



CALIFORNIA  
**HEART LAND**  
 CREATIVE CORPS  
 GRANT GUIDELINES



# BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

## CALIFORNIA CREATIVE CORPS HISTORY

The 2021 State Budget included a \$60 million one-time General Fund allocation for the California Arts Council to implement the California Creative Corps pilot program, a media, outreach, and engagement campaign designed to increase:

- public health awareness messages to stop the spread of COVID-19
- public awareness related to water and energy conservation, climate mitigation, and emergency preparedness, relief, and recovery
- civic engagement, including election participation
- social justice and community engagement

Grant guideline development began with the convening of California Creative Corps Community Development Panels, first by region and then with one statewide panel, including representatives from each region. The panels included artists, culture bearers, creative individuals, and arts administrators that represented the priority populations to be engaged and who work in the intersectional focus areas of the Creative Corps program. The panels articulated their communities' values, needs, and opportunities, and identified ways in which the Creative Corps program might address them.

## ADMINISTERING ORGANIZATIONS

The CAC then sought applications from Administering Organizations with the capacity to:

- Administer and regrant funds to arts and social service organizations, individual artists, and cultural workers
- Develop media, outreach, and engagement campaigns that speak to the program goals listed above.

**The intention of this grant program was to provide as broad a geographic reach as possible and serve all 58 counties while prioritizing communities that demonstrate the highest levels of need as indicated by the California Healthy Places Index (HPI).**

### [United Way of Merced County \(Administering Organization\)](#)

United Way of Merced County was awarded \$4,230,216 by the California Arts Council (CAC) to administer the California Creative Corps program throughout Merced, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne counties within the Central Valley as an Administering Organization. United Way of Merced formed partnerships with prominent and established art organizations in the region and then formed The Heartland Creative Corps. The Heartland Creative Corps represents an unprecedented collaboration between arts agencies from all three counties. The arts agencies will work cooperatively to support program administration and serve as primary partners, service providers, and communication conduits in their respective geographies.

The grant received from the California Arts Council will be used exclusively for regranteeing and administration of the Heartland Creative Corp project. It will not be used to fund United Way of Merced's existing programs, which will continue to operate alongside the Heartland Creative Corps. United Way will continue to need funding and community support to meet its daily and annual operating needs.

### [Merced County Arts Council - \(Regional Art Partner\)](#)

Incorporated in 1978, the Merced County Arts Council was originally operated from a small office space on Main Street. In 1996, the City of Merced entrusted the Arts Council to manage the 28,000 sq. foot multipurpose arts center. There, the Arts Council manages an arts-in-education program; an arts facility for adults with developmental disabilities; performances and visual/performing arts classes for children and adults; professional support for artists through fiscal sponsorship; exhibits year-round in the four galleries; and newfound coalitions for visual and performing artists.

### [Stanislaus Arts Council - \(Regional Art Partner\)](#)

Originally formed in the late 1940's, the Central California Art League began as an artist's co-op, eventually taking residence in a gallery space in Downtown Modesto in the early 2000s. The Stanislaus Arts Council has existed in some form or another since the late 1970s and has recently reformed as a part of the CCAL in 2019 after a brief hiatus of operations.

Throughout its rich history, the Stanislaus Arts Council has worked hard to support the Arts in Stanislaus County and the surrounding areas. Invigorated with new members and community support, the arts council will represent the artists and arts organizations that make Stanislaus County a special place for creativity in the Central Valley.

### [Tuolumne County Arts - \(Regional Art Partner\)](#)

Originally known as Central Sierra Arts Council, TCA became a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit organization in 1978. Tuolumne County Arts endeavors to inform, educate, entertain, and provide enjoyment and enrichment for our constituents: residents, visitors, students, seniors, and all those who value the benefit of the arts and know that we can achieve a more vital and resilient community through the arts.

# PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Heartland Creative Corp's primary duties include but are not limited to:

- Focusing and identifying communities in the lowest quartile of the California Healthy Places Index in order to assist potential applicants in finding ways to design their projects and/or programs to positively engage and benefit those communities in the four program focus areas.
- Managing the application processes for sub-grantee individual artists and organizations through the application period, application screening, adjudication, award management, and reporting, and then distributing funds to the sub-grantees.
- Establishing an online platform for mentorship through which sub-grantees can find mentorship in their chosen field as well as other avenues to optimize their business and marketing acumen.
- Increasing visibility of the work of artists, cultural practitioners, and nonprofit organizations in their region and/or statewide by documenting the grant process, the project creation process, and the final reporting.
- Providing grassroots outreach to our communities regarding the grant process to provide a wide geographic reach within the service area for sub-grantee organizations, artists, and cultural practitioners.
- Delivering regular reporting to the California Arts Council (CAC) and working with them to develop best practices for the grant-making process.

## PROGRAM GOALS

1. The California Creative Corps program is a job creator.
2. The California Creative Corps program increases how artists engage in public work.
3. The California Creative Corps program uplifts new communities served (counties and cities not strongly represented in prior CAC grant-making)
4. The California Creative Corps program supports artists who identify as representing communities residing in the lowest quartile of the California Healthy Places Index.
5. The California Creative Corps program helps to cultivate a better California for all.



## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Below is a list of some quantitative outcomes that the Heartland Creative Corps will be measured by which the California Arts Council has currently identified:

- Total number of new communities served (counties and cities not strongly represented in prior CAC grant-making)
- Total number of sub-grantees awarded
- Total number of artists employed and workforce hours
- Total number of artists who identify as representing communities residing in the lowest quartile of the California HPI
- Shift in attitude and readiness of community members to engage in healthy behaviors related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Shift in attitude and readiness of community members to engage in behaviors that support water and energy conservation
- Shift in attitude and readiness of community members to participate in election activities
- Shift in attitude and readiness of community members to engage in activities that support social justice outcomes
- Shift in attitude and readiness of community members to engage in activities that support community engagement
- Total number of marketing and outreach collateral developed and distributed in languages other than English

## **SUB-GRANTEE REQUIREMENTS**

The Heartland Creative Corp will award funding to sub-grantees that are arts and social service organizations, individual artists, and cultural workers.

**While a sub-grantee can apply to multiple AOs, grantees can only receive funding from ONE AO.**

The HCC shall regrant California Creative Corps funds to California-based individual artists ages 18 and above; and to units of government and nonprofit organizations (both arts and non-arts-based) that meet the following eligibility criteria:

### **Individual Artists & Cultural Workers Requirements**

- 1.) 18 years of age or older
- 2.) Letter of recommendation - Individual artists should provide one letter of recommendation citing the artist's qualifications and/or work history.
- 3.) Artistic evidence - Individual artists will need to submit at least 1 past work sample of their art.

### **Organization Requirements**

- 1.) Types of organizations that can apply - 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and organizations using fiscal sponsors (see fiscal sponsors for more information)
- 2.) Regionally Based - Organizations applying must be located within the regions of influence of the grant.
- 3.) Certificate of good standing - Nonprofit organizations must provide an IRS Determination letter and have active status with the California Secretary of State, showing evidence of good standing at the time of application. A reviewer will check this status during the initial review stage.
- 4.) Financial Documentation - Each organization will be asked for a Form 990 and basic financial information.

### **Fiscal Sponsor Requirements**

- 1.) An applicant organization without nonprofit status must use a fiscal sponsor with a federal 501(c)(3) designation to apply for funding. For-profit businesses and individuals may not use a fiscal sponsor to apply. Types of applicant organizations eligible to apply using a fiscal sponsor include but are not limited to artist collectives, guilds, and 501(c)(6) organizations.
- 2.) A letter of agreement between the fiscal sponsor and the applicant organization must be signed by a representative from both parties and submitted with the application. A blank signature field will not be accepted. If the grant is awarded, the fiscal sponsor becomes the legal contract holder of the grant.
- 3.) A fiscal sponsor change is not permissible during the Grant Activity Period, except in extenuating circumstances based on staff assessment.
- 4.) Fiscal sponsors must have a minimum two-year history of fiscal sponsorship activity.

## **GRANT REQUEST GUIDELINES**

### **REQUEST AMOUNTS**

Individuals may request up to \$150,000 and organizations may request up to \$300,000 for the grant period. Budgets for the grant applications should reflect the scope of the project and the experience of the artists involved.

### **GRANT BUDGETS GUIDELINES:**

- Sub-grantees may use up to twenty percent (20%) of the grant award for costs associated with program design and implementation.
- Eighty percent (80%) of funds must either be granted directly to individuals or used by nonprofit sub-grantees to hire individual artists.

### **MATCHING FUNDS**

This program does not require matching funds.

### **WHAT WE DO NOT FUND**

- Nonprofit organizations not in “good standing” with the California Secretary of State
- Former grantee organizations not in compliance with CAC grant requirements, such as failing to submit a final report (as stipulated in the grant agreement)
- Expenses incurred before the start date or after the ending date of the Grant Activity Period
- Expenses that would supplant other state funding
- Operational, administrative, or indirect costs of schools, colleges, or universities
- Fundraising activities or services such as grant writing, annual campaigns, or fundraising events
- Lobbying activities that intend to influence the actions, policies, or decisions of government officials or specific legislation
- Projects with religious purposes
- Trusts, endowment funds, or investments
- Construction projects, purchase of land and buildings, or capital expenditures used to maintain, upgrade, acquire, or repair capital assets
- Debt repayment
- Hospitality expenses, meals, or food
- Out-of-state travel
- Equipment Purchases (Equipment rentals are acceptable)

### **ADDITIONAL CREATIVE CORPS CENTRAL VALLEY REGION ADMINISTERING ORGANIZATIONS**

Check out the [KDA Creative Corps](#), which are funding artists and organizations throughout the Central Valley.

# GRANT APPLICATIONS

Heartland Creative Corp will be accepting grant applications in two ways:

1. An online application using the Submittable platform at this [link](#)
2. A paper PDF application process via one of our three partner agencies - (Only if the online application is not accessible to you)

Representatives from Heartland Creative Corps or our partner agencies will be available to assist in the process for any questions. Additionally, the application will be available in Spanish, with other languages provided on an as-needed basis.

**All applications must be received by April 15 at 11:59 pm.** It is recommended that applicants apply for the grant well before the deadline to assist in the early approval process.

## GRANT APPLICATION LAYOUT

### **1. Individual Section (not required for organizations)**

- a. Applicant Name
- b. Phone Number
- c. Email
- d. Mailing Address

### **2. Organization Section (not required for individual artists)**

- a. Organization Name
- b. Fiscal Sponsor (if applicable)
- c. Primary Applicant Name
- d. Phone Number
- e. Email
- f. Business Address
- g. Mailing Address (if different from business address)
- h. EIN Number
- i. Year Organization Began
- j. Organization's Mission and Purpose
- k. Core Programs and Services
- l. IRS Determination Letter
- m. Most recent form 990 tax return
- n. Basic financial documentation
  - i. Statement of activities
  - ii. Statement of financial position
  - iii. Audit - Required if revenue > \$2,000,000



### 3. **Project Proposal and Budget**

- a. Proposed project title
- b. Proposed grant request amount
  - i. No less than 80% of grant requests must go to artists' salaries. A maximum of 20% of grant requests can go to project costs.
- c. Select the program focus(es) for your project
  - i. Public health awareness messages to stop the spread of COVID-19
  - ii. Public awareness related to water and energy conservation, climate mitigation, and emergency preparedness, relief, and recovery
  - iii. Civic engagement, including election participation
  - iv. Social justice and community engagement
- d. Select the community which the project is intended to serve:
  - i. Merced
  - ii. Stanislaus
  - iii. Tuolumne
- e. Project Summary
  - i. Include a clear and concise description of the project emphasizing the objectives, the need for the project, and the plan for the execution of the project.
- f. Describe how your project directly benefits artists and/or engages communities in the bottom quartile of the California Healthy Place Index.
  - i. The California Healthy Places Index, developed by the Public Health Alliance of Southern California and visualized by Axis Maps, is a powerful tool to explore the community conditions that impact life expectancy. The HPI helps prioritize public and private investments, resources, and programs in neighborhoods where they are needed most.
  - ii. This data is used by community leaders, policymakers, academics, and other stakeholders to compare the health and well-being of communities, identify health inequities and quantify the factors that shape health.
  - iii. To learn more: [Healthy Places Index](#)
- g. How does your project accomplish one or more of the program focus areas?
- h. Provide a timeline for the project and detail all proposed activities during each phase as well as any/all communities in which each phase occurs. Your timeline should clearly define the four phases of your project and it should be made clear the physical locations where each phase will be occurring.
  - i. Phase 1 - Project Planning
  - ii. Phase 2 - Production/Creation
  - iii. Phase 3 - Public Presentation / Distribution
    1. During the grant period, all projects created must be presented, exhibited, or distributed freely to the public.

- iv. Phase 4 - Evaluation
- i. What are the goals of your project and expected outcomes?
- j. Provide a brief biography for key individuals involved in this project. Include name, title, whether they will be supported by the Heartland Grant, relevant experience as it pertains to the project, and role within the proposed activities
- k. Describe who and how many your project will serve, including ages, age ranges, locations, demographics, etc.
- l. [Project budget](#)

**4. Upload up to three previous work samples (not required)**

- a. Instructions for Document Work Samples (.docx and .PDF):
  - i. Documents are limited to 1 page in length. It is the responsibility of the applicant to edit and submit documents that are no more than 1 page in length. If a document is uploaded exceeding the 1-page limit, additional pages will be eliminated and not assessed by panelists.
  - ii. Applicants are expected to choose to submit either a link or a file, not both.
- b. Instructions for Image Work Samples:
  - i. Photo files that are submitted must not exceed 1 image per file. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit files that are no more than 1 image. If a document containing more than one image is uploaded, additional images will be eliminated and not assessed by panelists.
  - ii. Links embedded with submitted documents will not be reviewed as part of the work samples.
- c. Instructions for Video/Audio Work Samples (video/audio files or URL links):
  - i. Samples may not exceed 3 minutes per file. It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit files within this time limit. Larger files will not be permitted and will not be considered or assessed by panelists. Applicants that circumvent this process will be subject to Work Sample rejection or not having their full submission reviewed.

**5. Website / Social Handles (not required)**

- a. Website
- b. Instagram
- c. TikTok
- d. Facebook
- e. Twitter
- f. Youtube
- g. Other

**6. CERTIFICATION & RELEASE – the applicant will certify**

- a. By submitting this application, I hereby release the United Way of Merced County, Merced County Arts Council, Central California Art League INC, Tuolumne Arts Council Inc, California Arts Council (CAC), and

the State of California, their employees and agents, from any liability and/or responsibility concerning damage to or loss of materials submitted to the United Way of Merced County, Merced County Arts Council, Central California Art League INC, Tuolumne Arts Council Inc, California Arts Council (CAC), and the State of California, whether or not such damage or loss is caused by the negligence of the United Way of Merced County, Merced County Arts Council, Central California Art League INC, Tuolumne Arts Council Inc, California Arts Council (CAC), and the State of California their employees and agents.

- b. By submitting this application, I certify that the represented organization has valid proof of tax-exempt status under sec.501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or under sec. 23701d of the California Revenue and Taxation Code, or is a unit of government; or for grant programs allowing Fiscal Sponsors, is applying in partnership with a Fiscal Sponsor entity meeting all Fiscal Sponsor eligibility requirements as indicated in Heartland Creative Corps Fiscal Sponsor Policy; that the applicant organization has been consistently engaged in arts programming for two years prior to time of application; has its principal place of business in California; and has completed prior contract requirements, if applicable; and has the approval of the organization's board of directors or other governing body; and that the applicant organization and Fiscal Sponsor, if applicable, both comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; sec 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; observes provisions of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988; and California Government Code secs.11135-11139.5 (barring discrimination); complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act, as defined by the Secretary of Labor in part 505 of title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulation; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and the Fair Employment and Housing Act; that all information contained herein is accurate or represents a reasonable estimate of operations based on data available at the time of submission; and that there are no misstatements or misrepresentations contained herein or in any attachments; and is aware that modification of the proposal at any point may require a contract amendment, rescinding of a grant award or cancellation of contract.

# GRANT DECISION-MAKING

## PROCESS

Heartland Creative Corps has established a multi-stage review for all grant applications.

- Step 1: Organizational and Financial Overview
  - Members of the United Way of Merced Staff will evaluate applications based on the following:
    - Application is complete and has all the requested information
    - Applicant has a completed and valid budget
    - If the applicant is a non-profit organization, UWMC will verify that the applicant is in good standing with all state and federal regulatory agencies.
    - The applicant will then be scored based on the primary applicant's address in proximity to HPI tract's that are below 25.0% and each phase of the applicant's project will be reviewed to determine which HPI tract will be primarily impacted by the project.
    - UWMC will conduct no other subjective review.
  - Applications found to have missing or incomplete information will be returned and applicant's will be given guidance to update their submission.
- Step 2: Art Partner Overview
  - Applications will be checked by staff from all three arts agency partners regarding scope, engagement, and community impact.
  - Staff from agency partners will utilize this time to provide mentorship and guidance to all potential grantees and strengthen proposals.
  - Potential grantees will have the opportunity to take the mentorship or proceed to evaluation as is.
- Step 3: Arts Panel Regional Reviews
  - Applications will be sent to a five-person panel review. No panelist will have served in any other capacity regarding the grant-making process.
  - Each application will be ranked according to the scoring rubric.

# Application Review Criteria

All grants will be reviewed on the following criteria:

## Healthy Place Index

1. Applicant proximity to communities in the bottom quartile of HPI
  - a. Exemplary (6 pt) - Applicant is located in the bottom 25% of HPI
  - b. Fair (3 pt) – Applicant is located in 26 -50% of HPI
  - c. Marginal (2 pt) – Applicant is located in 51% - 75% of HPI
  - d. Weak ( 1 pt) – Applicant is located in 76-100% of HPI
  
2. Project phase proximity to communities in the bottom quartile of HPI - The applicant's submission will detail four phases (Planning, Creation, Public Presentation/Distribution, and Evaluation). During each of these phases, the applicant will need to determine in which HPI tract their project is primarily occurring. The reviewer will assign a score between 1-6 based on the criteria below and then divide the total score by 4 (number of phases).
  - a. 6 pts - During the phase the project occurs in a tract that has an HPI score of 20.0 or lower
  - b. 5 pts - During the phase the project occurs in a tract that has an HPI score between 20.1 - 40
  - c. 4 pts - During the phase the project occurs in a tract that has an HPI score between 40.1 - 60
  - d. 3 pts - During the phase the project occurs in a tract that has an HPI score between 60.1 -80
  - e. 2 pts - During the phase the project occurs in a tract that has an HPI score between 80.1 - 100
  - f. 1 pt - During the phase the project cannot identify any particular HPI tract.

## Programmatic

1. How does the project proposal fit the program focus areas?
  - a. Does the Project have a clear understanding and plan involving one or more of the four program focus areas?
2. Project Design
  - a. Does the Project include a clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the applicant's proposed art project, which includes clear and thorough evidence of community impact; including engagement, intention, timeliness, and/or inspiration in relation to the defined community and outcomes?
3. Community Engagement
  - a. Does the Project provide detailed information on how target communities will be engaged?
4. Management
  - a. Does the key personnel have the necessary skill, capacity and experience to complete the scope of the project?
5. Budget
  - a. Was an accurate, itemized, and realistic budget that reflects the scope of the project provided?
6. Timeline
  - a. Did the applicant present an accurate and detailed timeline of the project with clear, understandable outcomes?

## PANEL ADJUDICATION AND RANKING SCALE

Panelists review and rank applications and work samples using a 6-point ranking scale

Score	Score Title	Score Description
6	Exemplary	Meets all of the review criteria and project requirements to the highest degree
5	Strong	Meets all of the review criteria and project requirements to a significant degree
4	Good	Meets all of the review criteria and project requirements to some degree
3	Fair	Meets most of the review criteria and project requirements
2	Marginal	Meets some of the review criteria and project requirements
1	Weak	Inadequately meets the review criteria or project requirements



# SUB-GRANTEE AWARDS

Sub-grantees and their award amounts will be guided by panel ranking, taking service area and program focus area into account. Final decisions will be made collaboratively between the Heartland Creative Corps (United Way of Merced County, Merced County Arts, Council Central California Art League INC, and Tuolumne Arts Council Inc) and CAC agency staff.

## Grant Period Requirements:

**During the grant period, all projects created must be presented, exhibited, or distributed freely to the public.**

# TIMELINE

All timeline dates are subject to change with or without notice

Date	Description
January 2023 - February 2023	Listening sessions will occur to answer any questions potential applications may have in our regions of influence
February 15th, 2023 - April 14th, 2023	Funding launch date. Applicants are encouraged to apply on the online portal for Phase 1 funding
April 15th, 2023	Phase 1 funding portal closes
May 1st, 2023 - June 16th, 2023	Phase 2 opens for applications (depending on fund availability)
May 1st, 2023	Funding decisions are made by panelists selected by the partner agencies in the regions of influence
May 15th, 2023	Phase 1 grants are awarded
June 16th, 2023	Phase 2 funding closes
June 23rd, 2023	Funding decisions are made by panelists selected by the partner agencies in the regions of influence
June 27th, 2023	Phase 2 funding awarded
July 2023 - June 2024	Projects must be completed no later than June 2024
	<b>All projects must be presented, exhibited or distributed free to the public during the grant period.</b>