

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund

A Partnership of City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Division,
Akonadi Foundation, and East Bay Community Foundation



Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics, but a process that can and must transform us.

— Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

Sparking Radical Visions For A Racially Just Oakland

Moments of profound crisis can turn the world we think we know upside-down, challenge our deepest beliefs, and make us question what we thought was tolerable. Such moments can also spark new visions of how our lives, our city, our country could, and should, be better.

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund (JCCF) is a funding and support program that recognizes that this moment is an ideal one for asking:

How might we imagine a truly racially just and equitable Oakland where everyone belongs?

To generate an array of possible answers to that provocative question, we turn to **community-rooted BIPOC** (Black/Indigenous/People of Color) visionaries, artist activists, and resilient culture keepers to help us imagine new landscapes and narratives, liberate deferred potential, recover old wisdoms, and unleash radical hope.

In this new funding round, *Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund* will provide two-year grants - ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year - and networking support to Oakland-based BIPOC artists/cultural practitioners who work deeply in and with their communities to co-create aspirations to build a racially just city.

The Fund is a unique public-private partnership inspired by the values lifted up in the City of Oakland's cultural plan, [Belonging in Oakland](#). The partnership brings together the cultural equity vision of Oakland's

Cultural Affairs Division, the racial justice mission of the Akonadi Foundation, and the commitment to power building of East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF).

**See Glossary of Key Terms for definitions of bolded terms.*

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Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund is made possible with major funding from [the Surdna Foundation's Thriving Cultures program](#) and additional funding from the Akonadi Foundation and East Bay Community Foundation. [Radical Imagination for Racial Justice](#) is Surdna's national regranting initiative to enable artists of color in partnership with communities to develop imaginings and actions that foster **racial justice** for those most impacted by **systemic racism**.

About the Fund

The extraordinary power of art and culture shine a fresh light on injustice, build solidarity, and help us imagine—and work toward—a better future for whole communities. On the other side of justice is belonging.

– Lateefah Simon, President, Akonadi Foundation

The Just City Cultural Fund will support Oakland-based, civically-engaged, **BIPOC** (Black/Indigenous/People of Color) artists/**cultural practitioners** to work with the communities they are rooted in to co-create a project driven by their vision of a just society that centers the perspectives of those who have borne the brunt of **systemic racism** and social and economic inequality.

⇒ **We want to be respectful of your time, so we encourage you to read the guidelines carefully to make sure your project aligns with the Fund's intent. In the spirit of transparency, we seek to be clear about what our grantmaking will and will not support.**

What We Will Fund

The Fund will focus on BIPOC artists/cultural practitioners who have a demonstrated commitment to community-centered social justice practices with an orientation toward systemic change.

Moving beyond critiques of injustice, the Fund seeks projects with the multiple purposes of:

- Challenging the policies and practices of oppressive racialized systems,
- Lifting up value systems and ways of being that cultivate belonging;

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- Supporting self-determined action by those most impacted by systemic racism; *and*
- Generating new tools/policy arguments/prototypes for a just and equitable city.

Examples of Potential Projects

Below are some examples of the kinds of projects that could be supported by the Fund. These examples are meant to spark ideas, not to limit them.

- Creating spaces for equitable civic dialogue and practices relating to decolonization and rematriation informed by Indigenous and place-based wisdom
- Promoting community well-being and healing from civic traumas through new civic practices for truth-telling and restorative justice
- Designing a community-centered process that helps Oaklanders envision what the hardscape and softscape of a culturally-equitable neighborhood could include
- Employing under-recognized forms of cultural knowledge and/or new value narratives to build pathways out of white supremacist mindsets
- Creating new civic-facing cultural practices to address racialized violence, houselessness, xenophobia, faith-based prejudice, etc.
- Collaborations between arts practitioners and community organizers that are grounded in cultural practices that propel coalition- and power-building for racial justice.

What We Will Not Fund

The Fund values and recognizes the roles and needs of diverse forms of artistic and cultural work to a healthy and just community. However, this program, because of legal requirements and limited resources, will not fund:

- Activities to influence the outcome of elections for candidates for public office
- Capital campaigns for building maintenance/construction/purchase or endowments
- Projects with the sole purpose of putting artistic works before an audience
- Training activities with the sole purpose of helping individuals develop artistic skills

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Grant Amounts

Approximately seven or eight two-year grants ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year will be awarded. A special stipend equalling 12% of the grant amount (ranging from \$3,600 and \$6,000 per year) will be added to each award for life sustaining expenses of the artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s)—such as healthcare, childcare, student or other debt, restorative time or activities, or other such expenses—as a modest recognition of the hidden costs of maintaining cultural practices in Oakland's communities of color.

Funding Match Requirement

There is no funding match requirement for this grant. A project doesn't need to be large in scale or budget to be considered competitive. However, if the project budget significantly exceeds the requested grant amount, having additional secured or pending resources will strengthen the feasibility of the project.

Rootedness in Oakland Communities

The word "radical" comes from the Latin word for root. Rootedness is an important concept for The Fund. We are looking for artists/cultural practitioners who are deeply rooted in their Oakland communities and have the commitment and capacity for working with community members to address an opportunity or challenge. A community may be geographically or ethnically/culturally defined. It may also be a community of identity based on, for example, age, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status.

Sharing the Vision

The Fund requires projects to share their learnings/findings/results through engaging a broader public in some fashion. For example, this could be a process-based activity, work-in-progress showings, a culminating event, or final product (in-person, virtual, documented, as appropriate). Please notify the Fund of any public activity that is a part of your project so a Fund representative may attend.

However, the Fund recognizes and honors the importance of preserving ritual/ceremonial spaces intended for limited participation as part of a project's process or activities.

Reporting Requirements

After the first year of the grant period, the main reporting requirement will be to have a conversation with a Fund representative about what has taken place, what you are learning, and what you have planned. Final written/recorded reporting requirements will be negotiated between grant recipients and the Fund, as appropriate to the project. A simple accounting of how the grant funds and special stipends were spent will be requested.

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Peer Networking & Learning

Grant recipients will be convened at the beginning of the project to learn about each other's projects and to decide if they would like to participate in peer sharing and learning activities together. There may also be opportunities to be in dialogue with counterparts nationally. (Frequency and content of the activities will be determined by the cohort of grant recipients with support from the Fund.)

How to Apply

The democratic charge to support an ethically just, aesthetically diverse, dynamic, and rich city asks that we serve the civic narrative of belonging in all its beauty, temperaments, and complexities.

– Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager, City of Oakland

Who Can Apply

Applicants must be:

- an individual or group of BIPOC artists/cultural practitioners who resides and is rooted in Oakland with demonstrated experience in producing and/or co-designing community-centered/public-facing projects

OR

- an Oakland-based cultural organization led by BIPOC artists/cultural practitioners with demonstrated experience in producing and/or co-designing community-centered/public-facing projects

AND must have

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit status

OR

- a 501(c)(3) **fiscal sponsor**.

Groups/collectives of artists/cultural practitioners must be led by people of color, but can include others. They must also be led by Oaklanders, but can include non-Oakland-based members.

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Fiscal Sponsors

A fiscal sponsor is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that is willing and able to assume the legal responsibility to receive and administer grant funds in compliance with requirements.

The Fund seeks to support Oakland's historically marginalized communities of color and the artists/cultural practitioners within them. While the Fund can only grant to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, we are aware that nonprofit infrastructure is challenged in communities of color in Oakland. For that reason, **fiscal sponsors are not required to be located in Oakland nor BIPOC-led.**

If awarded a grant, the fiscal sponsor of a project must be prepared to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the mutual obligations of the fiscal sponsor and the person or entity it is sponsoring.

Please click [here](#) for more information about responsibilities of fiscal sponsors and/or how to create an MOU for a sponsored project, or contact Mush Lee at 510-214-2926 or justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.

Application Process

There is a two-step application process.

The first step is to complete a brief online Letter of Inquiry (LOI) application. This includes:

- basic information about your project
- some demographic information
- a brief (300 word) description of the project
- a work sample

LOIs will be reviewed and ranked by peer readers and the Fund's leadership team. Up to 20 LOI applications will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal. The rest will receive notification that their application has been declined. For those declined, the process will end there.

The second step will be for those who have been invited to submit a full proposal.

Full proposals will need to include more project details, such as a project budget and short artist/cultural practitioner bios. Proposals will be due within three weeks after receiving the invitation and will be reviewed and ranked by peer panelists. Those who submit a full proposal will receive an honorarium of \$300 for the effort required to submit a full proposal.

Up to eight two-year awards will be announced in September.

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Please read the guidelines and application text carefully before starting an online LOI application. You may print out the guidelines and the LOI application text and technical tips by clicking on the PDF links found at the bottom of this page. The [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) can help guide you in your submission and will be updated during the application process. Please check back periodically for new information.

Click [here](#) to access the online portal to create and submit your LOI.

The LOI application deadline is **Monday, June 14, 2021, at 6:00 pm.**

Only applications submitted through the East Bay Community Foundation's online portal will be eligible for consideration. Late applications will not be accepted. Incomplete applications may be deemed ineligible.

Please review the **program timeline** for important dates.

Last year, the Fund received over 100 applications for very few grants. The grantmaking process is very competitive and many worthy projects were not able to be funded.

Review Process & Timeline

Throughout history, the arts have played a unique role in inspiring and unifying communities. As EBCF embarks on our journey to advance an inclusive, fair, and just East Bay, we continue to uplift the power of art and culture to drive social change and build stronger communities and neighborhoods.

—James W. Head, President & CEO, East Bay Community Foundation

Review Process

There is a two-step application process.

Letter of Inquiry: Eligible applicants are asked to submit a brief (up to 300 words) Letter of Inquiry (LOI) along with a sample of artistic work and some demographic data. Eligible and complete LOIs will be reviewed and ranked by peer readers and the Fund's leadership team.

Full Proposal: Up to 20 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal in mid-July. This proposal will be due within three weeks of the invitation. Applicants will receive an honorarium of \$300 to offset the cost of submitting the full proposal. A peer review panel will meet to discuss the applications and recommend up to

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eight projects for two-year funding. The East Bay Community Foundation board will have final approval of the slate of recommended grants.

The Fund's peer readers and panelists will be cultural leaders and activists who understand the historical grounding and cultures of a wide range of BIPOC communities in Oakland. In assembling the readers and panelists, the Fund has a goal of creating a thoughtful mix of racial, ethnic, age, and gender considerations that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ people of color.

Review Criteria

Letters of Inquiry will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- ✓ *Quality of radical imagination and action for a just Oakland*
 - The strength of the vision of social transformation for Oakland and the actions prompted by it, and the clarity and resonance of the areas of systemic racism to be addressed
- ✓ *Depth of cultural/aesthetic practices*
 - The depth and resonance of the cultural/aesthetic practices, values, and inquiry involved with the project
- ✓ *Quality of relationship and engagement between the artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s) and the community(ies) centered in the project*
 - The depth of the engagement and relationship of the artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s) and the community(ies) centered in the project and the sense of collective voice

In addition to these criteria, factors such as geographic, cultural, and issue diversity may also be considered in selecting those invited to submit a full proposal.

Application Assistance

We will host two how-to-apply webinars during which attendees will be able to ask questions.

1. **Wednesday, May 12, 2021 10:00am-11:30am** [Register to attend the webinar.](#)

This webinar will be archived on the program website for viewing should you be unable to attend.

2. **Monday, May 24, 2021, 5:30pm - 7:00pm** [Register to attend the webinar.](#)

Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend or view a webinar before applying to the program. Please also see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for further guidance.

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Questions about applying to the Fund will be answered by phone or email up to the deadline, as possible.

We encourage you to begin your LOI application *at least* a week before the submission deadline.

For assistance contact Michelle Mush Lee at justcityfund@eastbaycf.org. You can also schedule 20-minute phone appointments with Mush Monday through Wednesday between 10am and 5pm here: <https://bookwholestory.as.me/jccf>.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

Application Portal Opens	Tuesday, May 4, 2021
Application Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wednesday, May 12, 2021, 10:00am – 11:30am• Monday, May 24, 2021, 5:30pm – 7:00pm <p>Recording of the webinar will be posted on the grant website for those unable to attend. Please check the website.</p>
Letter of Inquiry Application Deadline Late applications will be not be accepted	Monday, June 14, 2021, 6:00 pm Applications must be submitted online through EBCF's application portal
Invitation to Submit a Full Proposal	Mid-July 2021 <i>If you receive an invitation to submit a full proposal, you will have 48 hours to accept or decline the invitation.</i>
Full Proposal Deadline	Wednesday, August 11, 2021
Award Notification	Mid-September 2021
Grant Period Starts	September 2021

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Peer Learning Activities	Activities will take place periodically throughout the grant period as determined by the grant recipient cohort in collaboration with the Fund.
Interim Check-In	Fall 2022 The Fund will have a verbal or in-person check-in with grant recipients to discuss progress, learning, adaptations/course corrections.
Sharing the Vision activity	By the end of the grant period (September 2023) Sharing the project vision with a broader community is a program requirement. This could be process-based activities, work-in-progress showings, or culminating events (in-person/virtual/ documented, as appropriate) or cultural products.
Grant Period Ends	September 2023

Glossary of Key Terms

Belonging: Within the civic realm, *belonging* is tied to people's ability to lead meaningful lives, to be connected to the place they live in and the people they live among, and to feel a part of something larger than themselves. We believe to cultivate *belonging*, there must be more equitable racial, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions for self-expression, mutual respect, empathy, and acceptance. These conditions cannot be fulfilled without an understanding of the breadth of cultural diversity in Oakland and how different forms of expression have different needs. (Definition from the City of Oakland's [cultural plan](#))

BIPOC: BIPOC is an abbreviation for Black/Indigenous/People of Color, and highlights the legacies of enslavement and colonization in the U.S. People of Color refers to people who do not identify as white and are not exclusively of European heritage.

Community-Rooted: It is important to the Fund that the artists/cultural practitioners involved with projects are deeply a part of the communities with whom they will work - either through identity, years of

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while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy—the preferential treatment, privilege, and power for white people at the expense of Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, SWANA (Southwest Asian, North African) and other racially oppressed people. (Definition adopted from [Structural Racism](#) by Keith Lawrence and Terry Keleher)

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