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Jerome Foundation Grants \$5.2 Million to Bolster Arts Organizations Through New Seeding Innovation Fund, Flexible Grants to Arts Organizations Supporting Early-Career Artists

Flexible, unrestricted grants aim to support Jerome-grantee arts organizations serving early-career artists amid mounting financial pressure across the arts sector.

ST. PAUL, MN, September 9, 2026 — Jerome Foundation announces the Seeding Innovation Fund, a one-time grant available to current arts organization grantees in Minnesota and New York City—80 arts organizations, whose missions and values align with Jerome Foundation’s focus on supporting early-career artists, received flexible, unrestricted funding.

“We hear loud and clear that organizations are being pushed to do more with less and that resources, time, and tools are stretched thin,” said Eleanor Savage, President of Jerome Foundation. “This funding is an investment in the essential and innovative contributions arts organizations are making to artists and communities and in their ability to persevere.”

According to The Center for Effective Philanthropy’s [State of Nonprofits 2026: What Funders Need to Know report](#), a majority of nonprofit leaders face severe exhaustion driven by soaring service demands, shrinking foundation grants, dwindling financial reserves, and an atmosphere of fear and stress stemming from political threats to the well-being and safety of their communities, staff, and board. Nonprofit arts leaders—like their counterparts across sectors—are calling for immediate, responsive support to sustain the field’s cultural infrastructure.

In June 2026, Jerome Foundation’s Board of Directors approved [\\$12 million in expanded funding](#), naming the Seeding Innovation Fund its first priority for responsive support.

“Through our depth of connection with arts leaders, we know what is at stake. Our values of creative risk and innovation ask us to be bold in our response,” said Board Chair Lori Pourier. “We believe, and hope, that these funds support organizations’ capacity to keep going and to continue providing critical cultural space and programming that nurtures artists, culture bearers, and communities.”

The Seeding Innovation Fund provides \$80,000 grants to Jerome Foundation grantee organizations that maintain physical space, and \$40,000 grants to fiscally sponsored or program-focused organizations without a dedicated facility. The funds are unrestricted and may be used for any purpose that sustains an organization's work. This includes, but is not limited to, general operating support, program support, financial stabilization, leadership transitions, board or community development, technology and infrastructure, capital and facility needs, debt retirement, and creative production.

After authorizing these funds at its June 22 Board meeting, the Foundation was able to distribute the funds to its grantee partners starting August 3. The speed of this process was achieved through a deliberately simple, low-burden process for getting resources into grantees' hands.

Jerome's framing of these funds as "seeding innovation" recognizes that innovation can emerge in many ways. It can come from working with existing resources, seeing something familiar in a new way, or venturing into wholly uncharted territory. But innovation requires resources: leaders and their teams need protected time, space for productive friction, and funding that goes beyond bare survival. These are the conditions under which ideas can surface, be tested, cross-pollinate, and ultimately take shape.

Savage encourages fellow philanthropies to interrupt the familiar notes of futility, such as: "We can't possibly fill the gap left by government cuts," "Increased grantmaking will jeopardize our perpetuity," "Our board will never approve this," or any number of other constraints funders use to justify inaction. Along with Jerome board, she urges funders to weigh those justifications against the risk of not acting: an organization closing, a community losing access to the arts, artists leaving the sector, a field's capacity eroding.

"Focus on action, and find ways to close the hope gapⁱ," said Savage. "Move beyond futility, and move beyond emergency funding, to investing in surviving and thriving arts ecosystems. The response from arts leaders—expressions of solidarity, of feeling valued, trusted, and understood, of having renewed space to breathe and hope—affirms the impact this kind of grantmaking can have in seeding innovation now and into the future."

Responses from Grantees

"We don't have adequate words for the gratitude and surprise we felt opening this email. We have been working hard to build relationships with artists and our community to dream about what a vibrant equitable rural community can look like. We feel so seen and trusted. Thank you for showing us your belief through care, trust, and deep generosity. This abundant support will ripple through to artists for a long time."

“This grant is such an incredible investment in our ability to be creative thinkers rather than merely scrappy problem solvers. This money will help us build vision and strategy. And that in itself is a huge gift.”

“Reading your note, I felt you fully understand our work—not just for the work we produce, but for the exhaustion of doing that work under constant pressure, and the resourcefulness it takes to keep going anyway. The Seeding Innovation Fund’s flexibility is a gift in itself, so few funders understand that sometimes the most transformative support isn’t tied to a program, but to the breathing room an organization needs to stabilize and imagine what’s next.”

“Thank you for fueling our ability to adapt and innovate in these dark and challenging times. Together we burn more brightly in our support for our artists and our communities! Thank you for seeding the future of our organization and for your ongoing encouragement to BE BOLD!”

“This grant makes something possible that wasn’t in this climate: We can think strategically about our organizational durability, about how we want to reshape our relationship to financial cycles and scarcity. This shift to possibility is profound.”

“This support comes at a crucial time for our organization to continue its mission long term and we hope that you and all of our community members experience the deep generational impact that these funds will create for artists. We are committed to continue to create innovative programs rooted in our values of care, interconnectedness, and accountability that support the many needs and dreams of artists.”

“I know we don't have to explain how impactful this gift is, but I can't help but express how powerful it is for us at this moment, as we insist on staying ambitiously artist-centered despite the chaos we are all trying to survive as a field.”

“This support will continue to change lives and awaken the HEART of why art will be our salve in the midnight hour! This support comes at a time when we can really use it to maintain, deepen and strengthen our position as a pillar for the next wave of creative leaders in our sector—enabling them not only to hone their skills yet also to thrive while doing it. Thank you for seeing our work and investing in the sector by investing in us. Here is to all the amazing existing and new opportunities we will be able to now do.”

“Your consistent recognition of the challenges facing arts organizations, coupled with your willingness to respond with trust, flexibility, and meaningful investment, reflects what it means to be a true ally to the cultural sector. At a time when so many organizations are being asked to do more with fewer resources, your support offers not only critical funding but also encouragement and hope.”

About Jerome Foundation

Founded in 1964, Jerome Foundation offers grant programs across creative fields in Minnesota and the five boroughs of New York City, providing direct support to early-career artists and culture bearers as imaginative changemakers, as well as to arts organizations and ecosystem initiatives that offer them ongoing programs, services, or opportunities—together building an ecosystem of belonging and care for the arts, its creators, and the communities they serve. We steward our grantmaking and our financial assets through a values-aligned investment approach that considers the impact of our decisions on the communities we serve.

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ⁱ [We Need to Close the Hope Gap](#), by Camilla Griffiths, Trevor Smith, Christina Pao, and Justin Morgan. “At BLIS Collective, a solidarity and action hub that leverages narrative and storytelling to advance transformative social policy, we call this measurable distance between support for a cause and belief in its feasibility the Hope Gap.”