

## 2026 Creative Communities Program Guidelines

**Next call for letters of interest: Fall 2026**

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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.

### Creative Communities Program Purpose

The purpose of the Creative Communities program is to provide multi-year funding to community-driven, arts-based projects. Also called creative placemaking or placekeeping, the funded projects will have a demonstrated, positive impact on their respective communities.

### What is Creative Placemaking?

Creative placemaking is a powerful community and economic development practice that integrates art, local creative sector assets, community culture and identity, and design to transform community spaces into vibrant, inclusive, accessible, and engaging places that foster community connectedness and livability.

### Creative Communities Program Goals

- Strengthen communities through the arts and encourage creative expression and engagement to enhance community well-being.
- Promote and support projects that include and are accessible to all members of PA communities.
- Empower communities that have experienced disinvestment and support grassroots leaders and residents in addressing local challenges.
- Advance community revitalization and resilience and foster sustainable growth and adaptability.
- Cultivate deep community engagement and encourage active participation in community projects.
- Celebrate unique community identities that highlight what makes each community special.

- Build authentic partnerships through collaboration with local government and organizations, and artists and culture bearers.
- Invest in the creative sector through support of artists, creative small businesses, and cultural initiatives.
- Address community challenges positively by leveraging community assets to tackle pressing issues.

### **Eligibility**

- Project must be place-based.
- Required partnership of at least two organizations, one of which will serve as the lead applicant.
- Lead applicant must be a unit of government, nonprofit (501(c)(3) or 501(c)(6) organization.
- Lead applicant organization must be located in the Pennsylvania community or county where the project will take place.

**Funding Amount** - Up to \$25,000 per year for up to four years.

### **Match**

- A 1:1 match is required (up to 50% can be in-kind).
- 10% of the match (cash or in-kind) must come from a local government entity.

### **Funding Restrictions**

In general, Pennsylvania Creative Industries does not fund the following:

- Activities for which academic credit is given;
- Activities that have already been completed;
- Activities that have a religious purpose;
- Performances and exhibitions not available to the general public;
- Performances and exhibitions outside Pennsylvania;
- Cash prizes and awards;
- Benefit activities;
- Payments to lobbyists; and/or
- Competitions.

### **For questions and advice regarding this process:**

Contact Sarah Merritt, Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities & the Creative Economy at [skmerritt@pa.gov](mailto:skmerritt@pa.gov).