

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Grant Program

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM?

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund (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](#) and a vision to create a more just city. In the 2026 funding round, the Fund is putting out a call for collaborations between Oakland-based cultural and social justice organizations serving BIPOC communities and working with civically-engaged artists or cultural practitioners to co-create, develop, or test aspirational policy ideas for building a racially just city.

WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS WILL THE GRANT SUPPORT?

The Fund is putting out a call for **collaborations** between cultural and social justice organizations that serve BIPOC communities looking to shape racial and social justice-oriented policies and practices to create a more just Oakland. Eligible collaborations may not yet have a clear project in mind, but should have an idea of **what sector or issue area will be addressed and what vision grantseekers have for change, what communities will be centered in the work, what track record grantseekers have of working in communities for social change, and what will be strengthened by collaborating.**

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY "SECTOR OR ISSUE AREA"?

Sectors or issue areas of where social change is needed include community development, economic justice, education equity, environmental justice, sustainability, climate change, food justice, health & well-being, housing rights, immigrant & refugee rights, land use & spatial justice, participation in the civic realm, public safety, and worker rights. You are free to offer additional issues or ways of framing where you want to make change to create a more just Oakland.

WHAT IS THE AWARD AMOUNT?

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Three-year grants of **\$100,000 per year** will be awarded to **no more than three collaborative partnerships**. In addition, each partnership will also receive: **an annual stipend of \$12,000** (12% of the grant amount) **for life sustaining expenses of the participating artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s)**—for example, to cover healthcare, childcare, student debt, restorative time or activities, or other such expenses) and **an annual stipend of up to \$25,000 will be available for the purpose of documenting** the learning and outcomes resulting from the collaboration, the amount to be negotiated with each collaboration based on the scope of their plans and their capacity/desire to carry them out.

WHEN WILL ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRANT AWARDS BE MADE?

Up to 10 Letters of Interest (LOI) applications will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal by early October. Three collaborative awards will be announced in late October.

To be awarded a grant, the lead applicant of the collaboration must be prepared to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the respective roles, responsibilities, and general budget allocations of the collaborative partners, and the fiscal sponsor if one is being engaged; a general documentation plan and budget, if documentation funds are being requested (up to \$25,000 is available); and have a mutually agreed upon plan with the Fund on reporting requirements.

IF MY COLLABORATION RECEIVES A GRANT, WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

The form of reporting will be based on the nature of each collaboration and what the Fund needs to track for the program as a whole. Annual reporting requirements will be negotiated between awardees and the Fund before awards are made to ensure mutual benefit and possibilities for sharing learning with other awardees and the field. Some demographic data collection and reporting will be required on an annual basis as well as information about how grant funds and special stipends were allocated that the Fund needs to report back to the Surdna Foundation. Annual grant renewals will be contingent on demonstrated progress on goals and adherence to funding requirements.

CAN AN ARTIST OR CULTURAL PRACTITIONER BE INCLUDED IN MORE THAN ONE COLLABORATION?

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Yes, an artist, cultural practitioner, or artistic company may be named in more than one collaboration. However, we encourage you to move forward with the collaboration you believe is the strongest and most aligned with the program goals.

ARE MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRED?

No, matching funds are not required. A collaboration doesn't need to be large in scale to be considered most competitive. However, if a draft budget significantly exceeds the grant amount offered by the Fund, having additional secured or pending resources will strengthen the feasibility of the collaboration. A detailed budget will not be required for the Letter of Interest (LOI) application.

Eligibility & Fiscal Sponsors

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Eligible collaborations must include an Oakland-based cultural organization that serves BIPOC communities and works with civically-oriented artists or cultural practitioners and an Oakland-based social change organization. Both organizations must have either 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) or have a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor in good standing with the IRS. One organization needs to be designated as the lead applicant for the collaboration. This organization will serve as the main contact for the collaboration and the Fund. The lead applicant organization must have an annual operating budget of at least \$500,000, even if fiscally sponsored.

DOES MY FISCAL SPONSOR NEED TO BE IN OAKLAND?

No. The Fund seeks to support Oakland's historically marginalized communities of color and the artists or cultural practitioners within them. While the Fund can only grant to 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) nonprofit organizations, we are aware that nonprofit infrastructure is challenged in communities of color in Oakland. For that reason, fiscal sponsoring organizations **do not** need to be located in Oakland.

WHAT IS A FISCAL SPONSOR?

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. If you or

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your organization have never had a fiscal sponsor, you can find resources about fiscal sponsorship, including a list of arts-centered fiscal sponsors, [here](#).

Use of Grant Funds

WHAT ARE ALLOWABLE USES OF THE GRANT FUNDS?

The grant award is for the work of the collaboration over a three-year period. Generally, the funds may be used to advance the proposed vision of the collaboration. However, this program, because of legal requirements and limited resources, will not fund collaborations meant to:

- Influence the outcome of elections for candidates for public office
- Use the funds for anything that qualifies as a reportable campaign contribution
- Support capital campaigns for building maintenance/construction/purchase or endowments
- Create artistic works with the principal purpose of putting them before an audience
- Support training activities with the sole purpose of helping individuals develop artistic skills

If there are specific questions in this regard, please contact JCCF Fund Manager Anyka Howard at justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.

HOW CAN THE “LIFE SUSTAINING STIPEND” BE USED?

An annual stipend equal to 12% of the grant amount will be added to each award. This stipend is meant to be used by the artist(s) or cultural practitioner(s) engaged by the collaboration for life sustaining expenses such as healthcare, childcare, student debt, restorative time or activities, or other such expenses. This stipend serves as a modest recognition of the hidden costs of maintaining cultural practices in Oakland's communities of color.

Application Process & Letter of Interest (LOI)

WHAT IS THE ELIGIBILITY QUIZ?

In order to submit an application, you will be asked a series of questions that ensures you are eligible to apply to the grant program. (Please see “Who is eligible to apply” above.)

The eligibility quiz saves prospective applicants from going through the process of submitting an application if they are not eligible to receive the grant. Eligible applicants will be given access to submit Letters of Interest and work samples after meeting basic eligibility requirements.

THE GUIDELINES MENTION A TWO-STEP APPLICATION PROCESS. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The first step is to complete an online Letter of Interest (LOI) application.

This includes:

- some information about the purpose and nature of your collaboration
- some summary financial information
- a work sample

Up to 10 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 grantmaking process is very competitive and many worthy collaborations will not be able to be funded. To save your time and effort, please do not apply unless there is a good fit with the program guidelines.

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

Full proposals will need to include more information about your collaboration, your vision and the role arts & culture play in realizing it, communities served, and a proposed budget. Proposals will be due within three weeks after receiving the invitation and will be reviewed by peer panelists. Those who submit a full proposal will receive an honorarium of \$300 for the effort required to submit a full proposal.

The three collaborations to receive three-year grant awards will be announced in late October.

WHAT WILL HELP ME WRITE A COMPETITIVE LETTER OF INTEREST (LOI)?

We encourage applicants to directly address the questions asked in the application and to try to convey the vision of your collaboration as faithfully as possible. Your LOI will be ranked using the Review Criteria listed in the guidelines. It will be helpful to have the Review Criteria in front of you as you write your LOI.

The Review Criteria

Potential impact of the proposed policy change 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 policy ideas for the issue areas to be addressed
- The strength of the capacity or track record of the partners to make positive social change

Depth of understanding of the importance of culture/aesthetics to equity and social change

- The strength of the proposed partnerships with artists or cultural practitioners
- The relevance and resonance of the cultural or aesthetic practices, values, and vision proposed and their relation to the participating communities

Quality of relationship and engagement between the collaborative partners and the community(ies) centered in the collaboration

- The depth of the engagement and relationship of the collaborative partners and the community(ies) centered in the work

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.

DO I HAVE TO SUBMIT A WORK SAMPLE?

Yes, there is a requirement to submit one work sample. It must be a relevant example of social change work your organization or your partner has engaged in to make a more just Oakland. Work samples can take the form of a written report, policy paper, powerpoint slides, a film, video, or audio sample, or other form of documentation.

Application Support & Technical Assistance

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HOW DO I USE THE ONLINE APPLICATION PORTAL?

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund uses SurveyMonkey Apply (SMA) as its online application portal.

We've put together a list of [tips on how to navigate SurveyMonkey Apply](#).

CAN I CONTACT SOMEONE IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED TECHNICAL SUPPORT WITH MY APPLICATION?

Yes. We are hosting an [application webinar](#) on **Wednesday, Aug. 12**, and there will be time for questions about the program and/or application process.

For other questions, you can email Anyka Howard, Program Manager, at justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.

If you are having technical difficulties with the online application, please submit a SMA Help Desk ticket, they typically reply within an hour: <https://eastbaycf.smapply.io/helpdesk/>