Pennsylvania
Creative Industries
Powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

2026-2027 Application Guidelines
Creative Catalyst Grant Program

Due dates: June 12, 2026; September 11, 2026; November 13, 2026, February 12, 2027
Performance period: September 1, 2026, to August 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.

About the Creative Catalyst Grant

Creative Catalyst grants support new initiatives and opportunities that advance strategies for empowering, connecting and amplifying creatives and creative industries and their contributions to Pennsylvania's communities, economy and workforce. This funding opportunity is designed to encourage and support projects and events that have the potential for statewide or broad regional impact on the creative sector. Creative Catalyst grants are not designed to provide ongoing support or to fund projects that occur on an annual or regular basis, but rather to help support special events or unique, strategic opportunities. This grant may not fund activities supported by other Pennsylvania Creative Industries grant awards.

Applications to this program will be assessed based on the degree to which they:

1.) Align with one or more of Pennsylvania Creative Industries' five key areas:

- Asset Development
- Workforce Development
- Community Development
- Visibility
- Policy

2.) Demonstrate statewide or broad regional reach and benefit.

3.) Demonstrate capacity to carry out project as proposed.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, unit of government; college or university; or school district providing creative sector programming and/or services in Pennsylvania.
    - Applicants are required to provide proof of incorporation and activity in Pennsylvania before an application will be reviewed or awarded funds.
- Fiscal agents and fiscal sponsors are not eligible to apply for Creative Catalyst funding.

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.

- Hospitality expenses.
- Competitions.
- Performances and exhibitions not available to the public.
- Activities for which academic credit is given.
- Activities supported by other Pennsylvania Creative Industries grant awards.

Please note the following:

- Grant amounts will not exceed $25,000.
- No more than 20% of the grant award may be used for administrative expenses.
- A confirmed 1:1 cash match is required.
- Applicants can only receive a Creative Catalyst grant once every three years.
- Creative Catalyst funding is not designed to support established programs, ongoing operations, or serve as an annual source of funds.
- 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.

Narrative and Submission Process

Narrative:

1. Provide a summary of the proposed project. (4,000 character maximum.)

2. How does the proposed project align with one or more of Pennsylvania Creative Industries' five key areas? (3,000 character maximum.)

3. What is the project's statewide or broad regional reach and benefit to the creative sector? (3,000 character maximum.)

4. How will the funds be used if awarded? (3000 character maximum.)

Required attachment:

- Proposed project budget including match. Please note that matching funds must be committed.

Submission process:

1. **Read this document thoroughly.**

2. **Before applying**, contact Seth Poppy at spoppy@pa.gov**.**

3. **Register and apply** through Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) grants management system: https://grants.pa.gov/.
    - Note: You must register for a Keystone Login in order to apply through the grants management system. You may register here if you have not already: https://keystonelogin.pa.gov/Account/Register

4. Submit your application.

5. Please note that the Commonwealth uses ACH to make grant payments. Register for ACH Authorization at the following link, if you have not already done so: https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pennvest/programs-and-services/financing/ach-authorization-change-form

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 Seth Poppy: spoppy@pa.gov or (717) 787-1520

Proposal Review Process

Review Criteria:

1.) Align with one or more of Pennsylvania Creative Industries' five key areas:

- Asset Development
- Workforce Development
- Community Development
- Visibility
- Policy

2.) Demonstrate statewide or broad regional reach and benefit.

3.) Demonstrate capacity to carry out project as proposed.

Creative Catalyst applications will be reviewed by Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff based on the review criteria included in this document. Recommendations will be presented to the Council, Pennsylvania Creative Industries' governing body. Submission of an application does not guarantee a recommendation or approval. Awards go to applications that demonstrate the highest degree of alignment and advancement of Pennsylvania Creative Industries' five key areas.

Council will act on recommendations during their quarterly meetings and has final authority in the awarding of grants. Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals. Selected proposals will be notified via email with next steps outlining the grant award process.

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.