

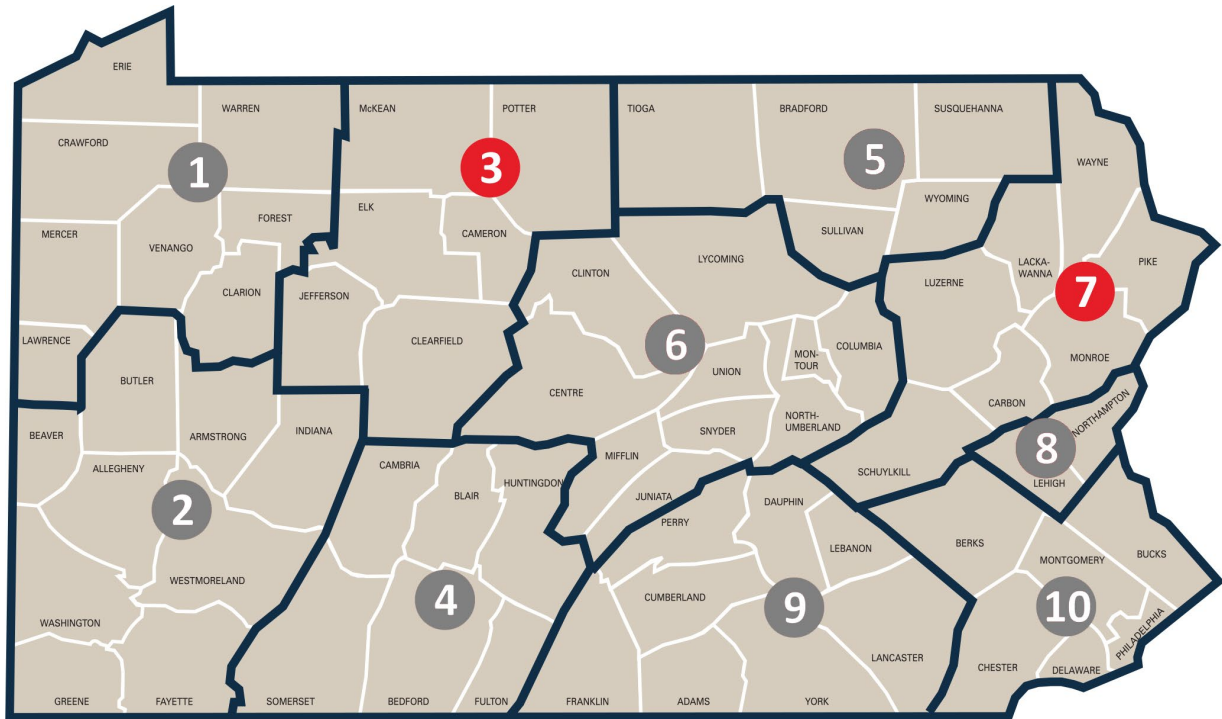


Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

Guidelines for Statewide Services – PA Creative Connection Network Pilot

A regional ecosystem platform for Pennsylvania’s creative sector



Due Date: January 4, 2027 – 5 p.m. EST

Performance Period: January 1, 2027 – December 31, 2027

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About Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Pennsylvania Creative Industries is the new flagship brand of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency. With this name, the Council aims to elevate the creative sector's visibility, engage broader audiences, foster collaboration across disciplines, and underscore creativity's vital role in innovation, economic growth, and community vitality.

In 2025, our Council adopted a new strategic plan with the mission to empower, connect, and amplify creatives and creative industries and their contributions to Pennsylvania's communities, economy, and workforce. Our vision is that Pennsylvania becomes the national leader among states for creative communities, talent, and industries.

To maximize impact and align with state community and economic development goals, Pennsylvania Creative Industries invests resources in five key areas:

- **Asset Development** (e.g., creative organizations, entrepreneurial ecosystem, technical assistance, regional networking).
- **Workforce Development** (e.g., creative skills, career awareness, and employment pathways).
- **Community Development** (e.g., creative placemaking, engagement with local governments, and networking for practitioners).
- **Visibility** (e.g., promotion of creative industries, products and services, and of the contributions and opportunities within our commonwealth's creative sector).
- **Policy** (e.g., creation of policies that promote and foster relevancy and opportunity for creative industries, within governmental and non-governmental agencies and businesses)

Creative Industries Defined

Creative industries encompass individuals, organizations, and businesses that generate goods, services, and intellectual property through creative work. This includes, but is not limited to, advertising, architecture, performing and visual arts, design, crafts, music, media and film production, publishing, and digital games. Innovation, technology, and creative expression unite these diverse sectors.

In 2023, our commonwealth's creative industries contributed \$30B to Pennsylvania's economy and supported nearly 190K jobs. Learn more [here](#).

The Why

The PA Creative Connection Network is designed to build an ecosystem that encourages regional coordination and promotion of creative sector opportunities as part of a comprehensive statewide development and communications strategy. The network is integral to the advancement and implementation of Pennsylvania Creative Industries strategic plan.

Network leads will develop and manage cross-sector collaborations that amplify the creative sector, local economies and community vitality. They will cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other sectors such as tourism, recreation, community development and education.

Network leads will work closely with Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff to ensure alignment to the agency's key areas, vision and mission. The PA Creative Connection Network will be required to collaborate and to attend an annual statewide gathering hosted by Pennsylvania Creative Industries.

Requirements

- Host at least one regional convening annually. (encouraged but not required in year one)
 - Plan, promote, and execute at least one in-person (with a hybrid option) gathering for members of the regional creative industries ecosystem. Showcase best practices,

facilitate knowledge exchange and networking, and address regional challenges and opportunities.

- Create and maintain an online resource center for the regional creative industries eco-system. Develop an online platform (web site or section of existing web site) that includes but not limited to the following categories:
 - Funding opportunities
 - Conferences and workshops
 - Research and data on the regional creative economy
 - Technical assistance and capacity building tools
 - Job boards and/or creative sector workforce training programs
 - A directory of creative sector organizations and businesses
- Develop and maintain a creative sector inventory that documents the region's existing creative sector institutions, artists, businesses, organizations, etc.
- Develop and maintain a regional creative sector asset map to show how assets connect, where there are gaps and opportunities for collaboration.
- Promote Pennsylvania Creative Industries programs and services as well as other funding opportunities and resources for the creative sector.
- Present at public meetings and events throughout the designated region, advancing information about resources and Pennsylvania Creative Industries' programs.
- Provide resources, technical assistance, and support to the creative community. Develop and deliver professional development programs throughout the region.
- Dedicated personnel responsible for implementation of the requirements outlined in these guidelines.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, college or university.
 - Fiscal agents and fiscal sponsors are not eligible to apply.
- Be located in Pennsylvania and registered as a Pennsylvania Non-profit Corporation with the Pennsylvania Department of State Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations, and in compliance with required annual report filing(s).
- Applicants must be located in the region they are applying to serve.

Funding Amount and Payment Method

- PA Creative Industries anticipates funding one applicant per region for up to \$150,000 annually over the course of 5 years. A match of at least 10% is strongly encouraged, half of which can be in-kind. This *refers* to donations of tangible items such as equipment, food, space or professional services that would typically be purchased.
- This is a non-reimbursement-based grant, which means grantees receive funding before eligible expenses are incurred or paid. The grantee is responsible for using the funds only for approved project costs and must comply with all grant requirements, including reporting and documentation, as outlined in the grant agreement.

Funding Restrictions

Grant funds cannot be used for any of the following:

- Activities that occur outside the Performance Period.
- Activities that have a religious purpose.
- Payments to lobbyists.

- Cash prizes and awards.
- Benefit activities.

Unless authorized by the Council, Grant funds cannot be used for any of the following:

- Hospitality expenses.
- Capital expenditures, including equipment costing \$500 per item or more.
- Competitions.
- Performances and exhibitions not available to the public.

Eligible Use of Funds

- Reasonable costs for personnel, travel, equipment, supplies, and other expenses directly associated with the delivery of services outlined in these guidelines.
- Development of new campaigns, events and workshops to meet the evolving needs of the creative sector community with an emphasis on the Pennsylvania Creative Industries' [key areas](#). Funding can support components such as marketing and outreach, presenters, catering and hospitality (alcohol is prohibited), event logistics, space and equipment rentals.
- Information technology to support the service delivery requirements, including the development of the website and online tools.

Crediting Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Grantees must prominently acknowledge Pennsylvania Creative Industries funding in promotions, flyers, programs, media announcements, press releases, websites, social media that relate to this grant, by utilizing approved logos, branding, and materials. Pennsylvania Creative Industries will provide said materials and templates to the grantee.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include the following components:

Organizational Information:

- Mission, history, and relevant experience – including what counties the organization currently serves
- Leadership and Governance structure
- Provide evidence that the applicant is aligned with the Pennsylvania Creative Industries' mission, vision and key areas
- Evidence of organizational capacity and planned staff capacity to fulfill requirements detailed in these guidelines.

Selected Region and Knowledge of Region - Regions 3 and 7 will be eligible for FY 2026-2027:

- Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) must be completed and included at time of submission. The applicant should identify the needs and gaps in creative sector services in the region. Key components to the RNA are to collect, analyze, identify and prioritize. The RNA can be completed through the gathering of data using tools such as surveys, focus groups, census, numbers, etc. Once the information has been collected applicants should analyze the data to determine what the region currently has and what it needs. This RNA report will guide planning and resource development for the regional creative connection.

Year one work plan (should align with the identified priorities in the RNA):

- Detailed approach for fulfilling each element of the scope of work
- Timeline for implementation
- Roles and responsibilities of key personnel and partners

Partnerships and Collaborations:

- Letters of support from key stakeholders
- Evidence of existing cross-sector collaborations

Budget and Budget Narrative:

- Total annual budget and use of funds
- Other sources of support or in-kind contributions. A match of at least 10% is strongly encouraged, half of which can be in-kind. This refers to donations of tangible items such as equipment, food, space or professional services that would typically be purchased.

Annual Evaluation Plan:

- Program metrics
- Tools for collecting, tracking and reporting data

Required attachments:

1. IRS Determination Letter confirming nonprofit 501(c) status.
2. Most recently submitted IRS Form 990 tax filing, including postcard 990s and Non-Arts Organizations 990s.

Submission process

1. Read this document thoroughly.
2. Before applying, contact Jamie Dunlap at jadunlap@pa.gov
3. Read and comply with the checklist for applicants and grantees:
[grants management checklist for applicants and grantees as of 7.17.25.pdf](#)
4. Register and apply through Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Electronic Single Application (ESA): <https://grants.pa.gov/Login.aspx>
 - Note: You must register for a Keystone Login in order to apply through grants.pa.gov:
<https://keystonelogin.pa.gov/Account/Register>
5. Submit online.
6. Please note that ACH must be established to make grant payments. Please sign up for ACH grant payments if you have not already done so:
https://na1.documents.adobe.com/public/esignWidget?wid=CBFCIBAA3AAABLbqZhAemOgcNfZcKCihxArEGRGeX4UDnmkQ4lzmzZYzAIXBvJBYew_vPwufqC7NLB9aYqY%2a
7. Questions?
 - For questions, concerns, and issues with Keystone Login call: (877) 328-0995.
 - For technical and login questions, contact the Enterprise eGrants Customer Service Center: (833) 448-0647 or egrantshelp@pa.gov.
 - For questions about grant application content and required attachments, contact the following PA Creative Industries staff:
 - For questions about grant application content and required attachments, contact: Amanda Lovell - Senior Director of Workforce and Business Development: alovell@pa.gov, or Jamie Dunlap, Chief Strategy Officer: jadunlap@pa.gov.

Proposal Review Process

- Proposals will be reviewed by a committee based on the review criteria included in this document. Finalists will be required to host Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff to conduct a site visit and interview with the staff and board leadership.
- Awards will be approved at a Council meeting. Council meeting dates may be found on PA Creative Industries' website: pa.gov/agencies/coa/about/council-members/meetings
- Applicants approved to receive awards will be sent email communication outlining the next steps in the grant process.

- Once recommended and approved as a Creative Connection, each region will utilize the standard Regional Creative Industries Designations. (ex: North Central Creative Connection)
- Each region will be provided with ongoing Pennsylvania Creative Industries marketing resources (logos, graphics, templates, taglines, etc.) as our marketing efforts change and evolve. Each region will prominently feature the Pennsylvania Creative Industries branding in all pertinent publications, websites, workshop notices, etc. Providers that have developed ancillary regional brands will ensure that they are complimentary to, and coordinated with, Pennsylvania Creative Industries marketing efforts.

Review Criteria

- Organizational staff and financial capacity to act as a Pennsylvania Creative Industries Creative Connection Network Provider.
- Alignment with Pennsylvania Creative Industries [strategic mission, vision and key areas](#).
- Applicant's relevant experience in partnership development, training and technical support, conference planning and marketing and promotion.
- Quality and feasibility of proposed work plan.
- Strength of current and proposed regional cross sector partnerships.
- Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) shows meaningful understanding of the creative industries in the selected region.
- Budget and cost-effectiveness.

Appeals Process

The Council recognizes that errors may occur in the application process. The Council is committed to acknowledging any errors and responding to rectify the effects of an error. The appeals process enables applicants to identify these errors and omissions and bring them to the attention of the Council. Appeals may result in a change in the determination of eligibility or the award amount if the applicant can satisfactorily document that an error or omission occurred through no fault of the applicant. Appeals are awarded only if the error or omission had a substantial effect on the evaluation of an application or on the determination of an applicant's eligibility.

Appeals are not intended to provide the applicant with an opportunity to challenge the qualitative assessment of the application. Missing the published application due date or failure to submit required information or documentation are not grounds for appeal.

Applicants considering an appeal should contact the applicable [program director](#) for advice and guidance. The appeal must be made in writing (hardcopy letter) to the Council's [Chief of Staff](#) within ten business days of the date of the notification of the award status from the Council. Appeal letters should identify the error or omission and the effect such error had on the Council's application review process. If the appeal is supported, funds will be awarded only if they are available.

Grants under this program are processed under the authority of the act of January 25, 1966 (P.L. 1542 (1965), 71 P.S. Section 1530.1 et seq., as amended, and 58 Pa. Code §301.32.