**October 2024**

**Grant Guidelines for the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program**

**Due Date:** Applications will open on January 15, 2025, and will be due on February 12, 2025.

**Grant Amount:** $2,000, in addition to business planning resources

**Program Description and Purpose**

This program is designed to pair access to existing small business consulting services with financial resources of $2,000 for creative entrepreneurs who aspire to start their own for-profit business or who operate an existing for-profit micro business. Creative entrepreneurs are invaluable assets to communities. They 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 a rapidly changing economic environment.

Additionally, this program advances and prioritizes the overarching value of diversity, equity, and inclusion held by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and prioritizes investment in creative entrepreneurs who identify as Black, Indigenous, or persons of color (BIPOC) or those located in and whose work benefits low-income communities as defined under federal guidelines. For the purpose of the Program, low-income communities are those where the poverty rate is greater than or equal to 20% or the median family income is less than or equal to 80% of the area median income. (You may use [this tool](https://www.policymap.com/embed/) to help determine whether you are located in a community that is classified under federal guidelines as low-income.)

**Eligibility**

Applicants must:

* Have not received Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Funding in the past three years (Creative Entrepreneurs are eligible to apply for the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program once every three years). Please note that applying and receiving funds after the 3-year mark is contingent upon availability of funds after applicants that have never received funding have had an opportunity to be funded. Other requirements for reapplying after 3 years include a follow-up visit with a referral partner to review business plan and progress of business.
* Be at least 18 years of age and a current resident of Pennsylvania for at least one year.
* Demonstrate gross revenue of less than $200,000 from the creative entrepreneur business.
* Be a creative entrepreneur intending to form a business or operating a business in Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, or Washington counties within one or more of the following creative industry areas:
* Operate in one or more of the following creative industry areas:

1. Marketing – Advertising and marketing agencies and professionals
2. Architecture – Architecture firms and architects
3. Visual Arts &amp; Crafts – Galleries, artists, artisans & makers, tattoo artists
4. Design – Product, interior, graphic, and fashion design firms and designers
5. Film & Media – Film, video, animation, television, and radio businesses
6. Digital Games – Companies, programmers, and individuals producing games
7. Music & Entertainment – Producers, venues, musicians, and performers
8. Publishing – Print or electronic businesses and content creators, editors, and writers

* Possess all current and valid licenses, permits, leases, certifications, and registrations required to engage in the creative endeavor (e.g. tattoo, street performance) in the geographical location served by the entrepreneurship.
* The CEA Grant is funded through a program that activates State Taxpayer Funding. For purpose of tax reporting, the funds are not considered a “gift” and should be reported in tax filing. For further questions regarding filing please visit the IRS website at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov/) or consult with a tax professional.
* A final report and evidence of eligible use of the CEA grant funding is required at the end of the contract term. Consult with your PPA Partner for more information on the process for final reporting. See also “Application Process” in these guidelines for more information.

**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
* Business development fees for courses or seminars for business skills
* Research and development
* Marketing and promotion
* Development or upgrades to technology related to business practices
* Studio/rehearsal/retail space rent (outside of regular business operating costs, rent, and utilities)
* Reasonable fees for supporting or collaborating with artists
* 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

**Application Process**

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is administering this grant on behalf of the PA Council on the Arts for Allegheny, Beaver, Greene, and Washington counties. All grants will be in the amount of $2,000.

* Review guidelines and eligibility criteria for the 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 Coordinators for business plan review.
* Return to the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council website to submit application.
* The CEA program includes the use of a data and information resource called the Impact Management System (IMS)/ Business Growth Ladder (BGL). This tool gives the creative entrepreneur insights into their business growth. Entrepreneurs will receive a link from Bridgeway Capital where the Entrepreneur will self-report their information. Once the creative entrepreneur inputs their data into the IMS/BGL system then the PPA Partner will process a grant of $2,000.
* At the end of the grant period, the Creative Entrepreneur must input and complete their final report data into the BGL system. In addition, receipt of eligible purchases must be shared with the PPA Partner at the end of the grant period. If information is not input into the BGL and/or receipt of eligible purchases are not shared, then the Creative Entrepreneur will not be allowed access to PCA grant funding in future grant cycles.

**Referral Process**

**Not sure which Referral Coordinator you should reach out to?**

If you already have a solid business plan, we encourage you to reach out to Katie Schaible at Bridgeway Capital. If you do not have or are looking for assistance in building a better business plan, please reach out to either Michelle Price at Chatham University or Nicole Hudson at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Please note: The deadline to reach out to Referral Coordinators to ensure that they will be able to review your business plan prior to the application deadline is December 13, 2024.** We cannot guarantee that any requests made to meet with the Referral Coordinators after this date will be able to occur prior to the application deadline.

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**

**University of Pittsburgh: Nicole Hudson**

*Interim Assistant Director*

Small Business Development Center

3520 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15261

Phone: 412-648-1542

Email: nhudson@innovation.pitt.edu | SBDC email: [sbdc@innovation.pitt.edu](mailto:sbdc@innovation.pitt.edu)

**Chatham University: J. Michelle Price, MFA, PhD**

*Community & Membership Engagement Coordinator*

CENTER FOR WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP - Women’s Business Center Chatham Eastside

6585 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Phones: (direct) 412.365.1384 | (main) 412.365.1253 | (cell) 412.510.4774

Email: [m.price@chatham.edu](mailto:m.price@chatham.edu)

**Bridgeway Capital: Katie Schaible**

*Director of Programs*

310 Grant St., Suite 2800, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Phone: 412.912.9910

Email: [kschaible@bridgewaycapital.org](mailto:kschaible@bridgewaycapital.org)

**Criteria for Referral Approval**

* Entrepreneur intends to form a creative business or operate a creative 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’ 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 the guidelines and eligibility criteria for Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator (CEA) grant. For more information, please contact our grantmaking team at the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council at [grants@pittsburghartscouncil.org](mailto:grants@pittsburghartscouncil.org).

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