

**Minutes
Council Meeting
March 6, 2025
9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: Chair Cohen, Vice Chair Alaquiva, Mr. Astorino, Senator Cappelletti, Mr. Gabel, Ms. Goldberg, Ms. Gunderson, Representative Labs, Judge Morgan, Mr. Parks, Mr. Stull, Ms. Vilayphonh, Mr. Warfield

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Senator Bartolotta, 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; Dana Payne, Director of Capacity Building and Creative Asset Development; 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.

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 December 5, 2024 meeting minutes:

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

ITEM 4: Recommendations for Creative Catalyst Grants

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning

Ms. Dunlap presented the following recommendations for Creative Catalyst support in Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Dunlap reminded Council that all of these are one-to-one matching grants.

Applicant: SACA Development Corporation

Proposal: Voices of Migration

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request from SACA Development Corporation is for Voice of Migration, a multi-generational placemaking project using public art and technology to share migration stories of graduates from Spanish American Civic Association (SACA) workforce centers. Dunlap stated that the first phase will launch at Lancaster Tec Centro, with public art and elder storytelling, followed by expansion to additional counties (Berks, Dauphin, Lebanon, York). PCA funds will support the Lancaster site and technical assistance for replication.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$12,500 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$12,500.

Applicant: Big Picture Alliance

Proposal: Multimedia Apprenticeship Program

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request from Big Picture Alliance is for the Multimedia Apprenticeship Program, which is a state-registered apprenticeship program training marginalized young adults (ages 18-24) for careers in media. Dunlap stated that the initiative will provide digital media tools, mentorship, and industry connections, partnering with Philly Youth Media Collaborative, PA Department of Labor & Industry, and various media companies. Ms. Dunlap explained that PCA funding would support the development and launch of the apprenticeship model over the next year.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$20,000 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$20,000.

Applicant: Association For the Colonial Theatre

Proposal: League of Historic American Theatres National Conference and Theatre Tour

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request from the Association for the Colonial Theatre is for the League of Historic American Theatres National Conference and Theatre Tour. Dunlap stated that this is for a professional development and networking event for historic theatre professionals, taking place in Pittsburgh from July 20–23. Ms. Dunlap explained that PCA's Creative Catalyst funds would assist with costs for traveling and touring historic theatres in the area, including those managed by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$10,000 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$10,000.

Applicant: AI Horizons

Proposal: The AI Horizons PGH Summit 2025

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request from AI Horizons is for its PGH Summit 2025, which is set for September. Ms. Dunlap explained that this summit builds on the success of the 2024 inaugural event, which focused on human-first AI innovations. She added that this year's summit will feature a Creative Tech Kickoff, celebrating the fusion of AI and creativity.

Dunlap stated that this event will include sessions on AI's influence in the creative sector, bringing together creatives, entrepreneurs, and researchers to discuss advancements in

digital art, music, virtual reality, and interactive media. She explained that by emphasizing creativity, the summit aims to reinforce Pennsylvania's role as a leader in AI and innovation.

Ms. Dunlap stated that PCA funds will support promotion and marketing, including media outreach and interactive programming, to highlight Pennsylvania's leadership in AI and the creative industries and raise awareness of how AI is shaping the creative landscape.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$10,000 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$50,000.

Applicant: Community Arts Center of Cambria Co. (CACCC)

Proposal: Log Art Theatre (LAT) – Listen

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request from CACCC is for Log Art Theatre (LAT) – Listen, which is an accessibility-driven performing arts initiative launched by CACCC in response to COVID shutdowns. Ms. Dunlap stated that this is a partnership with *The Show Must Go On...Line*, LAT-Listen which transforms audio theatre productions into mp4 videos with closed captioning and sound effect descriptions, ensuring greater accessibility.

Ms. Dunlap reported that initially, CACCC used existing productions from *The Show Must Go On...Line* to introduce LAT-Listen via its YouTube channel, where four productions remain permanently available. This digital-first approach allows artists across Pennsylvania to participate in LAT-Listen's four-component creative process.

Dunlap stated that CACCC has also built partnerships with multiple local and statewide agencies, including the Cambria County Association for the Blind and Handicapped, PA Rural Arts Alliance, and public broadcasting organizations, to support and promote LAT-Listen's content.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$10,000 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$10,000.

Applicant: Workforce LIVE

Proposal: Live Events Industry Partnership Study

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request is from Workforce LIVE for its Live Events Industry Partnership study. Dunlap explained that Workforce LIVE, a non-profit focused on recruiting and retaining talent in the live events industry, seeks to analyze data on Pennsylvania's live event sector. Ms. Dunlap stated that while venues and performers are recognized under existing NAICS codes, behind-the-scenes professionals—designers, technicians, engineers, and other event staff—lack clear industry classification.

Ms. Dunlap stated that this study aims to better define the industry, improving recruitment, education, and training efforts. She explained that by gathering data, Workforce LIVE hopes to establish a unified NAICS code and enhance statewide awareness of the field.

Ms. Dunlap reported that if awarded, PCA funds would support the study, including contracting Lightcast, a global leader in labor market analytics, to conduct the research.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$37,500 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$37,500.

Applicant: Carnegie Mellon University

Proposal: Confluence of Cultures Conference

Ms. Dunlap stated that this request is Carnegie Mellon University for its Confluence of Cultures Conference. Dunlap explained that this conference will be hosted by Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) and is scheduled to take place on May 22–25 event in Pittsburgh. Dunlap stated that this conference will bring together arts administrators, educators, cultural leaders, and arts managers for professional development and networking.

Ms. Dunlap reported that this conference will center on four themes: The Culture of Belonging; The Culture of Health and Well-being; The Culture of Innovation; and The Culture of the Environment

Dunlap stated that the event will highlight Pennsylvania's creative sector while attracting national and international participants.

Ms. Dunlap explained that PCA support will enable the conference to showcase Pittsburgh's creative ecosystem, including organizing pre-conference and post-conference experiences for 160+ attendees from across the U.S. and beyond.

Ms. Dunlap stated that the organization has requested \$10,000 and that PCA's recommendation is for \$10, 000.

Chair Cohen asked Mr. Blischke to explain the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) method of coding, particularly its six-digit structure. Blischke noted that creative industries have historically been difficult to classify, but the NAICS system might help measure them more effectively. He also highlighted that many creative occupations are new and often cross multiple industries.

Representative Ciresi raised a question about the proposed grant for Rock Lititz, noting that the organization already receives support through the state. He questioned whether a university could fulfill the same role.

Ms. Dunlap clarified that Workforce Live is a new nonprofit based on the Rock Lititz campus, that is aiming for national recognition. She stated that the grant is not funding Rock Lititz or its existing businesses, but rather this independent nonprofit.

Judge Morgan questioned whether Carnegie Mellon's Confluence of Cultures Conference would primarily benefit Pennsylvanians and if PCA should be funding national initiatives in the arts. Ms. Dunlap explained that such events bring people to Pittsburgh, helping to showcase the region's creative ecosystem.

Ms. Goldberg inquired about Big Picture Alliance's media workforce training program, asking whether it repeats previous PCA-supported apprenticeship initiatives. She requested details on how apprentices will be introduced to the program, supported after graduation, and transitioned into employment. Ms. Dunlap provided further clarification and examples.

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

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

ITEM 5: Recommendation for Statewide Services Request for Proposals: Pennsylvania Poetry Out Loud Program

Amy Gabriele, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Gabriele provided a brief overview of the Poetry Out Loud (POL) initiative. Ms. Gabriele stated that during the November 2024 Council meeting, PCA staff proposed a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage an organization to manage Pennsylvania's POL program, including the state finals, for a five-year grant cycle (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2030). Ms. Gabriele reported that PCA received proposals from the following organizations: Millersville University, Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit, Capital Area Intermediate Unit, Wildcat Academy of the Creative Arts, and Pennsylvania Poetry Society.

Ms. Gabriele explained that each submission was evaluated on published criteria and after committee review, Capital Area Intermediate Unit was recommended for selection. The organization will receive \$75,000 annually for up to five years, starting July 1, 2025.

Mr. Gabel asked for clarification about the Capital Area Intermediate Unit.

Ms. Gabriele explained that every region in Pennsylvania has an intermediate unit that provides services and teacher training for school districts. The Capital Area Intermediate Unit is located in Enola.

Ms. Goldberg asked if PCA's regional partners previously handled the administration for Poetry Out Loud. Ms. Gabriele confirmed that AIE partners previously received \$1,500 to manage regional competitions, but PCA would still oversee the program without directly running it.

Ms. Goldberg inquired whether this transition would improve promotion for POL and PCA. Ms. Gabriele responded that the Capital Area Intermediate Unit has better infrastructure and will provide stronger statewide promotion throughout the year, particularly in Pennsylvania schools and with teachers.

Mr. Stull asked when the POL competition took place, and Gabriele confirmed that this year it happened on March 3.

Ms. Cohen asked whether charter and homeschool students can participate, and Gabriele confirmed that charter schools, homeschoolers, and eighth graders taking high school courses are eligible.

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

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

ITEM 6: Recommendations for Creative Communities Initiative

Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities & The Creative Economy

Ms. Merritt provided an overview of the Creative Communities program as well as the list of requirements for the CCI requirements.

Ms. Merritt stated that the first part of this recommendation is for Council to approve the following six communities, each of which focuses on public art, community engagement, and revitalization:

- Adams County – A Community Placemaking Initiative led by the Adams County Arts Council to foster belonging and healing.
- Ambridge, Beaver County – The Borough of Ambridge will revitalize the community through public art, with a focus on youth engagement.
- Lock Haven, Clinton County – The City of Lock Haven will develop an arts corridor to enhance vitality, walkability, and safety.
- Harrisburg, Dauphin County – Visit Hershey & Harrisburg Inc. will oversee community engagement and programming for the new Harrisburg Arts District.
- Forest City & Carbondale, Susquehanna & Lackawanna Counties – Valley in Motion will connect two de-industrialized communities through public art and local partnerships.
- Philadelphia County – Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates will strengthen community connectedness in the Norris Square Park neighborhood by addressing development and displacement through art and engagement.

Ms. Merritt stated that the second part of the recommendation for Council to approve is a minor revision to the CCI funding guidelines. Ms. Merritt explained that the previous language was "Up to \$25,000 per year for up to four years" and the revised language is "Generally, up to \$25,000 per year for up to four years."

Chair Cohen stated that she loves the fact that PCA is hitting various parts of the state and has become relevant around the commonwealth.

Ms. Merritt agreed and said competitiveness of the program is very good and added that there are incredible examples across the state. Ms. Merritt stated that this year, 55 letters of interest were received and since the program was rolled out in 2019, over 300 applications were received.

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

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

ITEM 7: Recommendation for Administration of Public-Private Partnership Projects

Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities & The Creative Economy

Ms. Merritt reported that at the December meeting, the Council authorized PCA to accept proposals for administering public-private partnership projects. Merritt stated that PCA received and reviewed a proposal from the Team Pennsylvania Foundation (Team PA), a statewide nonprofit co-chaired by the Governor and a private sector leader.

Merritt stated that PCA staff recommends the approval of up to \$28,890 for Team PA to act as the administrator of these projects, aligning with PCA's strategic plan to foster cross-sector partnerships.

Ms. Goldberg stated that TeamPA was involved in PCA's Governor's Award ceremonies.

Chair Cohen said that TeamPA is highly regarded across the Commonwealth.

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

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

ITEM 8: Recommendation for the Creative Business Loan Fund

Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities & The Creative Economy

Ms. Merritt reported that in December 2024, Council approved a proposal for the Creative Business Loan Fund (CBLF), which offers affordable financing to small creative businesses across various industries. Ms. Merritt stated that in order to sustain the program's success, PCA staff recommends the allocation of \$250,000 for a new five-year contract with Bridgeway Capital. Merritt explained that Bridgeway's application meets all grant criteria, and the organization has committed a \$1,000,000 match to support the initiative.

Ms. Merritt reported that Bridgeway serves as a neutral broker and convener, combining collaboration with strategic investment to accelerate Pennsylvania's economy and has a longstanding role in supporting economic development, working closely with Commonwealth agencies. Merritt added that PCA has worked very successfully with Bridgeway in the past.

Chair Cohen stated that her first interaction with Bridgeway was at the Touchtone Center for Crafts and said that she was very impressed with the event.

Ms. Goldberg asked if Bridgeway has performed similar work with organizations other than creative industries. Ms. Merritt replied that Bridgeway performs similar work in the outdoor recreation industry as well as with the PA Wilds and organizations in Erie, southwestern Pennsylvania and in the Pittsburgh region.

Mr. Blischke stated that Bridgeway is unique in that they have a division focusing on creative industry.

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

Mr. Gabel made a motion to approve the recommendation. Mr. Astorino seconded the motion. Motion carried, none abstained or opposed.

ITEM 9: Recommendation for Capitalization Pilot Program

Dana Payne, Director of Capacity Building and Creative Asset Development

Ms. Payne reported that in July 2024, Council approved the allocation of \$50,000 to develop a capitalization pilot extending the Strategies for Success program. Ms. Payne stated that this initiative aims to strengthen financially healthy arts organizations by increasing funding and supporting their long-term sustainability and growth.

Ms. Payne explained that capitalization involves accumulating and managing financial resources to advance an organization's mission. She stated that well-capitalized organizations require operational, risk, and opportunity capital, along with reserves to sustain their work and respond to challenges.

Ms. Payne stated that this pilot program seeks organizations with a strong artistic product or service ready to scale their operations. Ms. Payne explained that candidates will submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) including financial history and a capitalization strategy. Ms. Payne added that one organization will be selected for a three-year, \$50,000/year program, with funding provided in installments. Ms. Payne stated that grantees must meet capitalization

benchmarks and contribute matching funds in years two and three and added that an exit grant may be awarded based on success.

Mr. Parks asked if this is only open to non-profit or if it is also open to for profit organizations.

Ms. Payne responded that it will be for non-profits and PCA will see what types of organizations submit the LOIs.

Ms. Cohen stated that this initiative will get a lot of interest.

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

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

ITEM 10: Recommendation for New Agency Name

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke stated that over past several years and during recent planning process, PCA has been discussing different ways that the agency can be seen in a positive, inclusive and visible way.

Ms. Blischke stated that PCA staff recommends that Council approve rebranding the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts to “Pennsylvania Creative Industries” without making a legal or legislative change to the Council’s name.

Blischke explained that the new branding aims to enhance visibility, engage a broader audience, foster collaboration among creative sectors, and emphasize the role of creativity in innovation, economic growth, and community development. Blischke stated that upon approval, staff will develop branding, messaging, and materials to support the launch, aligning with Pennsylvania’s business and tourism branding guidelines. Blischke added that PCA will take all necessary legal steps to protect the mark and will work with legal counsel to protect the intellectual property.

Mr. Blischke asked for Council approval to take these steps as well as the authorization to move forward and to develop a plan to go forward.

Representative Ciresi stated that he recently learned that Citizens for the Arts in PA plans to rename itself “Creative Pennsylvania.” Mr. Blischke acknowledged their proposed name change and Representative Ciresi expressed that the change could create confusion, especially given PCA’s own rebranding.

Ms. Goldberg inquired about their funding sources, and Mr. Blischke explained that their funding comes from grants, memberships, and fundraisers. Ms. Gabriele stated that in the past, PCA previously provided grants and confirmed Citizens for the Arts in PA have not received funding in several years.

Chair Cohen cautioned against potential confusion, particularly during arts advocacy events with legislators. Judge Morgan suggested requesting the group reconsider their name choice, however Representative Ciresi noted that PCA cannot legally prevent it. Mr. Parks pointed out that Citizens for the Arts has historically struggled with effective arts lobbying and fundraising. Mr. Parks suggested that PCA should focus on moving forward with its own rebranding while ensuring legislators are informed of its name change.

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

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

ITEM 11: Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Draft Budget

Amy Gabriele, Chief of Finance & Administration

Ms. Gabriele reported that the draft Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget will be reviewed and acted upon at the July 2025 Council meeting. Ms. Gabriele directed Council to the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget that was provided in the Council Book for reference. Gabriele explained that the budget is pending state approval and stated that the amounts may fluctuate based on application reviews and Council decisions.

Ms. Gabriele stated that final figures will be presented at the July 2025 Council meeting for official action.

ITEM 12: Update on Framework for Strategic Plan

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke provided a recap of where PCA is with its strategic plan. Blischke gave a brief overview of what has been done over the past year. He also said that Council roundtable meetings were held to explain and receive feedback about the agency's new strategic direction.

ITEM 13 Chair's Report

Susan Cohen, Chair

Chair Cohen reported that Vice Chair Alaquiva was recently celebrated for his achievements, including his film showcased at Sundance and his recognition as one of Pittsburgh's Outstanding People of 2024.

Vice Chair Alaquiva expressed gratitude and reflected on how the arts transformed his life, particularly through childhood challenges with homelessness. He stated that he is now heading to South Africa for a film project with Viola Davis.

Chair Cohen reported that PCA's partnership with the PA Turnpike Commission led to the final ArtSparks installation at Blue Mount Service Plaza, completing a series at 17 service plazas.

Chair Cohen stated that she and Mr. Blischke recently met with David Briel, head of International Business Development under DCED, and the Cultural Minister of Ghana. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss a showcase of crafts and fabrics in Pennsylvania.

Chair Cohen reported that the recent Poetry Out Loud Competition crowned Isavel Mendoza of Lehigh Charter School for the Arts as the winner. Mendoza will represent Pennsylvania at the national finals in May, with Council members extending their best wishes and appreciation to staff for their contributions.

ITEM 14: Executive Director's Report

Karl Blischke, Executive Director

Mr. Blischke emphasized the importance of seeing how individual efforts contribute to a larger vision for Pennsylvania's creative industries. The Council discussed the enhanced

visibility and impact of the newly branded Pennsylvania Creative Industries.

Mr. Blischke reported that he, Chair Cohen, Vice Chair Alaquiva and Ms. Dunlap will represent Pennsylvania at the South by Southwest conference, promoting the state's creative sectors, artists, filmmakers, and business opportunities in order to boost tourism and business attraction.

Mr. Blischke highlighted Ms. Dunlap's work related to Workforce Development. He stated that Ms. Dunlap has recognized the importance of using data to identify skill needs and career paths. Mr. Blischke stated that Ms. Dunlap is also organizing the AI Horizon Conference, positioning Pennsylvania within emerging tech sectors and will provide Council with more details about this event which will occur in September.

Blischke reported that Ms. Merritt is developing public-private partnerships with TEAM PA to better leverage PCA funds with external investments.

Mr. Blischke stated that Ms. Payne is exploring strategies to build Pennsylvania's assets, including international discussions on impact investing and holistic partnerships.

Mr. Blischke provided Council with a reminder to file financial interest statements online by May 1st. Blischke stated that Ms. Kline will be emailing instructions and links.

Mr. Blischke thanked the PCA staff for their hard work and stated that Council is very lucky to have great leadership with such a small group.

Chair Cohen thanked Karl for his leadership, PCA staff for their hard work and for encouraging the Council to move forward with wonderful plans.

ITEM 13: Adjournment

Meeting Adjourned at 10:30