



Pennsylvania
Creative Industries
Powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

2025 – 2026 CREATIVE SECTOR FLEX FUND APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR BERKS, LANCASTER, and SCHUYLKILL COUNTIES

DUE DATE: Friday, October 31, 2025, 5 p.m. EST

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED

GRANT ACTIVITY PERIOD: January 1, 2026–December 31, 2026

GRANT AMOUNT: \$5,000 (please see below for more information)

Creative Sector Flex Fund Description

The Creative Sector Flex Fund is a grant program of Pennsylvania Creative Industries, powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), that provides support to eligible applicants that provide consistent annual levels of artistic programming and/or arts services in Pennsylvania. One application per applicant per year may be submitted. Eligible uses of funds are flexible, including the support of applicants' administrative, programmatic, and project-related expenses.

- Depending on the availability of funds, grant amounts will be \$5,000 per applicant.
- Annual grants are not guaranteed.

For the purposes of the Creative Sector Flex Fund application, applicants are classified by either being an arts organization or an arts program of a non-arts organization.

Organizational Classifications

- **Arts organization** – An eligible non-profit corporation whose mission is to create, perform, present, promote or serve the arts sector (e.g., symphonies, arts councils, theatres, art museums).
- **Arts Program of a non-arts organization** – A solely arts-related program of a larger, eligible, non-profit corporation or unit of government whose mission is not solely arts-related (e.g., charitable or community service organization).

If you are unsure how your organization is classified, please [contact us](#).

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, or a unit of local government (counties, cities, boroughs, townships, and municipal authorities).
 - Please note that Pre-K -12 public, private and parochial schools and programs including all charter schools, and affiliated booster organizations are NOT eligible. (K-12 schools should contact the Arts in Education Program of the PCA for other opportunities).
- **Be located in one of these Pennsylvania counties: Berks, Lancaster or Schuylkill.** Non-profit, tax-exempt corporations acting as a fiscal sponsor to the applicant do not need to be in these counties but they do need to be located in Pennsylvania.
- Be registered with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Corporations, except for local governments and fiscal sponsors.
- Have a history of at least TWO years of consistent arts programming in Pennsylvania.
- Have an annual average arts revenue of \$10,000 to \$200,000. Pennsylvania Creative Industries determines revenue size by a two-year average demonstrated by:
 - **Arts organization:** form 990 of the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service or if the 990 is a postcard, applicant 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 approved, arts-specific program financial statement. 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.

Unincorporated groups or Pennsylvania not-for-profit limited liability companies (LLCs) must apply through a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that acts as a fiscal sponsor. **Individuals and LLCs with fewer than two organizers/members are not eligible to apply.**

Fiscal Sponsorships

Unincorporated groups and Pennsylvania LLCs with two or more members conducting arts activities in Pennsylvania for an expressly not-for-profit purpose must apply through a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that serves as a fiscal

sponsor. LLCs applying through a fiscal sponsor must meet the same requirements as other applicants, except for tax-exempt status. If an LLC has a purpose that is not-for-profit, this purpose must be stated in its certificate of organization filed with the Pennsylvania Department of State, a copy of which must be included in the application materials.

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.

The fiscal sponsor is responsible for the administration of the grant award agreement (contract), including all reporting requirements, has discretion and control over the grant funds, and may charge a reasonable fee for its services. The fiscal sponsor receives the grant payment directly from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is responsible for ensuring the completion of the final reports.

Fiscally sponsored groups/LLCs must have a fully executed, active agreement with the fiscal sponsor, a copy of which must be submitted with the application materials.

Requirements for independent component units under a parent organization:

A parent organization that includes separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university that has a presenting organization and a radio station) may apply for each eligible component.

An eligible independent component must be a unit that is both programmatically and administratively distinct from the parent organization.

This independent status is demonstrated by the following components:

- Unique mission, separate and distinct from the parent entity;
- Dedicated staff, with duties specific to the mission of the component;
- Independent advisory committee or board; and
- Separate finances that are distinguishable by and applicable to the unit.

Please note: the items on the above list are all now required responses in the application. An eligible independent component is equivalent to a stand-alone institution. A parent organization should consult with Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff to verify eligibility of the component before preparing an application. Parent organizations applying with only one separate component also need to demonstrate the above bullets.

Matching Requirements:

- All grants must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis in cash.
- In-kind goods and services may not be used as matching funds.
- Creative Sector Flex Funding grant funds cannot be used to match other Pennsylvania Creative Industries grants.

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.

Application Process:

- Applications are [submitted online](#) (see details below).
- Awards will be approved at the December [Council meeting](#).
- Those receiving awards will receive email communications outlining the next steps in the grant process.
- **Final Reports are due no later than 30 days after the grant period closes (the grant period closes on December 31, 2026).**

Late applications will not be accepted, extensions to apply will not be granted, and incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.

Application Review Process:

- Applications are reviewed for eligibility
- Applicants will be notified of the status of their applications, award amounts, and grant award agreements.
- **Advisory panels evaluate application based on the following criteria:**

Review Criteria

(Note: Numbered questions below (1 – 8), will be presented to applicants in the [online application platform](#). These questions are included here to give applicants the chance to prepare.)

Community Value

(What are you doing as an organization that provides value to your community?)

Applicant demonstrates:

Artistic offerings and/or services that strengthen its community culturally, educationally, and/or economically.

1. Over the past year, how did your artistic offerings and/or services support your community culturally, educationally, and/or economically? (Your response may include a description of the value provided to your community, whether adding to its cultural landscape, educational opportunities, or economic opportunities promoted directly or indirectly within your community).

Artists and artistic offerings and/or services involve and are meaningful to the community being served.

2. Over the past year, describe how artistic decisions were made and by whom. How did you know your artistic products and/or services were meaningful to your community?

Relevant arts learning opportunities for community members.

3. Over the past year, describe how you defined and determined the impact of your arts learning initiatives within your community.

Participation and Engagement Value

(Based upon your value above, how are you engaging your audiences to increase participation?)

Applicant demonstrates:

Apart from being audience members or beneficiaries, community members are central to the design of the applicant's work.

4. Over the past year, describe your community's involvement in your work and its feedback related to your artistic products and/or services.

Plans and action-oriented practices toward increasing community participation in artistic offerings, including efforts to reach new audiences.

5. Over the past year, describe your organization's plans and work to advance community participation, including efforts to reach new audiences.

Stewardship Value

(How does your organization appropriately manage activities and funds?)

Applicant demonstrates:

Planning processes appropriate to the organization, mission, and goals.

6. Describe your most recently completed planning process, including who was involved. Describe the key findings and goals that followed this planning process, and how you track and measure progress.

Capacity to carry out programs and projects as planned.

7. Over the past year, how did you ensure that you were able to carry about your programs or projects? To what degree were you able to carry out programs as planned?

Appropriate financial planning and oversight practices.

8. Describe your financial planning and oversight practices, including who participates in and is accountable for financial management and organizational oversight. Describe the financial condition of your organization and key actions taken to ensure adequate resources are available to carry out your mission or arts program.

Required Attachments

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

- IRS Determination Letter confirming non-profit 501(c) status (does not apply to Local Governments).
- **Arts organizations:** attach the TWO most recently submitted form 990 IRS tax filings or if the 990 is a postcard, applicant must submit a board/committee approved, arts-specific program financial statement from the TWO most recently completed fiscal years.
- **Arts program of non-arts organizations:** attach a board/committee approved, arts-specific program financial statement for the most recently completed TWO fiscal years. The program financial statement must include program revenue, contributed and earned income, and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses. In-kind is not included.
- **For entities applying through a fiscal sponsor:**
 - Attach the fiscally sponsored entity's arts-specific program financial statement for the TWO most recently completed fiscal years. The program financial statement must detail program revenue, including contributed and earned income and income realized from investments, as applicable, and expenses.
 - Attach the Sponsorship Agreement between the fiscal sponsor and the sponsored entity.
 - LLCs MUST also submit their Certificate of Organization-Domestic Limited Liability Company filed with the Pennsylvania Department of State Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations. At least Two organizers/members must be listed in the Certificate of Organization.
- Provide a succinct list (no more than one page) of arts activities (for example: three concerts, two workshops, five exhibitions). THIS WILL BE SHARED WITH THE PANEL. Three links to artistic content or programmatic highlights generated during the previous two years may be submitted. (Note: links can be to websites or file sharing sites—e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox, YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, etc. Please be sure to grant proper access, as applicable.

How to Apply

Step 1. Read this document thoroughly.

Step 2. Register and apply through the grants.pa.gov platform.

Step 3. Submit online by October 31, 2025, 5:00 p.m. EST.

No hard copies are required.

Please note that ACH must be established in order for the Commonwealth to process grant payments. Please [sign up for ACH](#) grant payments if you have not already done so.

Need help?

- **For technical and login questions**, contact the egrants help desk at:
 - (833) 448-0647 or egrantshelp@pa.gov.
- **For all questions, concerns, and issues with Keystone Login** call:
(877) 328-0995.
- **For questions about content and attachments**, contact one of the following staff members:
 - **Amanda Lovell**: alovell@pa.gov or (717) 783-5056
 - **Seth Poppy**: spoppy@pa.gov or (717) 787-1520
 - **Amy Gabriele**: agabriele@pa.gov or (717) 525-5547

About Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Pennsylvania Creative Industries is powered by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency under the Office of the Governor. Pennsylvania Creative Industries empowers, connects, and amplifies creatives and creative industries. By leveraging the immense potential of Pennsylvania's creative sector, we support jobs, build community, inspire lifelong learning, promote the Commonwealth nationally and internationally, and spark innovation. For more information, visit pa.gov/arts.

Appeals Process

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (Council) recognizes that errors may occur in the Council 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 assessment of the application's status or viability. Disagreement with the judgment of the application review is not grounds for an appeal. 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 (email or hardcopy) to the Council's [Deputy Executive Director](#) 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 results of the Council's application review process. If the appeal is supported, funds will be awarded only if they are available.