



## 2025-2026 Application Guidelines for Creative Sector Flex Fund

Application opens: September 1, 2025

Application closes: October 31, 2025\*

For regional application submission processes, contact [your regional PPA partner organization](#)

\*Please note: No extensions will be granted. Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.

Grant activity period: January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026

Grant amount: \$5,000 per organization (see below for more information)

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### Creative Sector Flex Fund Description

The Creative Sector Flex Fund (CSFF) is a grant program of Pennsylvania Creative Industries, powered by the 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.

Additional program information:

- Only 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.
- The 2025-2026 grant amount will be \$5,000 per applicant, dependent on Pennsylvania Creative Industries' budget and availability of funds.
- Annual grants are not guaranteed.
- For the purposes of the Creative Sector Flex Fund application, applicants are classified as either an arts organization or an arts program of a non-arts organization.

### Organizational Classification

- **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, theaters, etc.).
- **Arts Program of 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).

There are different requirements for arts organizations versus arts programs, which are noted in the eligibility section below.

*If you are unsure how your organization is classified, contact the PPA Partner in your region:*

[https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/coa/documents/documents/pca\\_partnerships\\_map\\_and\\_contacts.pdf](https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/coa/documents/documents/pca_partnerships_map_and_contacts.pdf)

## Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation, or a unit of local government (counties, cities, boroughs, townships, and municipal authorities). Pre-K -12 public, private and parochial schools including all charter schools are NOT eligible. (K-12 schools should contact the Arts in Education Program of Pennsylvania Creative Industries for other opportunities).
- Be located in Pennsylvania, except for non-profit, tax-exempt corporations acting as a fiscal sponsor on behalf of an unincorporated group or not-for-profit limited liability company (LLC) that is 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. PPA Partners determine revenue size by a two-year average demonstrated by:
  - **Arts organization:** most recent form 990 of the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service
  - **Arts program of non-arts organization or whose 990 is a postcard:** applicant's 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.

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 not-for-profit LLCs with more than two members conducting arts activities in Pennsylvania for an expressly not-for-profit purpose must apply to the PPA Partner 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, its 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 PPA Partner and is responsible for ensuring the completion of the final reports.

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

## Parent (and Related) Organizations

A parent organization that includes separately identifiable and independent components (e.g., a university campus that has a presenting organization and a radio station) may apply for each such 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 board/committee, mostly consisting of members not associated with the parent entity and generally functioning with substantial oversight and management of the component;
- Separate budget, maintained by the component; and
- Two-year history of arts programming undertaken by the component.

To qualify as an eligible independent component, it should be equivalent to a stand-alone institution. A parent organization should consult with [the PPA partner organization for their region](#) to verify eligibility of the component before preparing an application.

## Matching Requirements

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

## Funding Restrictions

Grant funds cannot be used for any of the following:

- Activities outside the activity period of the grant.
- Activities that have a religious purpose.
- Payments to lobbyists.
- Cash prizes and awards.
- Benefit activities.
- Hospitality expenses (i.e., receptions, parties, gallery openings).
- Capital expenditures, including equipment costing \$500 or more.
- Competitions.
- Performances and exhibitions not available to the public.
- Direct or indirect participation in a political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.
- Attempts to influence legislation.

## Application Process

Applications must be submitted to the applicable [PPA Partner](#). PPA partner regions are based on the Pennsylvania county of residence of the applicant, or in the case of fiscal sponsorship, the unincorporated group or not-for-profit LLC. Application due date is **October 31, 2025**

for the **grant activity period of January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026**. For consistency and equity of the program statewide, late applications will not be accepted, application extensions will not be granted, and incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed. Grant applications must be submitted every year.

#### Application Review Process

- PPA Partner staff review applications for eligibility
- Applicants will be notified regarding the status of their application, award amount, and the grant award agreement process.

PPA Partner advisory panels evaluate Creative Sector Flex Fund applications based on the following criteria:

#### **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.
- Artists and artistic offerings and/ or services involve and are meaningful to the community being served.
- Relevant arts learning opportunities and creative endeavors for community members.

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

#### **Stewardship Value**

*How does your organization appropriately manage activities and funds?*

Applicant demonstrates:

- Planning processes appropriate to its organization, mission, and goals.
- Capacity to carry out programs and projects as planned.
- Appropriate financial planning and oversight practices.

#### Required Attachments

*Please note: 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.
- **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 also must 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 (no more than one page) list of arts activities (for example: 3 concerts, 2 workshops, 5 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 (Google Drive, DropBox, etc.), YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, etc. Please be sure to grant proper access, as applicable.

#### Appeals Process

Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA) recognizes that errors may occur in the PPA application process. PPA 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 PPA Partner. Appeals to the board of a designated partner may result in a different outcome if the applicant can satisfactorily document that the application was misrepresented or improperly reviewed through no fault of the applicant. Appeals are awarded only if the error or omission had a substantial effect on the evaluation and assessment of the advisory panel. **Appeals are not intended to provide the applicant with an opportunity to challenge the evaluation and assessment of the advisory panel.** Disagreement with the judgment of the advisory panel or the amount of the award is not grounds for an appeal.

Applicants considering an appeal should contact their PPA Partner for advice and guidance. The appeal of an award decision must be made in writing within ten business days from the date of the notification of the award from the Partner. Letters of appeal should be addressed to the PPA Partner. The letter should identify the error or omission and the effect such error had on the recommendation of the advisory panel. Partners must immediately forward an appeal to the Pennsylvania Creative Industries PPA Program Director. If the appeal is supported by the Partner, funds will be awarded only if they are available.

#### About Pennsylvania Creative Industries

Pennsylvania Creative Industries, powered by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, is a state agency under the Office of the Governor. Pennsylvania Creative Industries' mission is to empower, connect, and amplify creatives and creative industries and their contributions to Pennsylvania's communities, economy, and workforce.

For more information about Pennsylvania Creative Industries, visit [pa.gov/arts](http://pa.gov/arts).

## About Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts

- Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA) is a partnership between local organizations and Pennsylvania Creative Industries. [PPA Partners](#) re-grant Pennsylvania Creative Industries funds to support a variety of local and community arts activities.
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## How to Apply

- 1) Read this document thoroughly.
- 2) Apply and submit your application online through the [PPA Partner organization](#) in your region.

## Need help?

- For technical and login questions or questions about content and attachments, contact the applicable [PPA Partner organization](#) for your region.
- For general questions about Pennsylvania Creative Industries PPA partnership, contact [Amanda Lovell](#).