

2026 Powering the Arts Grant Guidelines



Application Deadline: June 15, 2026, at 5 p.m.

Overview

PECO, Team Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania Creative Industries, powered by PA Council on the Arts, have partnered to support grassroots audience development initiatives in the Philadelphia five county region (Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties) and part of York County (zip codes 17302, 17309, 17314, and 17321). The grant is designed to enhance community access to arts activities by fostering the growth of diverse audiences. To achieve this, applicants must understand the characteristics of their current audience and identify new demographics to engage—this could include variations in age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, or abilities. This collaboration aims to strengthen the connection between arts programs and the vibrant communities they serve.

Program Goals & Guidelines

How are NEW audiences defined?

New audiences refer to individuals who do not align with the typical characteristics of the current audience. Engaging these audiences requires an understanding of existing audience demographics and identifying those to be attracted, such as variations in age groups, genders, ethnicities, geographic areas, or disabilities.

The grant program activity period is September 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027, and includes two distinct types of funding:

The Powering the Arts grant program funds *New Audience Planning or Implementation Projects*

Planning Grants: Designed to help arts organizations assess their current audience, identify new audiences, and develop strategies or programs to attract and retain them. Eligible

activities include audience research, creating a plan to diversify audiences, or evaluating existing plans to refine or pursue a different approach.

Implementation Grants: Intended for arts organizations that are actively implementing strategies to engage and retain new audiences or building upon existing efforts. A detailed timeline of activities must be submitted alongside the grant application.

What Powering the Arts Grants Fund

Strategies may include but are not limited to:

- Removing barriers: eliminating obstacles that prevent desired audiences from participating in arts programming, such as admission fees, accessibility challenges, program types, or reaching diverse populations and new age groups.
- Exploring and clarifying the concept of inclusivity in relation to the community the organization serves.
- Support community engagement activities to reach new audiences.
- External community engagement programming: conducting community arts programming outside of the organization which may attract and retain new audiences.
- Designing innovative engagement strategies, activities, and programs for new audiences.
- Creative collaborations: partnering with other community organizations to connect with and plan for new audience development.

Examples of eligible activities could include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging a consultant to assist the organization in analyzing its current audience and designing a plan to attract and engage new, non-typical audience groups.
- Designing new education and public programs specifically tailored to the interests and needs of new audience demographics. (Refer to non-eligible activities for restrictions.)
- Building collaborative partnerships with non-arts venues to create joint programming, expand outreach, and boost visibility within diverse communities.
- Strengthening community engagement efforts to better connect with underserved or underrepresented audiences.
- Enhancing marketing and promotional strategies to raise awareness and interest among local communities.

Funding Restrictions

- Activities intended to increase the existing demographic groups that comprise the organization's current audience.
- One-time programs unless they aim to engage new audiences and include a documented follow-up plan to ensure the sustainability of those audiences.

Grant Amounts and Matching Requirements

- Grant amount = \$5,000
- Required 1:1 match (50% of the match can be in-kind)

Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include nonprofit arts and culture organizations or nonprofit community organizations offering arts and culture programming, with an annual budget not exceeding \$2M.
- Organizations may use a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor.
- Organizations must be located in one of the following counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia, or York.

Ineligible Applicants

- Schools, school districts, colleges, universities, governments, and government-run organizations are ineligible to apply.
- Individuals or faith-based organizations.

Funding Requirements

- Applicants are required to demonstrate a commitment to ensuring artistic programs are accessible, available, and meaningful to a broad range of participants.
- Grantees are required to acknowledge support from PECO, Team Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania Creative Industries in their Powering the Arts funded programs and promotional materials.
- Cultural offerings provided by the applicant must be open and accessible to the general public.
- Grant funds may be utilized to supplement existing staff salaries for management of the project.
- Grant funds may also be applied toward all expenses associated with project planning or implementation.
- Recipients of grant funds must ensure the full expenditure of the award by the conclusion of the grant period.
- Grantees are required to submit a final report no later than 60 days after the end of the grant period. The final report will require written documentation of the project activities, a detailed financial report, and links to project documentation (photos, videos, and other relevant materials).

Review Process

Grant proposals are evaluated by a panel of diverse individuals actively engaged in the arts and culture sector, representing a wide range of perspectives, expertise, and constituencies.

PECO staff will make a final application review and award approval to ensure projects align with the company's values and mission.

Review Criteria

Applicant demonstrates:

- Clear understanding of its current audience.
- Logical rationale for reaching a new audience that is aligned with the applicant's mission.
- Realistic plans for reaching a new audience with a likelihood of success.
- Appropriate plans to measure success and impact of audience development.

Program Timeline

May 4, 2026: Grant Opportunity Official Announcement & Application Launch

May 4 – June 15, 2026: Open Submissions Period

June 15, 2026 (5:00pm): Application Deadline

June 15 – August 20, 2026: Review Period

August 28, 2026: Grant Award Announcement

September 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027: Grant Activity Period

August 31, 2027: Final Grant Report Deadline