



# Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

## 2026-2027 Application Guidelines Spotlight Program

**Application Opens:** Monday, August 3, 2026

**Application Closes:** Monday, September 14, 2026

**Performance Period:** January 1-December 31, 2027

---

### Table of Contents

- [About Pennsylvania Creative Industries](#)
- [Creative Industries Defined](#)
- [About this Program](#)
- [Program Features](#)
- [Organizational Classification](#)
- [Eligibility](#)
- [Funding Restrictions](#)
- [Crediting Pennsylvania Creative Industries](#)
- [Narrative, Required Attachments, Submission and Review Process](#)
- [Appeals Process](#)
- [Addendum: Fiscal Sponsorships](#)

### 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](#).

## About this Program

The Spotlight Program supports smaller creative (arts) organizations and programs that deliver services, products, and/or programs that align with one or more of Pennsylvania Creative Industries’ strategic plan key areas.

## Program Features

- Funding to support arts organizations and programs that deliver services, products, and/or programs.
- Collaboration and networking opportunities for grantees. This may include webinars organized by artistic discipline and/or PA Creative Industries’ focus areas (Asset Development, Workforce Development, Community Development, Visibility, Policy).
- One application per organization, per year, may be submitted.
- Anticipated grant amounts will be up to \$5,000 per grantee.
- This is a reimbursement-based grant program, which means grantees must first incur and pay for eligible expenses, then submit an invoice/final report with required documentation, such as receipts, invoices, and proof of payment to receive funding.
- Grant awards may be subject to the National Endowment for the Arts’ (a federal agency) General Terms and Conditions-Appendix A: [GTC-PARTNERSHIP-FY25-PLUS-6-25-25-FINAL.pdf](#).

## Arts Organization or Arts Program Classification

For the purposes of this application, all applicant organizations are classified as **ONE** of the following:

- **Arts Organization** – An eligible nonprofit corporation whose mission is to create, perform, present, promote or serve the arts sector (e.g., dance companies, arts festivals, chorales).
- **Arts Program of Non-Arts Organization** – A solely arts-related program of a larger, eligible, nonprofit corporation or unit of government whose mission is not solely arts-related (e.g., charitable or community service organization).

Please note that there are different requirements for Arts Organizations versus Arts Programs, noted in the eligibility section below.

***If you are unsure how your organization or program is classified, please contact Pennsylvania Creative Industries.***

## Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation, or a unit of local government (counties, cities, boroughs, townships, and municipal authorities).
- Have an annual average arts revenue of \$10,000 to less than \$100,000. Pennsylvania Creative Industries determines revenue size by a two-year average demonstrated by:
  - **Arts organization:** most recent filed form 990 of the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service.
    - If your 990 is a postcard, you must submit the postcard AND a board/committee approved, arts-specific program financial statement from the most recently completed **two** fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind is not included.
    - If you are exempt from filing a 990 (please see list of exemptions: [Annual exempt organization return: who must file | Internal Revenue Service](#)), you must submit a board/committee approved, arts-specific program financial statement from the most recently completed **two** fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind is not included.
  - **Arts program of non-arts organization:** applicant's board/committee approved, arts-specific program financial statement from the most recently completed **two** fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind is not included.
- Have a history of at least **two** years of consistent arts programming in Pennsylvania.
- 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).

## Fiscal Sponsorships

Please see the addendum at the end of these guidelines for important information and additional requirements for fiscal sponsorships.

Ineligible:

- Colleges or universities and entities directly affiliated with them, such as university foundations, campus-based arts centers or museums, departments or academic units (e.g., theatre departments, music schools, etc.), student organizations, and others.
- Pre-K-12 public, private, and parochial schools and programs, including all charter schools and affiliated booster organizations.
- Auxiliary support organization such as "friends of" or "booster" groups that raise funds on behalf of another entity.

## Funding Restrictions

- Activities that occur outside the performance period.
- Activities that have a religious purpose.
- Payments to lobbyists.
- Cash prizes and awards.
- Benefit activities.
- Hospitality expenses (e.g., receptions).
- Competitions.
- Performances and exhibitions not available to the public.
- Activities for which academic credit is given.

## 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 to the grantee.

## Narrative, Required Attachments, Submission and Review Process

### Narrative:

1. What is your mission?
2. Select ONLY ONE Creative Industries key area that your organization or program advances (Asset Development, Workforce Development, Community Development, Visibility, or Policy—see first page for descriptions).  
Describe how your **ongoing activities** support this area.  
Include:
  - Populations/communities served
  - Key activities
  - Organizational capacity to carry out and sustain this work

**Responses to this question will be assessed by a review committee based on (1) Alignment with and Contribution to the Key Area (2) Evidence of Service to Populations/Communities, and (3) Organizational Capacity and Sustainability. Scores will be used to inform funding recommendations and final award decisions.**

### Required attachments:

If any of the following items are not submitted, the application will not be considered for funding:

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.
3. If the 990 is a postcard or applicant is exempt from filing a 990 or if the applicant is an arts program, applicant must also submit a board/committee approved, program financial statement from the most recently completed **two** fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind is not included.
4. A succinct list of arts activities with dates from the last **two** years. List must show **two** years of activities.

### Submission process

1. Read this document thoroughly.
2. Read and comply with the checklist for applicants and grantees:  
[grants management checklist for applicants and grantees as of 7.17.25.pdf](#)
3. Register and apply through the 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://grants.pa.gov): <https://keystonelogin.pa.gov/Account/Register>
4. Submit online.
  5. 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://www.pa.gov/agencies/pennvest/programs-and-services/financing/ach-authorization-change-form>
  6. 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](mailto:egrantshelp@pa.gov).
    - For questions about grant application content and required attachments, contact one of the following PA Creative Industries staff:
      - Ian Rosario: [irosario@pa.gov](mailto:irosario@pa.gov) or (717) 525-5548
      - Amy Gabriele: [agabriele@pa.gov](mailto:agabriele@pa.gov) or (717) 525-5547

### Review process

- A review committee will review all applications to verify eligibility and evaluate the completeness and content of responses to questions and required attachments.
- Scores will be generated for narrative question #2. These will be used to inform funding recommendations and final award decisions.
- Financial documents will be reviewed to assess financial stability.
- Funding recommendations will consider the following:
  - Applicant eligibility.
  - Completeness and content of application responses and required attachments.
  - Narrative question #2 score.
  - Financial stability (based on IRS Form 990 and financial statements).
  - Spotlight Program’s budget and total number of eligible applicants.
  - Each year, the Council reviews funding parameters and may consider factors such as geographic and county distribution, etc.
  - Council has final authority in approving award amounts.
- Awards will be approved at a Council meeting. Council meeting dates may be found on PA Creative Industries’ website: <https://www.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, including the reimbursement payment process.
- Reimbursement materials/Final Report are due no later than 30 days after the performance period closes (January 30, 2028).
  - A grant will be cancelled if a grantee fails to submit reimbursement materials by January 30, 2028.
  - In addition, if the reimbursement materials/final report remains incomplete or unacceptable after March 31, 2028, the grantee’s award will be terminated.
- Grantees that fail to meet material terms and conditions of a grant award agreement, including but not limited to, submission of a final report and reimbursement materials, may not be eligible for future PA Creative Industries grant awards.

### 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.

## Addendum

### Fiscal Sponsorships

Unincorporated groups, nonprofit organizations that do not have tax exempt status, and Pennsylvania limited liability corporations (LLCs) with at least two members and conducting arts activities in Pennsylvania for an expressly not-for-profit purpose must apply to Pennsylvania Creative Industries through a tax-exempt organization that serves as a fiscal sponsor.

Groups applying through a fiscal sponsor must meet the same requirements as other applicants, except for tax exempt status and being registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Corporations.

Fiscal Sponsors must 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).

The fiscal sponsor is responsible for the administration of the grant award agreement (contract), including all reporting requirements. The fiscal sponsor receives the grant payment directly from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is responsible for ensuring full compliance.

### **Required Application Attachments for Fiscal Sponsors**

If any of the following items are not submitted, the application will not be considered for funding:

1. IRS Determination Letter confirming nonprofit 501(c) status.
2. Most recently submitted IRS Form 990 tax filing.

3. Fully executed and active sponsorship agreement with the sponsored group. The agreement must include terms and conditions that address the following:
  - Financial management and oversight.
  - Administrative fees and services. **Note that use of grant funds to compensate a fiscal sponsor may not exceed 5% of the total grant award amount.**
  - Fundraising and donor relations, including who can solicit and accept donations.
  - Compliance and liability.
  - Termination and transition.
  - Communication and reporting protocols.
4. The fiscally sponsored group's board/committee approved arts-specific program financial statement for the most recently completed **two** fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind contributions may not be included.
5. A succinct list of the sponsored group's arts activities with dates from the last **two** years. List must show **two** years of activities.
6. If applicable, a sponsored LLC's certificate of organization filed with the Pennsylvania Department of State that states a not-for-profit purpose. The LLC must have at least **two** organizers/members.

**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.**