

“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 Hope For A Racially Just Oakland

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

What policies and practices are needed to make this a reality?

For answers to these thought-provoking questions, we turn to community-rooted visionaries, artists, activists, cultural workers and resilient culture keepers to help us create barrier-breaking narrative frames, policy ideas, and practices; to recover old wisdoms to illuminate future paths; and to liberate our imaginations and realize untapped potential.

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. 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).

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 in partnership with communities to reimagine policies and practices that will **advance justice for those most impacted by [systemic racism](#)**.

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

“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

About the Fund

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund (the Fund) is committed to providing three-year grants to Oakland-based, collaborations between cultural and social change organizations. Eligible organizations must either have nonprofit status or be fiscally sponsored by a nonprofit. They should also have a proven record of shaping racial and social justice-oriented policies or practices in sectors such as community development, economic justice, educational equity, environmental justice, sustainability, climate change, food justice, health & well-being, and housing rights, immigrant & refugee rights, land use & spatial justice, participation in the civic realm, public safety, and workers' rights. The Fund seeks such organizations to form or continue collaborations with civically-engaged, Oakland artists/[cultural practitioners](#) who are deeply rooted in communities that have borne the brunt of [systemic racism](#) and social and economic inequality.

In the 2026-2029 funding round, the Fund will support collaborations working together with communities to radically imagine how to transform power relations through a culturally-informed policy lens. Collaborations may seek to redefine the framing of a problem or solution, engage in cross-sector partnerships, reclaim traditional ways, invigorate community assets, or explore other promising approaches to achieving racial justice.

The Fund will award no more than **three [community-centered](#) collaborations** with **grants of \$100,000 per year for three years**, in addition to a **\$12,000 stipend each year toward life sustaining expenses of the artists/[cultural practitioners](#)** (for example, to pay down student debt, healthcare or childcare expenses, etc.) and **a stipend of up to \$25,000 for project-related research/documentation**. The program also includes **networking and peer learning support** for awardees.

Being based and rooted in Oakland is an important concept for the Fund. We are looking for collaborations that are deeply rooted in Oakland communities and have the commitment and capacity to work with community members to address an opportunity or challenge. A community may be geographically, ethnically, or culturally defined. It may also be a community of identity based on, for example, age, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status.

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Funded collaborations are expected to produce a policy change-oriented prototype or example that can be shared as a demonstration project to inspire others locally, regionally, or nationally. We want to be respectful of applicant's time, so we encourage you to **read the guidelines below carefully** to make sure your policy change-oriented collaboration aligns with the Fund's intent and expectations.

What We Will Fund

Beyond critiques of injustice, the Fund seeks visionary collaborations with the purposes of:

- Generating radical imaginings that counter oppressive racialized policies with transformative approaches and/or practices for building a more just and equitable city;
- Supporting self-determined and deeply culturally informed action by those most impacted by systemic racism; and
- Lifting lifeways and value systems that cultivate greater belonging in Oakland.

The Fund seeks creative, mutually beneficial, and equitable collaborations working to build pathways to a more just Oakland. Oakland's, [civic-facing](#) cultural workers and artists must be critical partners in funded collaborations to help break down old, racialized tropes and envision and test new narratives, social agreements, structures, and systems that lay the groundwork for freedom and liberation for Oakland communities.

There is no funding match requirement for this grant.

WHAT END RESULT DO WE WANT TO SEE?

The Fund aims to resource and bring to life radical ideas that reimagine how we operate and move as a society — ideas that will be developed, tested, and documented by and with community over a three-year period. From narrative shifts to policy prototypes to new community power-building structures, the Fund seeks to expand the realm of what is possible to achieve [racial justice](#). The arts and cultures of communities must inform and be deeply infused in the methods of each collaboration. At the end of the grant period, we expect each collaboration to produce a [civic-facing](#), social change-oriented model or framework that can be shared to inspire others locally, regionally, and nationally.

The question and challenge that the Fund presents to Oakland's cultural and social justice workers is:

- What visionary narrative, structures, or systems do you want to advance to make Oakland more equitable and just for all its residents?

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

An important outcome of this program is that learnings and results can be shared with the communities centered in the collaboration as well as with the field for the purpose of enriching the racial or social justice policy landscape. The Fund will require collaborative partners to document and share appropriate learnings and results with the Fund, its awardees, program partners, and other interested parties. The Fund recognizes and honors the importance of preserving ritual and ceremonial spaces intended for limited participation as part of a collaboration's activities, confidential community research, or preliminary findings not ready for wider distribution.

What We Will Not Fund

The Fund values and recognizes the many roles artistic and cultural work play to create a healthy and just community. However, this program, because of legal requirements and limited resources, will not fund collaborations with an aim to:

- Influence the outcome of elections for candidates for public office
- Support capital campaigns for building maintenance, construction, or 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

Program Supports

GRANT AMOUNTS

Three-year grants of \$100,000 per year will be awarded to 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) or cultural practitioner(s)—for example, to cover healthcare, childcare, student 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.
- An annual stipend of up to \$25,000 will be available for the purpose of documenting the learning and outcomes resulting from the collaboration—particularly with regard to new narrative changes, policy arguments or frameworks, or community structures to share with the field. The amount of the documentation stipend will be negotiated with each

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

collaboration based on the scope of their plans and their capacity or desire to carry them out. The Fund will be able to assist with documentation should the collaboration not be able/willing to take that on.

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 (including the fiscal sponsor, if applicable); a documentation plan and budget, if you are requesting a stipend for documentation; and a mutually agreed upon plan with the Fund on reporting requirements.

Annual grant renewals will be contingent on demonstrated progress on goals and adherence to funding requirements.

Awardees are requested to notify the Fund of any public activity that is a part of their collaboration so that a Fund representative may attend.

PEER NETWORKING & LEARNING

The Fund will convene funded collaborations at the beginning of the grant period so that awardees can learn about each other's plans and determine with the Fund what kind of peer learning they would like to participate in together with the Fund's support. There may also be opportunities for ongoing networking among awardees and capacity building in cultural strategy.

Reporting Requirements

Near the close of each year of the grant period, the collaborations will be asked to report on their progress on reaching their shared goals and what they have been learning with and about their communities. 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. Additionally, information about how grant funds and special stipends were allocated will be required so that the Fund can report this information back to the Surdna Foundation. Annual grant renewals will be contingent on demonstrated progress toward goals and adherence to funding requirements.

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Eligibility & Application Instructions

"We are grateful to Oakland's artists and cultural creators for gifting us with their vision of what belonging means in a community rooted in justice, healing, and liberation. Through their eyes, a just Oakland is not only possible, it is within our reach."

—RAYMOND COLMENAR, PRESIDENT, AKONADI FOUNDATION

The Fund seeks to support Oakland-based, policy-change collaborations whose visions are rooted in communities that have been most impacted by [structural racism](#). Please take the following quiz to see if your organization may be the lead applicant of an eligible collaboration.

Eligibility to Apply

Organizational collaborations applying for funding must designate a lead applicant who will submit an application on behalf of the collaboration. The lead applicant should be the organization that has the responsibility for managing the grant for the collaborative partnership, not the applicant's fiscal sponsor.

In order to apply, the lead applicant must first complete a brief eligibility quiz to ensure that their collaboration meets the eligibility requirements:

https://eastbaycf.smapply.io/prog/belonging_in_oakland_a_just_city_cultural_fund/

Below is a preview of the eligibility survey. You must answer YES the following questions to be eligible to apply:

1. Are you an Oakland-based* organization with 501(c)(3) status or 501(c)(4)** status, or with a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor that is in good standing with the IRS?
2. Are you a social change organization OR a cultural organization that works with civically-oriented artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s)?
3. If you are a cultural organization that works with civically-oriented artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s), are you collaborating with a social change organization? OR, if you are a social change organization, are you collaborating with a cultural organization that works with civically-oriented artist(s)/cultural practitioner(s)?
4. Do you have an operating budget of \$500,000 or more?

***A note about rootedness in Oakland**

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Being based and rooted in Oakland is an important concept for the Fund. We are looking for collaborations that are deeply rooted in Oakland communities and have the commitment and capacity to work with community members to address an opportunity or challenge. A community may be geographically, ethnically, or culturally defined. It may also be a community of identity based on, for example, age, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status.

*****A note about 501c4***

Grant funds to 501c4 organizations can be used for direct or grassroots lobbying activities. Grant funds cannot be used for anything that qualifies as a reportable campaign contribution.

For more information, please contact Debrah Giles justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.

Application Process

Once you have confirmed your eligibility, you can move on to the two-step application process:

Step 1: Eligible applicants will answer a series of brief questions and submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) along with some general organizational information, financials for the most recently completed year, and a work sample demonstrating policy change efforts. The LOI application deadline is Friday, Aug 28, 2026, 5:00 PM PDT.

Step 2: Up to 10 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due within four weeks after the acceptance of an invitation to apply.

Three three-year awards will be announced in late October.

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 by clicking on the PDF links found at the bottom of this page. TIP: We recommend drafting the answers to the application questions in a separate document so that you have them ready when completing the online application.

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 on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Get Started

Click here to enter the online application

portal: https://eastbaycf.smapply.io/prog/belonging_in_oakland_a_just_city_cultural_fund/

The first step will be to complete the eligibility quiz.

If eligible, you will move to a Letter of Interest (LOI) application, where you will be asked to provide some basic administrative information and a description of your collaboration.

- Name and Contact Information of the Lead Applicant
- Name and Contact Information of the Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable)
- Names and Contact Information of Collaborative Partner
- Principal Cultural or Artistic Disciplines Involved in the Collaboration (if known)
- Sectors or Issue Areas to be Addressed by the Collaboration (as many as apply)
- Neighborhood or Community Focus of the Collaboration (as many as apply)

Narrative Questions (up to 200 words per question)

1. What vision for a just Oakland do you have in the sector(s) or issue area(s) you have chosen?
2. If you are principally a community organizing or social change organization, why do you think it is important to collaborate with an artist(s) or cultural practitioner(s) to achieve this vision? If you are principally a cultural organization, why is it important to you to collaborate with a community organizing or social change organization(s) to achieve this vision?
3. What community(ies) is centered in your collaboration and what is your history working together with it(them)?
4. What are your principles for working collaboratively with organizational and individual partners toward a common goal? What is your history working with your identified (or similar) partners, if any?
5. Give an example of social justice policy change work you have engaged with in this community(ies).
6. An important part of this program is sharing learnings and results with the broader field. How would you like to share the learnings/results of your collaboration? Whom do you think would benefit most from them?

Attachments

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

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



- Organizational financials of the last completed fiscal year
- Relevant example of social change work of your organization

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.

Please [read the guidelines](#) carefully to make sure your collaboration is a good fit for the program. If you have questions about eligibility, please contact JustCityFund@eastbaycf.org

Application Assistance

There is an informational webinar on Wednesday, August 12, from 11:00am – 1:00pm, which will include information on how to apply. [Click here to register.](#)

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.

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 Letter of Intent (LOI) application at least a week before the submission deadline.

For assistance contact us at justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Review Process & Timeline

“Civic arts and culture programs are a truly vital component of a just, equitable, and inclusive future because they connect us to our history and our humanity. Artists and cultural practitioners give us the power to dream of what is possible, the inspiration we need to heal ourselves, and the understanding that we belong here.”

—BRANDI HOWARD, PRESIDENT & CEO, EAST BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Review Process & Criteria

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 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.

Letters of Interest will be assessed based on the following 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 and aesthetics to equity and social change

- The strength of the proposed partnerships with artists/[cultural practitioners](#)
- The relevance and resonance of the cultural/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

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

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.

Program Timeline

Application Portal Opens:	Wednesday, July 29, 2026
Application Webinars:	Wednesday, Aug. 12, from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Click here to register. The webinar will also be recorded and posted for those unable to attend. For other questions, you can email justcityfund@eastbaycf.org.
Letter of Interest Application Deadline Late applications will not be accepted	Friday, Aug 28, 2026, 5 p.m. PT Applications must be submitted online through EBCF's application platform
Invitation to Submit a Full Proposal	Thursday, Oct. 1, 2026, 5 p.m. PT <i>If you receive an invitation to submit a full proposal, you will have 48 hours to accept or decline it.</i>
Full Proposal Deadline:	Friday, Oct. 23, 2026 5 p.m. PT
Grant Period Starts:	Monday, Nov. 15, 2026
Peer Learning Activities:	Activities will take place periodically throughout the grant period as determined by the grant recipient cohort in collaboration with the Fund.

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

Interim Check-In:	Fall 2027, 2028, 2029 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:	In the latter half of 2027, 2028, 2029 Sharing the project vision with a broader community is a program requirement. This could be a process-based activity, a work-in-progress showing, or a culminating event (in-person/virtual/ documented, as appropriate) or cultural product.
Grant Period Ends:	Oct. 31, 2029

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](#)).

Civic-facing: The Fund considers a civic-facing organization or individual as being one whose work concerns or addresses the realm of the public sector, such as engagement in democratic processes and governance, public policy and administration, the rights and responsibilities of members of communities and societies, and the like.

Community-centered: The Fund seeks to support collaborations that center the voices, aspirations, and ideas of the communities they serve, in this case, those most impacted by systemic racism and other intersectional systemic oppressions.

Community-rooted: It is important to the Fund that the artists or cultural practitioners involved in collaborations are deeply a part of the communities with whom they will work – either through identity, years of involvement, or both. A community may be geographically or ethnically or culturally defined. It may also be a community of identity based on, for example, age, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, or immigration status.

Cultural Practitioners and Cultural Workers: The Fund uses the term *cultural practitioners* and *cultural workers* to include not only artists, but artist-activists, traditional culture bearers or keepers, griots, storytellers, craftspeople, creative placemakers and place-keepers, cultural strategists, community historians, elders, or other visionaries.

Intersectional or Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

(A term coined by [Prof. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw](#))

Racial Justice: The systematic fair treatment of people of all races resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)

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



systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. (Definition adopted from Race Forward) Racial justice is a step on the way to a society liberated from racialized systems of oppression.

Radical Imagination: The ability to imagine the world, life, and social institutions not as they are, but as they might be in a just world. It is the courage and the intelligence to recognize that the world can be changed. *Radical imagination* is about calling on the past, telling different stories about how the world came to be the way it is, and remembering the power and importance of past struggles and the way their spirits live on in the present. It calls on our capacity to imagine how to make common cause with other people, and undergirds our ability to build solidarity across boundaries and borders, real or imagined. (Definition adapted from writings by Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven)

[Click on a hyperlinked term for its definition on the Glossary page.](#)