

California Lawyers for the Arts
Presentation to CROB meeting 9.12.23
Updated 2.27.23

Designing Creative Futures Program Summary

Note: Powerpoint slides that were shown to the California Rehabilitation Oversight Board during the presentation are available at this [link](#).

[Designing Creative Futures](#) was California Lawyers for the Arts' response to the Governor Newsom's call for releasing 8,000 prisoners during the height of COVID. Our staff reached out to 21 arts organizations that provide arts programs in our state prisons, asking who they would recommend for release based on their skills, work ethic and other characteristics.

We poured names into several spread sheets and sent our list of 525 recommendations to the Governor's office. In response, his commutations staff said they did not want to release people into poverty and homelessness. So we set about creating a program that places formerly incarcerated people who are interested in the arts in paid internships with nonprofit arts organizations. Designing Creative Futures demonstrates that the arts are a successful engine for workforce development.

The plan for Designing Creative Futures was adapted from CLA's previous experience running internship programs in San Francisco: Spotlight on the Arts, which has been placing youth from low-income families in paid internships and apprenticeships since 1993, and the Arts Industry Employment Initiative, a highly successful program that placed people receiving public assistance in arts internships from 1999 to 2001 in response to the federal welfare to work mandate.

We received funds from a variety of sources to launch Designing Creative Futures, including local arts agencies in San Diego and San Francisco, the Conrad Prebys Foundation and the Art for Justice Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the state of California through our three-year contract with CDCR and our grant for arts services from the California Arts Council. This year, we received a third grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to produce and disseminate a set of best practices that will document the program and our third-party evaluation.

We decided to place the interns on CLA's payroll, to lift that burden off the shoulders of the participating nonprofit arts organizations. In addition to \$20/hour for 20 hours/week for four months, our interns receive monthly transportation stipends and personal technology reimbursements, up to three consultations with our career and college counselors, monthly professional development workshops, and support with mental health and other issues as needed. The worksites receive a \$1,000 administrative fee for each intern that is placed with them, and additional support if they continue employing the intern at the conclusion of the internship.

In addition to being formerly incarcerated with an interest in the arts, eligible participants must reside in California. As with all of our employees, we also require COVID-19 vaccination and completion of a sexual harassment training program.

Since the program was launched in the spring of 2022 in San Diego, we have received 231 applications. So far, we have placed 107 individuals at more than 40 organizations with a completion rate of 89%. We are on track to serve at least 250 persons during the three-year term of our CDCR contract, which has a goal of placing at least 50 persons per year. We have received four unemployment insurance claims and one workers' compensation claim that resulted from an injury on the job. And only two of our participants have been arrested during and since their internships.

The participants reside in eight counties: San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Colusa. We are soon going to hire a fourth program manager to recruit and place applicants in the Sacramento region.

Our program managers make great efforts to place the interns in positions that build their skills in their areas of interest. Our worksites have included museums, artist residency programs, theatres and community arts and social justice organizations. The range of work includes marketing, social media and podcasting, building sets and stage management, audio production, writing grants and curricula, and exhibit design and

visitor services, as well as, of course, the nuts and bolts of administrative work.

This short video describes the experience of Pablo, who completed his successful internship at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego: <https://vimeo.com/804419482>

Prior to his incarceration, Pablo had completed a year of college at Southwestern College in San Diego. He also earned some college credits while he was at Centinela State Prison, where he was enrolled in an arts program provided by Playwrights Project. During his internship at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, our program manager encouraged Pablo to complete a Google certification in data analytics.

He also worked intensively with our college counselor, who helped him with applications to four UC's, and he was accepted at two of them. He now completing his undergraduate degree with a major in international business and a minor in data science at UC-San Diego.

Pablo's success is one of many examples we are happy to share:

-- Our intern at Empowerment Avenue was promoted to Assistant Director at the end of his internship.

-- Our intern at Self Help Graphics & Art is now working at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

-- Our intern in the philanthropy department at the Old Globe Theatre, wrote a successful grant application and after her

internship, she is planning to start a nonprofit organization that will help formerly incarcerated women.

-- Our intern at The Actors' Gang in Los Angeles was retained to continue in his role building sets and props and was given a generous raise. He also enrolled in a course in prop design at East LA City College.

In conclusion, Designing Creative Futures demonstrates that the arts are a powerful engine for community re-engagement that ignites the ambitions and passions of our participants, while reducing anti-social behavior and recidivism.

Thank you for your support.

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