



ArtsWeb

**Driving Equitable Investment to the Arts by
Uncovering and Revaluing Unmapped Creative Economies**

Silicon Valley Creates and Community Vision are launching ArtsWeb in the Bay Area in 2021. ArtsWeb is a network of locally-rooted ecosystems that provide business navigation support and investment for unmapped artists and arts groups. This project was developed in response to a call-to-action by Kenneth Rainin Foundation to rapidly respond to the mounting pressures of displacement and systemic barriers to wealth-building for Bay Area artists, especially black, brown and Indigenous artists.

The problem

A significant portion of every creative economy happens outside the bounds of dominant culture data sets and financial metrics. We think about this part of the creative economy as “unmapped”, and it includes small organizations, artist collectives, fiscally sponsored projects, individual artists and creative entrepreneurs. The majority of black, brown and Indigenous artists operate in this unmapped creative economy, though their artistic practices inform the majority of the creative sector as a whole. The accomplishments, contributions and needs of unmapped Creatives are not represented in mainstream arts data sets like the Cultural Data Profile (CDP) and Guidestar, and unmapped Creatives often can never meet traditional financial benchmarks used to guide investments into the arts. This combination makes it nearly impossible for unmapped Creatives to significantly influence mainstream arts policy or access desperately needed financial resources. As the cycle of financial and “recognition” poverty is perpetuated, a deep distrust of institutions builds within unmapped creative economies. This is especially true in creative communities of color. This lack of investment and the distrust it breeds threatens the sustainability of our cultural sectors.

The solution

ArtsWeb seeks to build the assets of unmapped creative economies by assigning a value to community cultural wealth and using this new valuation strategy to bring down the cost of money, open doors to new money, and drive greater investment into these economies to rebuild trust and anchor the cultural sector for generations to come.

First, we will develop trust-based relationships between unmapped creative economies, intermediaries, and mainstream institutions by employing a locally-rooted Navigator who trusts and is trusted by their community. The Navigator will deliver culturally-relevant, highly-impactful navigation and technical assistance services to their local creative ecosystem. As each Navigator connects and weaves this arts web, we will gather information about participants, relationships, interactions and community assets within each ecosystem, thereby mapping these unmapped economies and elevating previously unmapped voices, opinions, perspectives, lived experiences and artistic modalities.

What we expect to uncover is an alternative economic model for sustaining creativity that already exists: a system based on non-financial forms of capital called [community cultural wealth](#) that has sustained communities of color for decades. As we uncover this alternative economy, we will be measuring three key forms of non-financial capital: community capital, resilience capital, and experiential capital. As we learn how these assets enrich unmapped creative economies, we can develop a system for assigning value to them. Once “valued” by traditional financial standards, these assets will visibly strengthen Creatives’ balance sheets. With stronger borrower and grantee balance sheets in place, we can leverage our positions as lenders, grantmakers and arts advocates to drive much greater investment (i.e. loans, grants, PRIs, etc.) into unmapped creative economies. And by showing a clear commitment to facilitating permanent wealth-building for artists, and especially black, brown and Indigenous artists, we can rebuild trust and offer a new philanthropic framework for driving investments to the arts. This will require disrupting dominant culture data sets and financial metrics, and replacing them with comprehensive data sets and alternative financial metrics developed through a trust-based ecosystem model like ArtsWeb.

This innovative wealth-building strategy based on community cultural wealth in unmapped creative economies presents a catalytic opportunity for funders to stabilize artists and unleash creativity, the exact creativity needed now to help us transcend divisions and reconnect us with our humanity.

Theory of Change

