven storytelling. We left with valuable insights and renewed inspiration to advance more effective and inclusive grantmaking and operations practices.

PERMISSIONLESS

(JUNE 24–26, 2025) IN BROOKLYN, NY

In June 2025, AmbitioUS Director Cate Fox, R2i Lab Director Jessica Mele, Grants Director Stephanie Imah, and AmbitioUS Program Officers Chris Audain and Leeann Wallett arrived in New York to attend Blockworks' Permissionless IV conference (see figure 7). For all except Cate, it was their first time attending the conference. The team's goal was to expand their knowledge of the Web3 space and stay up to date on the evolution and changes in the blockchain and cryptocurrency sectors.



Figure 7. 2025 Permissionless IV conference (from left to right: Leeann Wallett, Chris Audain, Cate Fox, Stephanie Imah, Jess Mele); 24 June 2025; Brooklyn, New York; photo by Center for Cultural Innovation.

CCI IN THE WORLD WITH PURPOSE & GRATITUDE



Figure 8. CCI Staff at CA Arts and Culture Summit Reception in the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium and SAFE Credit Union Convention Center (from left to right: Lorena Moreno and Stephanie Barajas); 22 April 2025; Sacramento, CA.

CA ARTS AND CULTURE SUMMIT (APRIL 22, 2025) IN SACRAMENTO, CA

Program and Grants Management Specialist Stephanie Barajas and former Systems and Grants Manager Lorena Moreno attended the 3rd Annual CA Arts and Culture Summit in Sacramento, CA (see figure 8). Centered on the theme of arts and culture as pathways to health, healing, and hope, the summit brought together artists, cultural workers, funders, and policymakers from across the state. From engaging sessions on community wellness and innovative arts policies to grounding movement experiences led by CONTRA-TIEMPO, the day offered space for reflection, learning, and reconnection. Both Lorena and Stephanie, in particular, valued the opportunity to connect with peers and grantees in person—something rare and deeply meaningful in remote work. They left inspired by the power of California's arts community and look forward to future gatherings that continue to center creativity, imagination, and belonging.

DWEB CAMP

(AUGUST 7–11, 2024) IN CAMP NAVARRO, CA

In August 2024, R2i Lab's Program Officer Jennelyn Tumalad Bailon and Enterprise Development Consultant Val Elefante traveled to DWeb Camp to facilitate a co-design for our gig worker savings club incubation project, currently known as "Cookie Jar Collective" (see figure 9). DWeb Camp is a 5-day retreat for tech builders and dreamers who want to create a decentralized web that is more open, private, secure, and fun. We welcomed 27 participants interested in helping us build a product that could facilitate shared accountability, community, and collective power centered on growing savings for gig workers.



Figure 9. Jennelyn Tumalad Bailon and Val Elefante presenting at the Redwood Grove at the 2024 DWeb Camp in Navarro, California; photo by Jessica Mele.



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