SAN FRANCISCO GUARANTEED INCOME PILOT FOR ARTISTS,  
POWERED BY YBCA  
LEARNING AND INSIGHT FROM DESIGN TO LAUNCH
Learning and Insight from Design to Launch

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This field paper highlights preliminary lessons and insights gleaned from one of the nation’s first guaranteed income (GI) pilots for artists, The SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists, Powered by YBCA (“the SF-GIPA”). This paper is intended for arts and culture organizations, economic justice organizations and prospective implementers, and funders entering or deepening their involvement with guaranteed income models. It is a contribution to the growing knowledge base of recommendations, evolving practices, and new ideas for practitioners in the guaranteed income field.

YBCA is committed to exploring and testing economic models that address systemic racism, inequity, and economic insecurity in the arts and culture sector and in society. The first iteration of the SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists (SF-GIPA), Powered by YBCA provides a direct, unconditional $1,000 monthly cash payment for a total of 18 months to 130 artists who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. YBCA aims to test and learn from this model to demonstrate its efficacy and advocate for systemic change in the arts and culture sector and in society at large.

When artists have access to adequate resources, they strengthen communities and improve health and well-being outcomes. Artists are an underutilized leadership asset and have struggled with financial precarity even before the onset of the pandemic. We believe that the SF-GIPA’s experiment as a model that provides regular and unrestricted cash payments will demonstrate what artists are capable of when they can focus on their creative output without the pressure of not knowing from where their next paycheck will come.

This paper:

● Situates artists as central contributors to economic development investment strategies and new economic models.

● Shares recommendations for how to start a guaranteed income pilot design process, including what determinations might need to be made before you begin.

● Describes pathways and possibilities for artist-centered guaranteed income programs, including several case studies with potential solutions for how to design and implement with an artist-centered approach. Case studies include:
  o Developing a local community outreach strategy
  o Workshopping impact measurement with artists for artists
  o Establishing an Artist Advocates program

● Makes calls to action for guaranteed income advocacy.

We welcome comments and feedback. Please reach out to us at pilot@ybca.org.
# Learning and Insight from Design to Launch

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### 4  INTRODUCTION

4  How Did We Get Here?
5  Who Are These Insights For?

### 7  WHY GUARANTEED INCOME FOR ARTISTS?

9  How Are Artists Essential for Social Change?
10  A Targeted Approach

### 11  GETTING STARTED

11  Compliance
   11  SOURCE OF FUNDING | TAX STATUS | PUBLIC BENEFITS

12  Operations and Engagement
   12  SETTING UP YOUR TEAM | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
   13  ESTABLISHING TRANSPARENT TIMELINES | BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS | MAKING PAYMENTS | IRB RESEARCH APPROVAL

### 14  PATHWAYS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR ARTIST-CENTERED PROGRAMS

14  An Engaged and Multi-Stakeholder Outreach Approach

15  CASE STUDY: Developing a Local Outreach Strategy

16  Eligibility Criteria

18  Co-Designing with Artists for Artists
   19  CASE STUDY: Workshopping Impact Measurement with Artists for Artists

20  Building Community
   21  CASE STUDY: Establishing an Artist Advocates Program

22  Measurement and Evaluation

### 24  CALLS TO ACTION

### 25  ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
INTRODUCTION

“Once you’re full, you’re able to share with others, provide for others. We could live in a really beautiful world if people had the resources to live out what they love to do.”

– CHRISS WATTS, Visual Artist, SF-GIPA Participant

In May 2021, 130 San Francisco artists received the first payment of an 18-month guaranteed income pilot as part of a landmark pilot initiated in partnership with the City of San Francisco. The SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists, Powered by YBCA (“the SF-GIPA”) builds on the knowledge and experience gained from pilots that paved the way for other champions to enter the space and to show how unconditional cash can change lives—and can help us to rethink the ways we in society care and uphold one another’s dignity and livelihoods.

How Did We Get Here?

In December 2020, YBCA was awarded a grant from the City of San Francisco to implement a six-month guaranteed income pilot, specifically designed for artists and culture-makers who faced loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With a May 2021 timeline to disburse the funds, the SF-GIPA design and development needed to occur fairly rapidly—over the course of about three months, with applications opening in March 2021.

In the spring of 2021, YBCA received private funding to extend the publicly-funded six-month SF-GIPA into an 18-month program.

Now in October 2021, five months into the SF-GIPA, we share this paper to assess how we got here, what we’ve learned, what insights we have to share, and what could have been done differently. Over time, we will also uncover and share the impact of unconditional cash transfers on artists in San Francisco.

With Gratitude

We are deeply grateful to the artists participating in the SF-GIPA for your trust and willingness to engage in this exploration with us. To the artists, community members, organization leaders, movement activists, Mayor London Breed and the San Francisco city officials who walked beside us on this journey so far—thank you.
At YBCA, we are committed to exploring and testing economic models that address systemic racism, inequity, and economic insecurity in the arts and culture sector and in society. Implementing the SF-GIPA is the latest and one of the most important steps to date in our trajectory of building investment structures for artists to do what they do best. We believe that guaranteed income has the potential to provide a path to building sustainable economic opportunities for artists in communities that have been historically underfunded, specifically in our Black/African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and immigrant communities. Our goal with the first phase of the SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists (SF-GIPA), Powered by YBCA is to provide direct, unconditional support to artists who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as important, we aim to test and learn from this model so that we can demonstrate its efficacy and advocate for systemic change in the arts sector and in society at large. Presently, there is planning in the works for a next phase. We plan to share insight from that initiative, plus findings from this first phase, in the future.

Finally, this paper is a guide. Many other pilots are asking the same or similar questions we tackle here. If you determine that a guaranteed income model isn’t your path, there is a much broader universe of economic justice exploration, research, and piloting that is also needed. Your process need not end in developing a guaranteed income pilot; however, the inquiry throughout this paper is an important piece of the economic justice movement that centers artists and may apply even beyond the field of guaranteed income.

Who Are These Insights For?

This learning and insight paper documents preliminary insights from the SF-GIPA’s design and launch phases. At the time of publishing, cash payments have just begun and we are beginning to gather indicators and insights about the impact of the SF-GIPA. The paper is not designed to be a straightforward roadmap for how to implement a program. In fact, a key observation when implementing a pilot alongside a large array of stakeholders and partners is that the design—across all aspects of the programs and its operations—must be highly contextualized to the communities the program serves. A blueprint can help with logistics and compliance, but ultimately, the pilot will be unique to its community. This may differ from a larger-scale means-tested program. Instead, this paper will highlight preliminary lessons learned and insights gleaned from developing the SF-GIPA in partnership with the City of San Francisco (which provided funding for the first six months of the SF-GIPA) and the Start Small Foundation (whose philanthropic contributions have funded the 12-month extension).

“I ask myself, ‘What can I do to be of the greatest benefit to community, to society, to myself? What is the greatest thing I can contribute?’ [It is] to be an artist, truly.”

- CLARISSA DYAS, Dancer, SF-GIPA Participant
Arts and culture organizations—whether just starting to think about guaranteed income in your community, or on the path toward implementation. Regardless how far along you are, we hope the observations here will spark interest or ideas.

 Guaranteed income field—whether you are an implementer, city or state agency, researcher, or advocate. We hope this helps with getting started and some of the details to consider; and we hope our recommendations make it both easier to implement in the future and bolster advocacy efforts for economic justice policies that truly make artists, and all peoples’, lives better and easier, so that we can all thrive together.

 Funders—you are critical to the growing guaranteed income movement. We hope to provide insight into what it takes to design and implement a guaranteed income program in partnership with communities directly impacted by these kinds of pilots.

 To all—we welcome comments and feedback. We are on a learning journey in service of artists and communities we are in relationship with, and we thrive when in collaboration with allies. We want to hear from you: pilot@ybca.org.

 These insights build on the broader GI field, including literature from the Basic Income Lab, Economic Security Project, Guaranteed Income Community of Practice, Insight Center, and the Jain Family Institute.

“The Pilot has changed my life, I now have the means to pursue my art, as well as make my bills.”

- GENIVER DELVOYE, Teaching and Visual Artist, SF-GIPA Participant
WHY GUARANTEED INCOME FOR ARTISTS?

Artists play a critical role in the well-being of our communities and in the economic, social, and cultural fabric of our cities. At YBCA, we believe that communities are the best builders of their own futures and artists are central actors to this work of reimagining, reawakening, and rebuilding our country. Artists bring unique talent and skill to fostering cohesion and belonging, building trust, activating civic engagement, addressing mental health, cultivating collective safety, and celebrating community identity. Artists are doing and will continue to do the essential work of helping us to make meaning of these times. Not only that, but artists have a direct impact on the health and well-being of their communities, creating the conditions for healthy, cohesive, safe, and engaged communities.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts’ (NEA) 2019 statistical portrait of artists and cultural workers, over five million workers are employed in arts and cultural industries in the United States, approximately half of whom are artists. These numbers are an undercount, as they grow when artists whose art is not their primary job are included, and we know there are countless uncounted, particularly culture-bearers and folk artists, those living on the margins, burgeoning online creators, and those who may not primarily identify as an artist yet engage in artistic practice. This same portrait reveals artists are 3.6 times as likely as other workers to be self-employed, and a 2011 NEA study reported that median incomes for fine artists are below the median income of the US labor force overall. Income from self-employment can be unstable and unpredictable, and many artists face heightened economic insecurity due to the reliance on gig-based employment that excludes them from benefits, health insurance, and medical leave.

Inequities in the arts and culture sector mirror those in broader society: A 2014 BFAMFAPhD report reveals more than 80% of working artists with an art school degree are white; and women artists only earn 79 cents for every dollar earned by men. Due to structural racism in our policies and systems—from the art world to our workforce writ large—Black artists and artists of color in particular must contend with barriers to economic security and visibility not only in their practice and daily life, but in being fully seen by economic programs and data. Despite promising efforts and calls to action, such as the Cultural New Deal, existing tools and capacity fail to accurately measure artists’ economic health and needs. The recent cutting-edge resource Solidarity Not Charity notes, “Artists and culture-bearers mostly live on the margins of poverty or have precarious and unpredictable economic conditions. These conditions are magnified for culturally-grounded organizations and BI-POC, differently abled, low wealth, rural, and LGBTQIA+ artists and culture-bearers.”

Yet, though we know that artists are essential to a more just and equitable future, this past year has revealed the inadequacy of our existing social support systems, and in particular, the fragility of our arts and culture ecosystem. The economic disruption across our country in the past year has specifically devastated the creative, hospitality, and entertainment.
industries. Artist Relief’s [COVID-19 Impact Survey](#) found that 62% of artists have become fully unemployed and 95% have experienced income loss because of shutdowns due to COVID-19. Two thirds of artists surveyed can’t access supplies, resources, spaces, or people necessary for their creative work and 80% have no plan to recover from the crisis.

For those who rely on audiences, the outlook is grim without proper safety protocols, according to the [Audience Outlook Monitor](#). Americans for the Arts’ July 2021 [pandemic impact update](#) reports that “BIPOC artists had even higher rates of unemployment than white artists in 2020 due to the pandemic... and lost a larger percentage of their creative income.” Here in the Bay Area, the impacts too underscore racial disparities: the Community Arts Stabilization Trust’s [Artist and Arts Group Impact Survey](#) found that “organizations that serve the African American and Latinx communities are the most financially impacted by the pandemic and at risk of displacement.” The COVID-19 pandemic is causing many artists to rethink their careers or give up their art entirely.

Across the country, as pandemic relief and protections (eviction moratoriums, unemployment benefits) end, artists remain vulnerable. Our safety net is woefully inadequate in San Francisco as costs rise, and even full-time wages do not make up for the cost of living. The [Insight Center reports](#) that in the runup to the pandemic, Californian families were seeing significant cost increases for housing, childcare and healthcare, with the most drastic childcare cost hikes in the Bay Area. In families with one or more working adults, almost 1 in 5 households in San Francisco County cannot make ends meet. These indicators demonstrate the increasing need for bold economic action.
How Are Artists Essential Catalysts for Social Change?

Communities are the builders of the best models for themselves, and artists are central actors for this work. YBCA builds the capacity of artists in service of the community by creating, championing, and investing in artists. Over the past several years, we have been strengthening our understanding of the potential connection between artists’ work and “upstream” health outcomes so greatly influenced by the social determinants of individual and community health. YBCA’s work has become very focused on the ways in which artists create these four vital conditions of equity, health, and well-being of communities.

THE VITAL CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**SOCIAL COHESION AND BELONGING:** Having positive social relationships, experiencing the sense of interdependence among individuals in a community—the bond that ties people together.

**COMMUNITY SAFETY:** Collectively addressing broad issues that create risk and vulnerability, so that community members feel safe where they live, work, or spend their leisure time.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Making a positive difference in the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes, recognizing yourself as a member of a larger social fabric.

**COMMUNITY IDENTITY/COMMUNITY NARRATIVE:** Understanding the shared culture, belief systems, social norms, and practices of a community; ensuring the community is in charge of its own narrative; and protecting against harmful mainstream narratives that dehumanize and harm individuals and communities.

As an organization on a journey toward an aspiring shared future with artists—one that leaves behind transactional relationships that are destabilizing and creates transformational relationships that are ongoing—how can we reflect this ethos in society? We know we need new ways of understanding artistic return and value that go beyond a monetary exchange. How might we reshape our economy to provide for everyone, including our essential artists and culture makers?
A Targeted Approach

Civil and human rights leaders paved the way for the contemporary idea of a guaranteed income—from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Poor People’s Campaign to the Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Platform to the National Welfare Rights Organization’s advocacy, as Anne Price explains. We believe in the ultimate goal of economic security for all, meaning that all human beings have the right to access the income and assets they need to not only make ends meet but care for loved ones, plan for the future, and thrive as their fullest self. To reach this objective, we have intentionally deployed a targeted approach to meet the greatest need in San Francisco—what we believe is more equitable than a distribution of unconditional cash regardless of income, race, and other factors. A universal program could solve many of the problems in our paternalistic and punitive social safety net; but for now, we must direct resources toward people who’ve been excluded from or penalized by programs and our economy due to systemic oppression, discrimination, and structural racism. (To dive into the racial rules—laws, policies, institutions, regulations, and normative practices—underlying our economy and society, we recommend *The Hidden Rules of Race: Barriers to an Inclusive Economy*.) Distributing resources to those in our community who need them most, at this time of deep economic and wealth inequality, is a moral imperative.

This Pilot’s approach is targeted—it is for artists with qualifying income, facing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, whose artistic practice is rooted in a community that has been or is marginalized—while taking into account constraints related to the use of public funds. In partnership with San Francisco city stakeholders and community arts organizations, we built the outreach strategy and SF-GIPA specifically for artists who have low incomes and for Black/African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and immigrant artists. The SF-GIPA also targets those who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and faced loss of income. None of these efforts were in any way perfect, and in this paper we will go into detail about what we’ve learned and how to continually improve.

“The Pilot makes me feel valued by the community and as an artist in a way I never had before in San Francisco... The fact that people were behind me, that appreciation [is] huge.”

—MARIA BRUSSEL, Dancer, Teaching Artist, SF-GIPA Participant
GETTING STARTED

Compliance

SOURCE OF FUNDING

Your program will need to be designed differently depending on the source of funding—whether those dollars are private or public. For instance, with public funding, you may need to assess what demographics you can target without running up against equal protection clause issues. Additionally, some public benefits waivers in California are not available for publicly-funded programs. As publicly-funded programs proliferate, the constraints and opportunities associated with public funds are changing. We recommend joining (or starting!) local communities of practice and working groups, which have been immensely helpful to navigate the dynamic funding landscape.

TAX STATUS

One of the first steps you’ll take is to determine the tax status of the cash payments. Many nonprofit-led pilots, including ours, use the IRS’ charitable gift status. Cash transfers, or gifts, should not be taxable if they are not offered in recognition of services rendered; and if they further the mission of the organization. Some pilots have applied the IRS’ disaster relief status during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the gift status, a 1099 form need not be issued to participants as there is no requirement to report the cash payments as income.

Funders partnering with implementing organizations should budget for legal compliance costs. Several community organizations, as well as city and state entities, are in the process of trying to streamline both the tax aspect and benefits protections (more below) for these kinds of programs, so that instead of making a per-pilot decision on a per-organization basis, there can be a blanket status for these smaller-scale guaranteed income pilots. To learn more about the tax status of gifts and how to categorize your program, check out shared learning from the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice (GICP).

PUBLIC BENEFITS

Much has been written on benefits and is forthcoming, as state and local agencies coordinate with implementers on waivers and exemptions. Specifically in California, be prepared to work with county and local human services agencies, knowing there may be limitations to the types of benefits protection you can access. For instance, some benefits administered by San Francisco County will only grant a waiver to those pilots with IRB approval.

Many programs, like ours, use a patchwork approach of securing waivers where possible, providing eligibility specialist referrals, and establishing a fund to compensate participants for any loss or decrease to their benefits as a last solution. Many participants choose to handle benefits issues themselves. When determining how to manage potential benefits loss,
work closely with the participants who want guidance and with other community and artists stakeholders involved in the design process. Because waivers are not available for all benefits programs, there will be some benefits—either amounts or eligibility—that could be at risk due to the cash payments. It is critical to get feedback from stakeholders on how to ask questions in a way that explains those risks, while allowing applicants/participants to decide for themselves what is best for them and their families. (It is worth noting as you begin that even though the cash payments are not taxable, they may still count as income for some benefits programs.) We are especially grateful to the Abundant Birth Project in San Francisco for modeling a client-centered approach to navigating benefits protections. The GICP is an excellent resource for federal and state benefits policy and the San Francisco Office of Financial Empowerment is the place to go for the Bay Area benefits protections landscape.

**Operations and Engagement**

**SETTING UP YOUR TEAM**

There are some basic “start up” requirements, almost regardless of the pilot size. At a minimum, consider team capacity for the following:

- Project management (program development, co-design/feedback processes, operations, logistics, outreach)
- Stakeholder engagement and management, especially when working with multiple city agencies and community partners
- Outreach/recruitment organizers
- Participant support (one-on-one communication; application support); operations (payments; vendor management)
- Research, measurement, and evaluation
- Communications and storytelling

When applications opened, we had a high volume of program inquiries and ultimately received over 2,500 applications. The application and onboarding processes required pulling in additional staff to field questions and follow up with artists about their applications.

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Set up your recurring check-ins, meetings, and updates early on in the process with your many stakeholders, which for us included San Francisco artists, city and public agencies, arts and culture community and nonprofit leaders, outreach ambassadors, internal staff and teams, and funders. Several stakeholder collaborations helped us to launch with success: bi-weekly meetings with our partner and funder, the City of San Francisco—including multiple City departments; a series of meetings with San Francisco arts and culture community leaders who participated in feedback and input sessions; and working and planning sessions with guaranteed income, economic security, and racial justice experts at the

“In San Francisco, this land of money, we pay a mental toll to survive. If there is so much abundance here, why is there so much scarcity?”

- KEVIN DUBLIN, Poet, Teaching Artist, Creative Writer, SF-GIPA Participant
local, regional, and national levels.

ESTABLISHING TRANSPARENT TIMELINES
There may need to be a balance between timelines and stakeholder input, especially when working with multiple external stakeholders and public entities. Ensuring the timeline is clear to everyone and making known the limitations, if they exist, at the get-go is essential. We recommend reserving at minimum six months to start up, establish program design, and organize the resources required to engage in the design process. Most programs began a year or two before launch. You need ample time to engage in meaningful community consultation and to incorporate those recommendations into the program design. Although the need for a rapid launch—and to get money deployed as soon as possible—is strong, so too is the critical mandate to be thoughtful, inclusive, and responsive in both design and implementation.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS
It was critical for us to budget for compensation for any kind of co-design, co-creation, feedback process, workshop. Funders especially must recognize the resources needed for participatory design and build those costs into overall program funding.

MAKING PAYMENTS
Our first priority was to provide options for participants to suit their needs and wants—with the critical goal to accommodate both those with bank accounts (via direct deposit) and those who may not use or frequent a bank (via a no-fee prepaid/reloadable debit card). Our second priority was to engage with an aligned vendor for the debit card. We selected MoCaFi as our debit card vendor because of their mission to build wealth in Black and Latinx communities through non-predatory financial services. MoCaFi’s purpose-driven partner bank is a Certified B Corporation, an exception in the banking industry, which has a long and documented history of wealth extraction in communities of color (see Mehrsa Baradaran’s *The Color of Money*). Certified B Corporations are legally required to consider the impacts of their business decisions on a range of stakeholders including workers, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment.

IRB (INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD) RESEARCH APPROVAL
If you wish to publish your research findings, you will need IRB approval to do so. IRB mandates an ethics review, as well as certain kinds of disclosures and consent processes for those participating in the research. This can be an expensive process, but there are GI technical assistance organizations who can help seek IRB approval and you can run your own study internally. When seeking out and applying for public benefits waivers, agencies may require your pilot to have undergone IRB review. This is something to keep in mind when considering whether or not to go through the IRB process.
“The pilot allowed me to re-focus on making music instead of stressing about living/loving/leaving San Francisco.”

- JAMES BUCKNER, Musician, SF-GIPA Participant

PATHWAYS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR ARTIST-CENTERED PROGRAMS

An Engaged and Multi-Stakeholder Outreach Approach

Take your time and be mindful of moving at the speed of trust. One of the most critical and ongoing lessons we learned is the need to make time. Outreach was challenging given the time constraints and that this SF-GIPA targets a relatively broad and diverse group of people and communities whose needs and wants are not homogenous. Budget for plenty of time for planning the outreach strategy in collaboration with program stakeholders and for conducting the outreach itself. See the following case study for how to develop a community outreach strategy.

“The pilot allowed me to re-focus on making music instead of stressing about living/loving/leaving San Francisco.”

- JAMES BUCKNER, Musician, SF-GIPA Participant
CASE STUDY: Developing A Local Community Outreach Strategy

To meet the SF-GIPA goal to reach artists in their communities, focused on demographics and neighborhoods hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in San Francisco, YBCA implemented an outreach program and hired Community Outreach Organizers to help spread the word. These critical ambassadors, who had experience working with artists of color, LGBTQIA+ artists, immigrant artists, and artists with disabilities, acted as a bridge between YBCA and prospective applicants.

**CHALLENGE:** To clarify any potential misinformation, confusion, or fear around the intention, purpose, and process of the SF-GIPA, we aimed to have trusted leaders sharing information. With a very short timeline to develop and launch the program (approximately three months), we needed to build an expansive outreach strategy that reached artists living on the margins.

**SOLUTION:** YBCA developed a Community Outreach Organizer role and hired a team to get the word out to impacted artist communities. Due to pandemic precautions, most of this outreach was remote, requiring Internet access. Although the online outreach strategy was successful (our applicant pool reflected the demographics we were focused on), we recognize this limitation, particularly to reach those without an Internet connection. All outreach organizers were paid hourly. Using email, social media, text messaging and group chats, virtual meetings, and phone, the organizers shared information with their networks and communities. The organizers also recruited artists well known in the Bay Area to spread the word as well as arts organizations to share out with their networks.

**MOVING FORWARD:** The Community Outreach Organizer is an essential role to build trust when embarking on a radical project like guaranteed income which requires nothing in return for regular cash payments—an unusual proposition in the nonprofit grantmaking world. Hiring artists within the communities that the SF-GIPA targeted was critical to the success of the outreach strategy, where we saw applicant demographic data which mirrored who we were trying to reach. GI funders must consider the true cost of a robust outreach strategy, which includes market-rate compensation for labor. Funders and all stakeholders must also consider timing. Theoretically, cash is delivered into recipients’ hands as soon as possible. In reality, fast-moving timelines can lead to skipping steps or excluding voices. We heard feedback about the rushed process, and we know that to reach more communities, we needed more time. It is a challenge to balance urgency and immediate need with community input. Funders should be prepared for later disbursement timelines if it means implementers can gather more input and do more extensive and comprehensive outreach. Implementers should consistently share transparent timelines, especially at the start of the process, so that community stakeholders are informed early on about the timing. Finally, language access is critical and so consider budgeting for an outreach team that has fluency in the languages spoken by the communities targeted by the program.
Eligibility Criteria

Because of the public nature of the funding for the SF-GIPA, we were not able to restrict funds by race or any group. This has been a frequent barrier in similar programs. To target artists in our focus populations, we used imperfect proxy indicators to be eligible for the program, such as an income qualifier (using Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines) as well as zip codes. Zip codes were selected based on a combination of the areas of San Francisco hardest hit by the pandemic (as determined by COVID-19 case counts) and on community input. The data demonstrates a relationship between the areas of San Francisco most impacted by COVID-19 cases and areas with higher populations of people of color. Lastly, the application asked artists to respond to a question asking if their artistic practice is rooted in a historically marginalized community, mirroring language from the San Francisco Arts Commission’s Cultural Equity Initiatives.

Using a number of eligibility criteria had its advantages—prioritizing those who need it—as well as disadvantages: a more cumbersome application process. Although the intention of including eligible zip codes was to ensure that we reached artist populations in most need, many in our community saw them as restrictive or exclusive. Many artists are dealing with displacement and/or moving around, and may not be tied to a specific zip code. In hindsight, the zip codes might not have been necessary, and may only have added another level of administration.

In the end, the artist participants reflect the intended target groups. Ninety-five percent identify as at least one of the following demographics: Black/African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander; LGBTQIA+; disabled; immigrant. Almost two thirds (64%) identify as Black/African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Thirty-five percent identify as white and 2% wrote in their own race/ethnicity. Close to half (49%) identify as LGBTQIA+. Over half (52%) identify as disabled and almost a fifth (19%) identify as an immigrant.

Additional recommendations:

- Focus eligibility criteria on including those who have been and continue to be excluded.

- Citizenship status should not be a barrier to participation. Social security numbers were not required to participate in this SF-GIPA, nor was a bank account (often associated with either an SSN or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number).

- Account for unhoused residents. If residence verification is required, as it was for this SF-GIPA, consider what alternative form of verification to use for city residents who have impermanent housing or may be moving around. This might include self-attestation, information on a transitional or non-fixed address home, or an address where the applicant receives mail.
A NOTE ON RANDOMIZED SELECTION

Discovery in the GI field points to random selection as a predominant way to gather participants. Other demonstrations select participants from preexisting pools (for instance, people who have participated in another program or who have previously received a grant or stipend from the implementer). Our process for selecting the 130 SF-GIPA participants was designed based on significant input from community members, research across the growing field of guaranteed income experiments, and best practices from existing programs in the field, including The Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED). To ensure a selection process that eliminated bias, we compared several methods including weighting tools/lotteries. Based on strong feedback from our community advisors and regarded practice in research trials, we determined that randomization prevents selection bias and eliminates accidental bias. What’s more, it was the preferred way to handle an oversubscribed applicant pool without having applicants compete with one another for worthiness of cash payments.

We did receive feedback from some expressing the desire for a merit-based selection process. Consistent with research, expertise, best practices, and community advisors in the guaranteed income field, we chose not to take this path from the start because we did not want to put artists in competition with one another. One’s economic security deservedness is not contingent on any kind of merit (for instance, quality or quantity of artwork). In fact, this SF-GIPA seeks to highlight the inherent deservedness of all people (or artists). We are grateful to the work of Anne Price, Jhumpa Bhattachayara, and Alicia Walters at the Insight Center who underscore that we need a major societal narrative shift in the way we talk about who is deserving—and who is not, because much of what we believe about who is deserving is rooted in anti-Blackness, and because merit-based measures can worsen disparities rather than promote equity. As Aisha Nyandoro, Executive Director of Springboard to Opportunities and the Magnolia Mother’s Trust, says, “You don’t have to prove that you deserve this. You simply deserve it because you are.”

“YBCA’s Pilot has dynamized my artistic practice. I found purpose again in these difficult times because the Pilot made me feel heard and seen.”

- MÉLANIE CLAPIÈS, Musician, SF-GIPA Participant
Co-Designing with Artists for Artists

We engaged stakeholders in many steps along the way. Still, we could have done more and provided more time for input. Generally, when co-designing with artists (or your target group):

- Share known timelines and roadmap early on in the process so all stakeholders are aware of the process and timing.

- Actively seek input and engage in exchange of ideas for measurement and evaluation with community organizations and people reflected in the pilot. See the following case study for how to design an impact measurement framework with artists.

On the design of the application in particular, we share several recommendations:

- Allow ample time to design the fields and questions for the application process. There are numerous best practices already in the field about how to ask for certain information, such as benefits. When developing the application with community input, we learned that there were strong preferences for the ways to word specific fields, such as those relating to demographics and income. We understand the application to be highly contextual to the target population and to its local geography and identity.

- Collect demographic data. Collaborate with stakeholders and community partners on the exact language for these fields, which may also be unique to the targeted group and/or to the local context.

- Consider multiple methods to apply, in addition to an online application, for those who don’t have internet access or who trust other forms (such as in-person, by mail, or by phone). Given our timeline (under three months) to launch and the ongoing pandemic making face-to-face encounters a challenge, we only offered an online application.

- Provide translation options.
CASE STUDY: Workshopping Impact Measurement with Artists for Artists

The SF Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists (SF-GIPA), Powered by YBCA aims to gather evidence across a range of indicators including financial security, health and quality of life, and experience as an artist. Pilots over the past few years have demonstrated evidence-based research across the first two categories, yet the latter—experience as an artist—remains uncharted. We knew we wanted to learn as much as possible about how a guaranteed income supports artists in San Francisco, and so we would need to devise metrics to understand these impacts over time. Our SF-GIPA received IRB-approval through the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine, where YBCA is in the process of developing a comprehensive outcomes framework that hypothesizes when we invest in artists and culture-makers, we achieve better, stronger societal outcomes across four critical conditions/aspects: social cohesion and belonging; community safety; civic engagement; community identity/community narrative. The ultimate goal is to understand from participants themselves how these programs can be fit into their lives. We know this is just a start and there is much more work to be done to continue to unpack power dynamics, understand and mitigate bias, and practice accountability in the field of measurement and evaluation.

CHALLENGE: How do we begin to measure the impact of guaranteed income on artists? How might we capture seemingly intangible changes over time in service of advocating for stronger social and economic policies that facilitate a system of care? We have to be mindful of historic trauma around experimentation, nonconsensual and/or invasive research, and the inherent power dynamics in researcher-subject positioning.

SOLUTION: First, we consult artists. By engaging artists in the creation process, we hope to distribute decision-making and creative analysis, rather than use a top-down approach. This is part of an overall process of transformation to reimagine the role of the arts institution in context with artists in community. We held a facilitated workshop to exchange ideas and determine the indicators for artist transformation. We explored a wealth of indicators to consider from the value of artistic production to the amount of energy and time to self-perceptions of worthiness and connectedness. The metrics used in our IRB study for artistic expression were entirely derived from this process.

MOVING FORWARD: As the SF-GIPA progresses, we know there is plenty more work to be done to assess the data collected. As Chicago Beyond’s guidebook Why Am I Always Being Researched? reminds us: What inequities, historical or present, are built into the metrics? How will the data be contextualized? What are the dominant narratives that have previously described participants? How have these narratives served participants well? How have they harmed them, or reinforced inequities? What are the limitations of the data collected, and how are they communicated? As we move into analyzing and publishing impact data, these are crucial questions to answer.
Building Community

When designing programs, consider ways to build community within the participant group—or, assess to what extent this may be a desire from participants. We heard loud and clear, early on, that artist participants want to engage with and support one another. All group opportunities are entirely opt-in so those who wish to remain private and anonymous may do so.

Additional recommendations:

- Consider what kinds of support structures and opportunities you can integrate to build community among pilot participants. See the following case study for how to integrate an Artist Advocate program into your pilot.

- In the future, we hope to integrate trauma-informed financial coaching resources and/or peer learning and sharing, with a racial equity lens, artist-lead and artist-centered resources, and other holistic supports.

  - Through disproportionately levying punitive overdraft fees on communities of color, aligning with oil and gas corporations that accelerate climate change and environmental racism, and perpetuating discriminatory lending practices, financial institutions have long profited from predatory practices and treatment of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people. To help artists navigate these extractive systems, offering GI participants a spectrum of financial supports—including, but not limited to, unconditional cash payments and trauma-informed financial coaching—can build a continuum of long-term, community-led knowledge and power.

  - We learned that many participants are interested in support in navigating daily stressors, as well as long term goal-setting and planning. Financial coaching could include those topics as well as navigating careers, pay, and personal finances, with a trauma-informed lens that takes into account the trauma behind systemic underfunding, poor pay, unequal pay for Black artists, artists of color, LGBTQ+ artists, and any artists who have been targets of oppression. We emphasize the opt-in/voluntary nature of accessing additional resources. We also can envision a collaborative project developing money planning and coaching content with artists/by artists.

“The extra money has shifted me out of survival mode and suddenly I have so much more capacity to show up for my own life, as well as for other people.”

- EAMON MCGIVERN, Visual Artist, SF-GIPA Participant
CASE STUDY: Establishing an Artist Advocates Program

As the SF-GIPA launched, we hired a group of Artist Advocates who were, on an opt-in basis, paired one-on-one with artists in the SF-GIPA. The Artist Advocates provided resource support and intimate point-of-contact for program participants. These Artist Advocates proved to be a welcome resource. They demonstrated the vast possibilities of additional community building efforts that implementers can integrate into GI programs, as well as revealing desires from artist participants to connect with one another and one another’s artistic practices.

CHALLENGE: We wanted to ensure that participants had ample support when onboarding. We also wanted to provide resources and referrals, knowing from our rapid response pandemic efforts that many artists want to get connected to a variety of services and opportunities. In keeping with our commitments to redistribute power and let artists lead—as the best solutions-makers of their own experience—we wanted to ensure artists are in the driver’s seat as much as possible.

SOLUTION: Participants were given the option to pair with an Artist Advocate. Each Advocate was then able to set up group sessions (for those participants who self-selected to not remain anonymous/private) and individual meetings with participants. Very quickly, we heard that participants wanted to be in creative spaces with one another, and that Advocates wanted to facilitate this. We also heard that artists wanted to share with one another and talk about their own career or practice development. One Artist Advocate held an Artist Salon for artists to present their work to one another. Another held a grant writing workshop, covering the fundamentals of preparing for artist grants and seeking project funding. Advocates spoke with participants about personal growth and career-building; how to identify their own strengths and rebalance time toward attainable goals. Participants were able to use these connections as spaces to not only access information about the SF-GIPA, but also to share experiences of pandemic sheltering-in-place and the transition into San Francisco’s reopening. Participants were also able to network with one another.

MOVING FORWARD: Our biggest takeaway from this trial is that artists wanted to be in community with one another. A consistent point of direct feedback from participants has been the desire for more opportunities to connect with one another and to connect with an Artist Advocate. Whereas much of the thought around guaranteed income is to deliver cash payments, and stay hands-off—for a number of valid reasons including the paternalistic nature of our current social welfare system—we now know there is a hunger for connection to be established through this program. Artist Advocates expressed a desire to have more time to cover more topics with participants, throughout the duration of the SF-GIPA, such as sessions on mental health, time management, goal-setting, holistic wellness, and art therapy, as well as more technical sessions on building a portfolio, website, and social media presence. (Ideally, funding would be sufficient to allow for the Artist Advocates to support participants for the entire duration of the SF-GIPA.)
Measurement and Evaluation

The SF-GIPA builds on YBCA’s existing expertise with its vital conditions of health and well-being framework (as introduced in the earlier section “How Are Artists Essential Catalysts for Social Change?”). By developing evidence-of-impact methodologies, we hope to not only be able to see progress/transformation in the communities in which we work—and where improvements can be made, but also will be able to apply evidence to a broader policy advocacy agenda that centers investing in artists as critical to economic and radical justice and economic development schemes. In this way, we are taking a rigorous approach that is “deeper” than one might imagine a traditional arts and culture institution can do.

We are taking two key routes of measurement: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative effort is primarily acquired through voluntary surveys—a baseline survey at the start of the SF-GIPA followed by monthly surveys throughout the duration of the SF-GIPA. These surveys look at indicators in three broad categories:

- **Experience as an artist**: We hope to learn insights from artist participants about their ability, time, capacity, and energy to engage in their artistic practice.

- **Health and quality of life**: We hope to build on the research in the field to learn how guaranteed income at this level affects physical and mental health and stress.

- **Economic security**: We know from existing research that guaranteed income increases economic stability. Knowing that income will be coming in on a regular basis can smooth income volatility and help mitigate crisis when faced with a financial emergency. We hope to add to the field of research with an artist-centered lens. Many artists are gig workers—for a long time, they have freelanced, worked part-time or temporary jobs, and generated income on a per-project basis. These artists do not have the economic security that often comes along with full-time employment: benefits, health insurance, medical leave. Artists are the harbinger for the changing ways of work and increasing economic insecurity in our society.

“This has given me such a blessing of peace of mind! Nothing kills creativity more than stress, and this has hugely helped with my creative process.”

- **ANASTASIA SAUVAGE**, Performing Artist, Teaching Artist, Dancer, SF-GIPA Participant
In our qualitative evaluation, we will capture participant’s stories in their own voices. How are lives impacted by regular installments of unconditional cash? Are participants able to pursue new opportunities that they wouldn’t have otherwise? Does this cash change the way artists plan their projects or accept or turn down gigs? How does guaranteed income affect employment? Stress? Community engagement? Overall well-being?

Additional recommendations:

● Engage with artists early on in the evaluation process (for details, refer to the case study above on co-designing with artists).

● Compensate participants for filling out surveys.

● We made the decision to not track purchases or expenditures. Instead, we will qualitatively gather stories from participants—completely optional—about how they were impacted by the cash payments. Coming from a place of trust and belief in self-determination, we did not want participants to feel like they were being surveilled or judged for purchases. We are more interested in changes over time (if any), how artists speak to their own experience of participating and the impact the SF-GIPA has had on their lives and artistic lives.

MARIKA BRUSSEL, Dancer, Teaching Artist, SF-GIPA Participant
CALLS TO ACTION

A FEDERAL GUARANTEED INCOME

We advocate for a guaranteed income. For example, The New School’s Institute on Race and Political Economy’s Guaranteed Income for the 21st Century Proposal would eliminate wage earning requirements and expand the negative income tax feature of the Earned Income Tax Credit, including those earning zero income or who are ineligible for current refunds because their income is too low. Many are exploring existing tax credits and pandemic relief programs as a basis for a guaranteed income (see the GICP’s Public Funding fact sheet).

Cash payments from guaranteed income must not interfere with or render people ineligible for existing social safety net programs.

Until a universal approach is achieved, guaranteed income demonstrations must be able to target by race without equal protection violations.

PROTECT BENEFITS ALONGSIDE GI

In the short-term, we must ensure that income received from GI pilots is exempt from eligibility requirements for public benefits programs. In the long-term, we must advocate for GI that is built into the existing safety net, so that families are not penalized (by the loss or reduction of benefits) when participating in GI programs.

GI programs are not a replacement for the social safety net. As many grapple with economic and housing insecurity during the ongoing pandemic, we need a stronger safety net—and more protections, not fewer. We must avoid enacting austerity measures post-crisis that do more harm than good and only exacerbate existing inequalities.

ADEQUATE AND PATIENT FUNDING FOR GI RESEARCH

Funders—both public and private—should be prepared to account for all the research associated costs (support staff, software, outreach, training, etc.) that come with running a research study, beyond the cost of the IRB approval process. Chicago Beyond’s guidebook Why Am I Always Being Researched? reminds community organizations and funders to ask questions together: “Will the research generate new staff responsibilities? Will it generate communications, change management, or other costs to the organization?” Funders must also account for the vast research required to assess the benefits landscape and deliver benefits protections pathways to participants.

Funders must also be patient. Funders and implementers can work together to set reasonable timelines for research pilots, including the time it takes to understand the context of where a project is taking place. Why Am I Always Being Researched? urges us to ask: “Does the timeline support and create incentives for building relationships and trust? Developing data tools with community participation? Researchers and community organizations interpreting the data together?”

DISAGGREGATE DATA, STARTING WITH RACE AND GENDER

With women artists of color disproportionately locked out of higher-paying jobs and other economic opportunities, we need data that accurately measures the economic health of artists: beginning with disaggregation by race and gender as a starting point. Without accurate data, we cannot address the deep inequities in our policies and the economy that widened during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Office of Mayor London Breed and San Francisco's Arts Commission, Office of Racial Equity, and Office of Financial Empowerment; the entire YBCA team and especially to Stephanie Imah, Emma Guterman-Slater, and Penelope Douglas; the SF-GIPA Artist Advocates and Community Outreach Organizers; San Francisco community arts leaders; Start Small Foundation; University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine; Mayors for a Guaranteed Income; our peers in the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice, the California Guaranteed Income Community of Practice, and the Bay Area Guaranteed Income group; and Aisa Villarosa, Jasmine Rashid, and Hope Wollensack for your close read.

We welcome comments, feedback, and continued collaboration. Please reach out to us at pilot@ybca.org.

guaranteedinc.org

OCTOBER 2021