

Upstart Co-Lab impact investments focus on creative economy

 philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/upstart-co-lab-impact-investments-focus-on-creative-economy

Candid

June 9, 2025

Upstart Co-Lab, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, has announced impact investments totaling \$5 million in support of its Inclusive Creative Economy Strategy.

According to UpStart's 2024 Report: Inclusive Creative Economy Strategy (27 pages, PDF), the initiative is expected to leverage as much as \$15 million to fund inclusive and sustainable businesses that provide market rate returns on investments, while benefiting the creative sector. The strategy is backed by more than two-dozen investors and funders, including the Bonfils-Stanton, Ford, Marguerite Casey, Skoll, Snap, Souls Grown Deep, and Woodcock foundations, as well as the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the Toledo Museum of Art.

Investments include \$1 million to Making Space, which uses its talent acquisition platform to connect neurodivergent, chronically ill, and disabled professionals with career opportunities; \$1 million to SoGal Ventures, which invests in technology solutions for the creator economy and community building; \$1 million to True Beauty Ventures, a Latina co-led fund that backs beauty industry brands centering culture, heritage, and personal creative expression; and \$1 million to Willow Growth Partners, which invests in disruptive technologies and entrepreneurs developing "better for you, better for the planet" consumer brands. In addition, UpStart has invested in Breakr, a creator marketing platform, and Honeycomb Credit, a crowdfunding platform serving small businesses in the creative sector.

According to UpStart, 49 percent of the companies in its inclusive creative economy portfolio are led by women, 40 percent by Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and 43 percent by artists, designers, and other creative people.

"Businesses started by artists, designers, and other creatives often balance financial profitability with concern for their workers, their communities, and the environment," wrote UpStart Co-Lab. "The potential to unleash the power of art, design, culture, heritage, and creativity through investment is greater than ever."

(Photo credit: Getty Images/Fresh Splash)

"2024 Report: Inclusive Creative Economy Strategy." UpStart Co-Lab report 05/29/2025. Subjects Impact investing; African Americans / Black People; Latinx / Latinos; Indigenous Peoples / Native Americans; Community improvement / development; Environment;

Financial management; Nonprofit management; Arts / Culture
Organizations Breakr; Upstart Co-Lab; Willow Growth Partners; True Beauty Ventures;
Making Space; SoGal Ventures; Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; Bonfils-Stanton
Foundation; Ford Foundation; Marguerite Casey Foundation; Skoll Foundation; Snap
Foundation; Souls Grown Deep Foundation; Woodcock Foundation; Andy Warhol
Foundation for the Visual Arts; Toledo Museum of Art; Honeycomb Credit
Locations National