

Community Catalyst Grant Program

Applicant Information Session



svcreates.org

Agenda

- Welcome
- SVCCreates History
- Program Goals
- Eligibility
- Review Criteria
- Application
- Comparisons to Arts Access
- Timeline
- Questions

SVCreates History

- SVCreates serves as the Arts Council for Santa Clara County. We are an independent nonprofit, but we contract with the County of Santa Clara to provide funding and capacity building support to small and mid-side arts organizations throughout the county.
- SVCreates mission is to elevate Silicon Valley's creative culture by building the capacity, visibility, and accessibility of the arts.
- Our vision is a vibrant community fueled by a dynamic and diverse arts and culture ecosystem
- In support of this we offer a suite of services and programs to support local arts organizations including grants, workshops, and peer support roundtable programs.

Program Goals

Program Goals

Focuses on arts and culture as a catalyst for community dialogue, healing, collective action, and power-sharing in under-resourced communities.

The Community Catalyst Grant Program has the goal of uplifting historically under-resourced populations in Santa Clara County through community-driven, impactful artistic projects .

Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria

1. 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or Fiscally Sponsored project.
2. Unincorporated community group with a clear, established history of local arts programming (requires a bank account in the group's name or a dedicated fiscal sponsor).
3. Individual artist/collective with a clear community partner (e.g., school, community center, church) willing to accept funds on their behalf.

Review Criteria

Scoring

Community Ownership & Leadership (40%):

- Evidence of Co-Creation: Is the project design, budget, and desired outcome rooted in the expressed needs and guidance of the target under-resourced population?
- Authentic Leadership: Is the project led by artists, organizers, or organizations who share lived experience with the community being served?
- Capacity: Does the organization/artist demonstrate the capacity to carry out the project they have proposed?

Scoring

Radical Imagination & Impact (35%):

- Vision: Does the project use art to challenge existing inequities, build collective power, or imagine a more just future for the community?
- Cultural Relevance: Does the project honor and reinforce the cultural assets, traditions, and resilience already present in the community?
- Feasibility: Is the budget realistic for the proposed activities and grant amount (\$5k–\$20k)? Or does the project define funds that fill in the remaining funding needs?

Scoring

Alignment and Trust (25%):

- Transparency: Is the budget clear, and do the funds primarily flow to the artists, community leaders, and local resources?
- Organizational Health: Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to equity and fairness in their internal practices (e.g., compensating artists and collaborators fairly)?

Application Review

Application

Section 2:

What is your expertise and place within the community?

- Who are you as an artist/organization?
- What is your experience as an artist/arts organization in Santa Clara County?
- What is your capacity to carry out this program (ie, what similar projects have you carried out? Or what projects of similar size/scope?)
- What is evidence of your organization's expertise to carry out this project?

Application

Section 3:

Which under-resourced population/geographic area you will engage and why are you the right individual/group to do this work?

- What is the population/geographic area of this project and why are they being engaged?
- Who are the members of the team responsible for executing this project?
- Why are you the right person/team to be taking on this project?

Application

Section 4:

What specific challenge or dream within the community does this project address?

- What are the key project activities?
- Where does this project take place?
- What is the timeline of key activities?
- Who are the key community collaborators of this project?
- How is this project accessible to all?

Uploads

Section 5: Budget

Provide a high-level budget breakdown, showing major expense categories (e.g., Artist Fees, Materials, Space Rental, Outreach) [UPLOAD]

Section 6: Supporting Materials

Provide a single letter or email from a non-applicant community leader or key partner confirming the project's value and readiness to engage.

Provide one link to a website or cloud folder (max 5 items) that best demonstrates the prior work, the work of the lead artist(s), and the artistic merit needed to complete this project.

Direct Comparisons to Arts Access

Comparisons

Access

8k - 20k

Restricted to 501c3

Required 3 minimum years of programming history and 1 year with community served

Community Catalyst

5k - 20k

Expanded to include community groups, artists and collectives with a community partner

Removes rigid multi-year organizational requirements, focusing instead on lived experience, expertise, and community focus

Comparisons

Access

Required narrative questions on artist compensation, venue, goals, and a detailed line-item expense table.

Standard written final reporting.

Community Catalyst

Streamlined narratives, high-level budget breakdown, one community letter of support, and one portfolio link (max 5 items)

Flexible options: narrative via short text, 5-minute video, or 30-minute phone call; impact shown via quotes/testimonials or a short photo/video essay

Key Takeaways

- Lower Barrier to Entry: Opens up funding to individual artists, informal collectives, and unincorporated groups who were previously ineligible
- Shift to Community Ownership: The review process places its highest emphasis (40%) on community leadership, co-creation, and lived experience rather than institutional longevity or traditional "artistic excellence".
- Simplified Reporting & Application: The new program significantly reduces burden by streamlining application materials and offering multi-format final reporting (video/phone check-ins)

Timeline

Application Workshop
September 11, 2026

Applications Close
October 9, 2026

Panelist/Staff Review and Scoring
October 19 - November 13, 2026

Award Notifications
Early December, 2026

Questions?