



Pennsylvania  
**Creative Industries**  
Powered by Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

## Guidelines for Pennsylvania Creative Industries' Statewide Services Request for Proposals: Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program Administrator

**Proposal due date:** November 21, 2025

**Performance period:** September 1, 2026 – August 31, 2031

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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 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 Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA)

Creative entrepreneurs are invaluable assets to communities. They lead innovation, deliver creative products and services, generate economic opportunity, and build community identity. The Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA) program is designed for creative entrepreneurs who aspire to start their own for-profit business or who operate an existing for-profit micro business.

The program encourages the participation of interested creative entrepreneurs located in communities across the commonwealth, including those located in low-income communities, urban, suburban, and rural communities. Successful applicants receive small business consultation services, grant funding, and access to a curriculum of business strategies delivered through a cohort model of networking, learning, and participation developed in collaboration between Pennsylvania Creative Industries and the CEA program Administrator.

## About this Request for Proposals (RFP)

Pennsylvania Creative Industries seeks proposals from qualified organizations to serve as the statewide administrator ("Administrator") of the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator program. Pennsylvania Creative Industries anticipates that the selected Administrator will maintain this status for a five-year period, subject to annual award agreements and availability of funds. At the end of the five-year period, the Administrator may re-apply to continue administration of the program.

**Grant Amount for CEA Administration:** \$1,000,000 per year (does not require a match)

Grant Breakdown:

- \$700,000 for regranting of funds to individual creative entrepreneurs (approximately 140 grantees per year), administered through a cohort model of knowledge sharing, networking, and business planning through in-person and virtual meetings.
- \$300,000 for programmatic and administrative costs that include expenditures in the following categories:
  - Statewide outreach and engagement with potential program participants and grantees;
  - Networking and business support programming for cohorts of participants.
  - Marketing of the program to potential grantees, and professional development and business training workshops for grantees;
  - Continual program development and implementation; and

- Data collection (including collection and review of applications, program and grantee outcomes, and collection and retention of grantee final reports).

Note: the selected Administrator will also be eligible for a program development grant, intended to be received prior to beginning implementation of the CEA program and pending availability of funds.

## Administrator Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a non-profit organization located and providing services in Pennsylvania.

## Administrator Requirements:

- The ability to re-grant funding directly to eligible applicants.
- Financial and staff capacity to effectively administer program requirements.
- Demonstrated knowledge of entrepreneurship and interest in (and preferably knowledge of) working with entrepreneurs in all or some of the following creative industry areas:
  - Marketing – Advertising and marketing agencies & professionals
  - Architecture – Architecture firms & architects
  - Visual Arts & Crafts – Galleries, artists, artisans & makers, tattoo artists
  - Design – Product, interior, graphic, and fashion design firms and designers
  - Film & Media – Film, video, animation, TV & Radio businesses
  - Digital Games – Companies, programmers & individuals producing games.
  - Music & Entertainment – Producers, venues, musicians & performers
  - Publishing – Print or electronic businesses & content creators, editors & writers
- Be an organization that offers expertise in business support services and resources including, but not limited to, business plan development, financial strategy, recommendations on business growth strategies and development, business planning workshops.
- Have the capacity and demonstrated history of offering and implementing statewide coverage.
- Work collaboratively with Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff on program development and implementation.
- Develop and actively distribute notice of and applications for the CEA program and grants.
- Publicize and conduct workshops with cohort groups of CEA grantees, both virtually and in-person, that build relationships and create opportunities for networking and business development.
- Monitor grantee performance and collect and provide data to Pennsylvania Creative Industries staff on a regular basis.

## 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.
- Capital expenditures, including equipment costing \$500 per item or more.
- Competitions.

- Performances and exhibitions not available to the public.

## Crediting Pennsylvania Creative Industries

The Administrator must prominently acknowledge Pennsylvania Creative Industries funding in promotions, flyers, programs, media announcements, press releases, websites, social media that references the CEA program by utilizing approved logos, branding, and materials. Pennsylvania Creative Industries will provide said materials to the Administrator.

## Proposal Narrative, Submission and Review Process

Proposal narrative (not to exceed 4 pages):

1. Describe your organization, including mission, vision, and goals, and how your organization is aligned with Pennsylvania Creative Industries' mission and vision, as outlined on page 1 of this document.
2. Specific to your organization's administration of the CEA program, explain how you plan to fulfill the Administrator Requirements outlined in this document on page 2-3.
3. Describe your organization's relevant experience with administration of comparable programs.
4. Describe your organization's capacity to carry out the proposed program implementation, including your plan to reach statewide coverage.

Required attachments:

1. Your organization's most recently completed audited financial statements.
2. Proposed CEA program budget based on \$1,000,000 grant amount outlined on page 2 of this document under Grant Breakdown.
3. Examples of similar programs and activities completed by your organization.

Submission process: *(Please note: all questions regarding this RFP process should be directed to Amanda Lovell via [alovell@pa.gov](mailto:alovell@pa.gov) or (717) 585-7987)*

1. Read this document thoroughly.
2. Before applying, contact Amanda Lovell via [alovell@pa.gov](mailto:alovell@pa.gov) or (717) 585-7987.
3. Submit your proposal to Amanda Lovell via email ([alovell@pa.gov](mailto:alovell@pa.gov)) by November 21, 2025.

## Proposal Review Process

Review Criteria:

- Alignment with approach: Proposal demonstrates alignment with Pennsylvania Creative Industries Mission and Vision as well as the requirements outlined in the guidelines in the proposal as it relates to approach, implementation plan, and program budget;
- Impact and reach: Proposal clearly illustrates impact and statewide reach of the proposed program approach;
- Experience with comparable projects: Proposal demonstrates the organization's successful history of developing and executing comparable programs and/or activities; and
- Capacity: Proposal demonstrates organizational and key staff capacity to carry out the proposed program statewide.

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee based on the review criteria included in this document. Committee recommendations will be presented to the Council, Pennsylvania Creative Industries'

governing body. Council will act on recommendations and has final authority in the awarding of funds. Organizations will be notified about the status of their proposal. The selected organization will be notified via email with 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 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 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.*