



CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR ACCELERATOR PROGRAM



SEPTEMBER 2021



Overview

As part of their new community-centered strategic plan, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) has launched a new program to help creative entrepreneurs grow their businesses and revenue.

This program will advance the PCA's values of diversity, equity, and inclusion by prioritizing investment in socially or economically disadvantaged creative entrepreneurs and those who are located in, and whose work benefits low-income communities. Fifty-one percent of the funds available for distribution in this program will be reserved for Black, Indigenous, or persons of color (BIPOC), or economically disadvantaged creative entrepreneurs and those who are located in and whose work benefits low-income communities. Low-income communities will be identified using the [**Small Business Administration's low-income communities map**](#). Nonprofit businesses will not be able to receive support through the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator grant.

Why Creative Entrepreneurs?

Creative entrepreneurs are invaluable assets to communities. As a creative entrepreneur, you lead innovation, deliver creative products and services, generate economic opportunity, and build community identity.

Assisting creative entrepreneurs is part of the pathway to recovery and increased opportunity within our rapidly changing economic environment. Providing a pathway for creative entrepreneurs to grow their businesses strategically helps foster thriving Pennsylvania communities that are great places to work and live.

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to support Pennsylvania's creative entrepreneurs as they grow their business, audience, and revenue. This program will invest in socially or economically disadvantaged creative entrepreneurs. By doing so, the program will advance the PCA's priorities of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Arts Council is administering this grant on behalf of the PA Council on the Arts for Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, and Washington counties. Grant amounts range from \$500 to \$2,000.

Application Deadline

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.
Funding decisions will be made on a quarterly basis.

- **Quarter 1:** November 1st, 2021
- **Quarter 2:** February 1st, 2022
- **Quarter 3:** May 2nd, 2022
- **Quarter 4:** August 1st, 2022



Eligibility

Creative entrepreneurs are eligible to apply for the Creative Entrepreneurs Accelerator Program once every three years. Applicants must:

- Be at least 18 years of age and a current resident of Pennsylvania for at least one year.
- Manage a business with gross revenue of less than \$200,000 or intend to form or operate a business in Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, and Washington counties.
- Operate in one or more of the following creative industry areas:
 - *Marketing* – Advertising and marketing agencies and professionals
 - *Architecture* – Architecture firms and architects
 - *Visual Arts & Crafts* – Galleries, artists, artisans, and makers
 - *Design* – Product, interior, graphic, and fashion design firms and designers
 - *Film & Media* – Film, video, animation, television, and radio businesses
 - *Digital Games* – Companies, programmers, and individuals producing games
 - *Music & Entertainment* – Producers, venues, musicians, and performers
 - *Publishing* – Print or electronic businesses and content creators, editors, and writers

Guidelines

How the Program Works

This program will provide **access to qualified small business consulting services and critical financial resources** for creative entrepreneurs who aspire to start their own business or who operate an existing micro-business (i.e., a very small company that has few employees and little to no turnover).

Before applying to the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program, creative entrepreneurs receive consultation services and a business plan review by a local small business development organization, known as **“Referral Coordinators”** for the purposes of this program. Business consultation services will be provided at no cost to prospective applicants. Contact information for Referral Coordinators is available on page six.

The Referral Coordinators can help with the details, first steps, and general obstacles of starting a business including the development of a sound business plan and business growth and sustainability strategies. **Referral Coordinator services are available on an ongoing basis.**

Once a Referral Coordinator has reviewed a creative entrepreneur’s business plan and determined eligibility, the Referral Coordinators will refer the creative entrepreneur to their regional PPA partner, which is the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council for applicants in Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, and Washington counties.

Upon receiving a completed referral from a designated Referral Coordinator, applicants may submit application materials through the Arts Council website. Applying is simple, and includes the creative entrepreneur’s request for financial support and intended purpose and use of grant funds.

Upon receipt of an eligible and complete application, the Arts Council will enter into a grant award agreement with the creative entrepreneur and process the grant payment.

The Creative Entrepreneur grant is first-come-first-serve. Funds will be replenished by the PA Council on the Arts on a to-be-determined cycle.



Eligible Use of Funds

Funds must support business formation or development. Nonprofit businesses are not eligible for support under this program. Eligible uses of grant funds include:

- Professional fees for workshops, consultants, and career coaching
- Participation in events, trade shows, and festivals that could support audience and revenue generation
- Fees for relevant courses or seminars on business development
- Development or upgrades to technology related to business practices
- Marketing and promotion
- Studio, rehearsal, or retail space rentals
- Reasonable fees for supporting or collaborating with artists
- Research and development
- Purchase of supplies and equipment

Ineligible Use of Funds

- Activities outside the grant period
- Activities that have a religious purpose
- Payments to lobbyists
- Activities for which academic credit is given
- Hospitality, food, or beverages
- Offsets to regular business operating costs, including regular salary or wages



Submission Process

- ☐ Review guidelines and eligibility criteria for Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA) grant as listed on the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council website.
- ☐ Download the referral form for the CEA grant.
- ☐ Arrange a meeting with one of the designated referral partners for business plan review.
- ☐ Arrange a meeting with one of the designated Referral Coordinators for business plan review. After the Referral Coordinator has reviewed and approved your business plan they will sign and date the referral form. If the Referral Coordinator does not approve of your business plan they will indicate why on the referral form. You can then edit your business plan based on their feedback and meet with them again for approval. If you would like to work with another Referral Coordinator at any time you are free to do so.
- ☐ Once you have a signed and approved referral form, click the apply now link on the Arts Council's CEA grant page. Upload your completed and signed referral form, your business plan, and other important submission documents.

Important Note

- Eligible entrepreneurs must engage an Arts Council designated Referral Coordinator in at least one consultation regarding a business formation or development activity.
- Referral Coordinators must determine the appropriateness of a referral to the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator program using the referral criteria.
- Referral of a creative entrepreneur to the Arts Council does not guarantee that a grant will be made; the Arts Council will make determinations of eligibility and availability of funds.

Referral Coordinators



**BRIDGEWAY
CAPITAL**

Connect Opportunity with Capital

Bridgeway Capital

Katie Johnson
Associate Director, Creative
Business Accelerator
707 Grant Street, Suite 1920
kjohnson@bridgewaycapital.org

chatham
UNIVERSITY

Chatham University

Michelle Price
Community & Membership
Engagement Coordinator
m.price@chatham.edu | 412-365-1384
Center for Women's Entrepreneurship
at Chatham University
Chatham Eastside | 6585 Penn Ave



University of Pittsburgh

Raymond Vargo
Director, Small Business Development Center
rvargo@innovation.pitt.edu | 412-648-1544
1st Floor Gardner Steel Conference Center
130 Thackeray Avenue

Criteria for Referral Approval

- Entrepreneur intends to form a business or operates a business within the specified creative industry areas in Pennsylvania.
- Entrepreneur has a viable business plan or plan that demonstrates knowledge of the following:
 - Understanding of product or services
 - Understanding of target consumer or audience
 - Plan to reach target audience or consumer
 - Clear budget for one year of operation using the funds
 - Goals, benchmarks, and metrics to evaluate success
- Grant-supported activities have strong potential to grow audiences and revenues for the entrepreneur.
- The proposed budget and use of funds is appropriate for business goals.



Business Plan Submission

We understand that there are a number of different ways to write and express a business plan. You can write your business plan in the way that best suits your business's needs. However, every business plan must demonstrate an understanding of the following:

- Understanding of product or services
- Understanding of target consumer or audience
- Plan to reach target audience or consumer
- Clear budget for one year of operation using the funds
- Goals, benchmarks, and metrics to evaluate success

If you do not have a business plan, please feel free to use the business plan template provided below. The use of this template is completely optional, however, submission of a business plan is mandatory.

Business Plan Template



Summary

Please briefly describe the proposed business. You will want to make sure to answer the following:

- What is the mission and vision of this business?
- How will you do this work?
- Who is your target audience?
- Where will you do this work?
- Who leads, or will lead, this business?



Identity and Objectives

Describe the nature of your business.

- Is your business a product, service, or process?
- What activities will take place to execute your business during the proposed funding period?
- Create a timeline for your major goals in the operating year and the primary tasks necessary to reach them.



Management

- Who are the individuals responsible for executing this work?
- Who leads this business?
- What are their respective skill sets, education, and experiences?
- What are each individual's responsibilities?



Finance

Express the following in a budget. (Note: Expenses do not need to equal income.)

- What is the total cost for the first year of operation?
- List all expenses for the operating year. This may include marketing, hiring contractors, renting space, operating utilities, equipment, product or art supplies, and more.
- What is the total amount of money you plan to earn in this operating year?
- List all income you expect to earn during the operating year. This may include grants you expect to receive, donations you plan to receive, and loans you plan to take.



Marketing

Demonstrate an understanding of your target audience and articulate how you will reach them.

- Who is your target audience? Be as specific as possible. You may use the following demographics and psychographics, or use your own:
 - Place of residence
 - Income level
 - Age
 - Cultural Background
 - Religious Background
 - Race and Ethnicity
 - Hobbies and Interests
 - Access to Technology, Transportation, Etc.
- How will you reach this target audience? Describe your strategy. You may reference this list of marketing platforms if it is helpful.
 - Traditional Marketing
 - Television
 - Print Advertisements (Newspapers)
 - Radio
 - New Media Marketing
 - Social media
 - Email
 - Phone
 - Organic Marketing
 - Word of mouth
 - Referrals
- What are your plans to reach the general public, or audiences beyond your target audience? This question is not mandatory.

Visit the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council website to review guidelines and eligibility criteria for Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA) grant. For more information, please contact Shaqui Scott, Manager of Grants and Membership at the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council at **sscott@pittsburghartscouncil.org**.

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