

**Minutes
Council Meeting
December 4, 2025
9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: Chair Cohen, Mr. Astorino, Senator Bartolotta, Representative Ciresi, Ms. Gunderson, Ms. Goldberg, Representative Labs, Judge Morgan, Mr. Parks, Mr. Stull, Mr. Warfield

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Vice Chair Alaquiva, Senator Cappelletti, Ms. Vilayphonh, Ms. Zaborney

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Karl Blischke, Executive Director; Heather Doughty, Deputy Executive Director; Christopher Duerr, Program Coordinator & Grants Specialist; Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning; Amy Gabriele, Chief of Finance & Administration; Norah Johnson, Director of External Affairs; Laura Kline, Executive Assistant; Amanda Lovell, Director of Access to the Creative Sector; Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities; Seth Poppy, Director of Data Systems & Creative Services; and Ian Rosario, Director of Arts Organizations & Arts Programs & Grants Liaison.

GUESTS PRESENT: Addie Abelson, Chief Counsel; Laura Callanan, Founding Partner, Upstart Collab

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Karl Blischke welcomed those in attendance and informed them that the meeting would be recorded for the administrative purpose of minute taking. Mr. Blischke then turned the meeting over to Chair Cohen.

ROLL CALL:

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke called the roll. A quorum was established.

ITEM 2: REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Cohen asked if the PCA received any requests for public comments. There were no requests for public comment.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Chair Cohen reminded the Council of the PCA's Conflict of Interest Policy.

ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the October 9, 2025, meeting minutes.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Stull seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

AGENDA

ITEMS 4: Recommendations for Creative Sector Flex Fund Awards – Region 7 Grants (Schuylkill, Berks, and Lancaster Counties)

Amanda Lovell, Director of Access to the Creative Sector

Ms. Lovell reported that following Council approval in July 2025, the Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff facilitated the collection, eligibility review, and panel review of the Creative Sector Flex Fund applications for Region 7 which encompasses organizations in Berks, Lancaster, and Schuylkill counties. Lovell explained that currently, there is no designated partner for Region 7 and added that the applications opened on September 1, 2025, and closed on October 31, 2025.

Ms. Lovell stated that there were 28 applications received, of which 19 were deemed eligible to move forward to the panel review process. Ms. Lovell indicated that the panel review process consisted of four Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff members who reviewed each of the 19 applications using the same guidelines and scoring rubric in line with the process for the rest of the state.

Ms. Lovell reported that agency staff are recommending approval for the 17 organizations that are listed in the Council Memo to receive funding through the Creative Sector Flex Fund Program in Region 7 for 2025-2026. Ms. Lovell stated that the total recommended funding amount is \$85,000.

Chair Cohen thanked staff for stepping up to take care of this situation.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendations. Mr. Warfield seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 5: Recommendations for Apprenticeship Grants

Amanda Lovell, Director of Access to the Creative Sector

Ms. Lovell reported that at the July 2025 Council Meeting, 30 Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship grants were approved and are now moving to award agreements following finalization of the state budget. Ms. Lovell explained that a further review of all applications, including seven initially deemed incomplete, was conducted and it was discovered that an administrative oversight was identified. Ms. Lovell stated that to ensure consistency and equitable funding practices, the seven applicants were given the opportunity for eligibility re-evaluation and panel review.

Ms. Lovell reported that agency staff conducted the review using the established guidelines and scoring rubric for the 2025–2026 cycle and are recommending additional applicants for funding, totaling \$13,000. Ms. Lovell stated that the second page of the Council memo contains the names of the candidates recommended for funding.

Chair Cohen thanked Ms. Lovell for acting on this situation and asked her to provide a brief overview of what each apprenticeship is for.

Ms. Lovell provided the overview of each approved grantee and listed where, in the state, they are from.

Chair Cohen asked if it is possible to receive a slide or video presentation of the completed projects and Ms. Lovell said she would be able to provide this type of follow-up to Council.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Mr. Stull made a motion to approve the recommendation. Ms. Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 6: Recommendations for Arts in Education (AIE) Partnership Award Conditions

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap explained that this recommendation addresses the potential impact presented by the FY2025-2026 budget impasse on the planning of residencies for AIE Partnerships.

Ms. Dunlap stated that agency staff recommends that Council authorize a waiver of the 1:1 match requirement for AIE Partners' artist residency activities supported with Fiscal Year 2025-2026 funds.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Ms. Stull made a motion to approve the recommendation. Ms. Goldberg seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 7: Recommendations for Innovation & Impact Guidelines

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap reported that agency staff created guidelines for the Innovation and Impact Grant program, which will support multi-year initiatives that enhance visibility and/or foster innovation within Pennsylvania's creative sector.

Ms. Dunlap provided an overview of the guidelines and explained that projects should strengthen public awareness, advance new ideas and partnerships, and amplify the sector's contributions to communities, the economy, and the workforce.

Dunlap stated that applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with funding recommendations presented quarterly to Council. She explained that eligible applicants

include Pennsylvania-based nonprofits, government units, colleges/universities, and school districts providing creative sector programming or services. Ms. Dunlap indicated that grant awards are expected to range from \$100,000 to \$150,000 over 24–36 months, require a 1:1 cash match, limit administrative costs to 20%, and may be awarded to an organization no more than once every five years.

Chair Cohen stated that she likes that these grants will be rolling.

Ms. Goldberg asked for clarification on the issue of grantees working with other not-for-profit organizations or if they are the nucleus.

Ms. Dunlap reported that it could be either and provided an example of a request for proposals for activation and promotion.

Ms. Dunlap also stated that one of the grants awarded was to the Pittsburg Glass Center, which is aligned with Contemporary Craft and the Union Project in Pittsburgh. Dunlap explained that these organizations are collaborating and hosting a large conference that will bring awareness about what is available for fine craft makers.

Ms. Goldberg then asked for clarification about the duration of the project, and Ms. Dunlap stated that projects will be two to three years.

Ms. Parks asked for information about how this program will be promoted.

Ms. Dunlap stated that it would be promoted through the agency's normal channels (social media, website, LinkedIn.) She said that agency staff will also promote this opportunity to communities around the state as well as to other state agencies.

Chair Cohen asked if eligibility is limited to nonprofit organizations, universities, and government agencies. Ms. Dunlap confirmed that it is.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Judge Morgan seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 8: Recommendations for Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program Administrator

Amanda Lovell, Director of Access to the Creative Sector

Ms. Lovell reported that at its October 2025 meeting, Council authorized guidelines for a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a statewide administrator for the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA) program. Lovell explained that the selected administrator will serve a five-year term, subject to annual award agreements and availability of funds, and may reapply at the end of the term.

Ms. Lovell stated that the statewide administrator model is intended to streamline the application process, strengthen engagement with grantees, expand resources such as grant funding and business planning workshops, improve access to program data, and support development of a statewide network of creative entrepreneurs.

Ms. Lovell reported that agency staff received nine inquiries regarding the RFP. She explained that two organizations were deemed ineligible due to financial or business model constraints, and two withdrew citing capacity limitations. Ms. Lovell indicated that five organizations ultimately submitted complete applications.

Lovell stated that applications were reviewed by five staff members using the published criteria: alignment with approach, impact and reach, experience with comparable projects, and organizational capacity.

Ms. Lovell reported that agency staff recommends selecting Bridgeway Capital as the CEA statewide administrator beginning with the 2026–2027 program cycle. She stated that pending passage of the FY 2026–2027 state budget and availability of funds, agency staff recommends awarding a \$1,000,000 non-matching grant, including:

- \$700,000 for regranting to approximately 140 creative entrepreneurs annually through a cohort model that includes networking, knowledge sharing, and business planning.
- \$300,000 for programmatic and administrative costs, including statewide outreach, business support programming, marketing and training workshops, program implementation, and data collection and reporting.

Ms. Lovell stated that agency staff also recommend awarding Bridgeway Capital \$25,000 to support program development in advance of the September 1, 2026, launch. She added that planned development activities include the creation of a program webpage, the selection of a grant application platform, outreach visits to partner organizations, and engagement with partners to ensure equitable statewide participation.

Chair Cohen commented that she attended a conference and heard someone from Bridgeway speak and she was very impressed and pleased that Bridgeway will be working with our agency and to reach creatives statewide.

Chair Cohen asked if Bridgeway would make sure that our agency is highlighted and promoted. Ms. Lovell confirmed that Bridgeway is very collaborative and have a thinktank approach of working together with PA Creative Industries to impact Pennsylvania’s creative entrepreneurs. Lovell added that Bridgeway understands needs at a much different level for creative entrepreneurs.

Ms. Goldberg asked for clarification about the review process and asked if Bridgeway will conduct it and if they will make the decisions. Ms. Lovell stated that Bridgeway will conduct both the review and approval process and gave examples of previous situations where they did this. She also explained that they will use a panel review process.

Ms. Goldberg asked if these are individuals or small organizations and Ms. Lovell replied that Bridgeway will continue to focus on the same individuals they are currently focusing on and she provided an overview of the types of individuals who would be eligible for these grants.

Mr. Blischke thanked Ms. Lovell for her work on this initiative and explained that this is an improved entrepreneur accelerator program that will continue the existing program but will be better for creative entrepreneurs.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Judge Morgan seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 9: Recommendations for Creative Catalysts

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap provided an overview of the below listed Creative Catalyst Grant recommendations, which total \$57,000.

Applicant: Mummers Museum Inc.

Proposal: Mummers Museum Festival of Many Colors

Ms. Dunlap reported that the Mummers Museum has partnered with Philly Caribbean Carnival and Carnaval de Puebla en Philadelphia to launch the 2026 Festival of Many Colors, a multi-week event series featuring public workshops in music, costuming, and dance from the three traditions. Dunlap stated that the initiative highlights shared elements of the traditions—colorful costumes, music, and public celebration—while encouraging collaboration, participation, and broader public awareness.

Ms. Dunlap explained that the series will begin with an opening reception at the Mummers Museum in February 2026, featuring a WHYY-moderated panel discussion with representatives from each tradition. She stated that following the reception, weekly workshops will be held at the Mummers Museum and led by experienced community members. Dunlap explained that planned workshops include a steel pan drumming workshop, a “Dance Like a Mummer Fancy Brigade” workshop, and a Puebla-style headdress-making workshop.

Ms. Dunlap indicated that the festival will conclude with a public one-day spring celebration in May 2026 and added that performers and craftspeople participating in the workshops and festival represent Southeastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. Ms. Dunlap explained that promotion will occur through regional media outlets including Philatinos Radio, WHYY, and WMMR.

Request: \$10,000

Recommendation: \$10,000

Applicant: Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Proposal: Shippensburg University Student Made Store

Ms. Dunlap reported that Shippensburg University plans to launch the Student-Made Store, a student-run marketplace designed to support creative student entrepreneurs in building brands, selling their work, and gaining real-world business experience.

Ms. Dunlap explained that a Fall 2025 feasibility study confirmed strong student interest, and the program will be fully implemented in 2026. She stated that Shippensburg will become the first Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) institution to launch the initiative and will serve as the pilot site for the system.

Ms. Dunlap reported that as the pilot, Shippensburg University will develop the contracting and vendor framework to support adoption by other PASSHE universities, positioning the institution as a model for student entrepreneurship and innovation. She explained that the program will engage students as creators and managers while also involving faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and regional community members as partners, mentors, and customers. She added that other PASSHE campuses will benefit from the implementation model and feasibility outcomes.

Request: \$10,000

Recommendation: \$10,000

Applicant: PA Jazz Alliance Inc.

Proposal: PA250: "Our Story" = A Jazz Journey

Ms. Dunlap stated that PA Jazz Alliance has asked for support of a series of performances titled PA250: "Our Story" which will be presented across Pennsylvania in October and November 2026. Ms. Dunlap reported that confirmed locations include MCG Pittsburgh, Mercyhurst University (Erie), and Misericordia University (Dallas), with additional performances pending in Harrisburg and Philadelphia.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the program will feature a jazz ensemble composed of Pennsylvania musicians, accompanied by narration from local representatives and supported by historic photographs and film. She added that the performances will highlight the legacy of Pennsylvania-born jazz artists, including Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Henry Mancini, Benny Golson, and Billie Holiday, and explore the state's role in the development of jazz and its influence on American culture as part of the nation's 250th anniversary commemoration.

Request: \$25,000

Recommendation: \$25,000

Applicant: Citizens for The Arts in Pennsylvania

Proposal: Creative Connectivity within the Sector

Ms. Dunlap reported that Creative Pennsylvania, formerly Citizens for the Arts in Pennsylvania, has realigned its strategy to strengthen the Commonwealth’s creative ecosystem in the post-COVID era. Dunlap stated that the organization will focus on three priorities: professional development and networking, cultural tourism and marketing, and arts-friendly policy.

Ms. Dunlap explained that beginning in 2026, Creative Pennsylvania will launch regional gatherings across the state as its first statewide initiative, Create Connectivity within the Sector. Dunlap stated that in partnership with community-based arts organizations, these convenings will bring together artists, cultural organizations, creative businesses, and arts education groups to foster professional growth, strengthen regional networks, and identify sector needs.

Ms. Dunlap explained Creative Pennsylvania will provide resources to host the gatherings, document findings, and engage experts or technical assistance to address identified needs.

Ms. Dunlap provided an overview of the planned locations and timeframes:

- 3 Dots Downtown, State College — Q1 2026
- Center for Creative Exploration, Pennsylvania College of Art & Design — Q2 2026
- Erie Arts & Culture — Q3 2026

Request: \$9,000

Recommendation: \$9,000

Applicant: New Castle Public Library (NCPL)

Proposal: Creatives Across the District

Ms. Dunlap reported that the New Castle Public Library (NCPL), the district center serving four counties, is planning to host *Creatives Across the District*, a series of four community engagement events featuring local artists.

Dunlap stated that one event will take place in each district county Butler, Mercer, Lawrence, and Armstrong—bringing together artists, libraries, and community members. Ms. Dunlap explained that events will include artist showcases and demonstrations, participation by local artisans, and opportunities for libraries in each county to promote services and programs. She indicated that each event will be hosted at a local community center and will be coordinated by NCPL staff and district libraries.

Ms. Dunlap reported that the events will occur monthly over four months in spring 2026.

Dunlap added that following the series, NCPL will develop implementation guidelines and a program model for other library districts and indicated that the model will be shared

through the District Resource Website, library forums, and the Pennsylvania Library Association Annual Conference in October 2026.

Request: \$3,000

Recommendation: \$3,000

Representative Ciresi stated that he has a personal relationship with an organization involved in the PA 250 jazz and would abstain from voting on this action item.

Ms. Goldberg asked for clarification of the Shippensburg project and Ms. Dunlap provided an explanation, presented examples and shared a website.

Ms. Dunlap stated that she will be placing language in each grantee's approval letter asking them to let her know about event details so that she can share this information with Council.

Ms. Cohen asked for information about the dates for the PA 250 jazz event and Ms. Dunlap said she would share these dates with Council.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Judge Morgan made a motion to approve the recommendation. Ms. Gunderson seconded the motion. Motion carried, Representative Ciresi abstained and none opposed.

ITEM 10: Recommendations for PA Creative Asset Program Guidelines

Amy Gabriele, Chief of Finance & Administration

Ms. Gabriele explained that at the October meeting, Council approved guidelines for the PA Creative Asset Program. She stated that Agency staff recommends the following clarifications to the Guidelines:

- Add "(arts)" after "creative" in the second bullet under Eligibility.
- Add the following to the list of ineligible applicants:
 - Local governments, including counties and municipalities
 - Libraries, including municipal, county, authority, and nonprofit libraries

Ms. Gabriele explained that eligibility requirements remain that applicants must be Pennsylvania-based nonprofit organizations with missions serving the creative (arts) sector and demonstrate average annual revenue between \$100,000 and \$2,000,000 over the past two years.

Ms. Gabriele provided an update of the Strategies for Success (SFS) program and stated that beginning in FY 2026–2027, applicants who previously applied to SFS will be eligible under the PA Creative Asset Program. Ms. Gabriele explained that SFS will no longer operate as a standalone program and will instead be integrated into the Creative Asset Program. She stated that elements of SFS, such as collaboration and networking

opportunities for grantees, may continue through webinars and convenings organized by discipline or PA Creative Industries focus areas.

Chair Cohen asked Council Members if they understand the basis of the Creative Assets Program.

Ms. Goldberg asked for some examples and Ms. Gabriele provided examples and explained that the program is open to organizations between \$100,000 and \$2 million as demonstrated in their IRS filing.

Ms. Goldberg asked if this will operate differently than with SFS other than just a change in the wording. Ms. Gabriele stated that this will operate differently and explained that not all the organizations from SFS will be eligible.

Chair Cohen asked Council if there were any questions. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve the recommendation as presented in the Council meeting materials.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Mr. Warfield seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 11: Information Item: Pennsylvania Creative Industries Regional Hub

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap stated that through the agency's strategic planning process, feedback from community members, state agencies, organizations, and artists identified key priorities for strengthening Pennsylvania's creative sector. Dunlap reported that in addition to funding, priorities included increased collaboration across communities, expanded training and networking opportunities, talent and business attraction and retention, greater sector visibility, and the development of signature creative industry events.

Ms. Dunlap explained that in response, agency staff are developing guidelines to establish Pennsylvania Creative Industries Hubs. She stated that these regional hubs would serve as the agency's regional representatives and be embedded within local community and economic development networks. Dunlap indicated that these hubs are envisioned as conveners and connectors that support regional creative economies and strengthen the statewide creative industries ecosystem.

Ms. Dunlap reported that program components and draft guidelines will be presented to Council at the March 2026 meeting. She stated that agency staff are currently evaluating potential hub responsibilities, including expanding visibility of agency programs, participating in existing economic and workforce development networks, hosting regional convenings, maintaining regional resource centers, providing professional development and technical assistance, and administering regional mini-grant programs.

ITEM 12: Presentation by Upstart Co-Lab on Impact Investing

Laura Callanan, Founding Partner

Mr. Blischke introduced Laura Callanan, the Founding Partner of Upstart Co-Lab.

Ms. Callanan presented a PowerPoint to Council about Upstart Co-Lab and the work it does in connecting capital with creative people to make a profit and make a difference. A discussion with Council members followed.

ITEM 13: Chair's Report

Susan Cohen, Chair

Chair Cohen congratulated Senator Bartolotta for receiving a Workforce Development Award for serving on the Pittsburgh's Film Office Board of Trustees.

Chair Cohen reported that agency staff will be attending the Carnegie Mellon University's Career and Technical Education festival which will highlight student work on entertainment technology and games. Cohen stated that this is a great asset for Pennsylvania's future development in the creative sector.

Chair Cohen provided some information about the agency's Creative Business Loan Program. She indicated that the total loans are \$8.5 million and explained that these loans have gone toward working capital, equipment and marketing.

Chair Cohen reported that Poetry Out Loud is a national poetry competition and indicated that regional competitions will take place in January and February. She stated that the state championships will be held in Harrisburg in early March and added that dates and details will be provided to Council members.

Chair Cohen stated because of all the changes in grants and programs, she asked Mr. Blischke to prepare a packet of informational materials that detail the new programs and will also include a current list of the grants that have been issued. Mr. Blischke stated that he will send this information following the Council Meeting.

ITEM 12: Executive Director's Report

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke provided a status update regarding the agency's strategic plan. He explained that now that the budget has passed, agency staff are sending out award letters. Mr. Blischke commended Amy Gabriele, Seth Poppy and Ian Rosario for their work in getting the awards distributed. Blischke stated that agency staff will be in communication with grantees about new grant opportunities for next year.

Mr. Blischke commended Ms. Dunlap for her work in connecting the art sector with workforce resources and added that he is excited about this work continuing.

Mr. Blischke reported that Council awarded a Creative Catalyst grant to Big Picture Alliance, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit media arts organization that collaborates

with a variety of youth programs. He shared that this grant assisted in the proposal development for a state registered apprenticeship for multimedia producers through the Department of Labor & Industries' Apprenticeship Training Office.

ITEM 17: Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 11:05 am