

CREATIVE PHILADELPHIA FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Valerie Gay, Chief Cultural Officer and executive director of Creative Philadelphia. I am pleased to provide testimony on Creative Philadelphia's Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: Creative Philadelphia (formerly the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy) provides creative and economic opportunities for all Philadelphians to thrive through the arts. Creative Philadelphia advances public access to arts and culture, collaborates with local creative communities, and celebrates the city's cultural assets, contributing to a safer, cleaner, and greener city.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2026:

DELIVER THE CITY'S FIRST CULTURAL PLAN

In FY2026, Creative Philadelphia will complete and deliver the City's first-ever Cultural Plan, an historic, community-led initiative ensuring that arts and culture in Philadelphia are shaped by the people who live, work, and create here. Building on work begun in FY2025:

- Hosting 12+ interactive planning sessions across all 10 council districts, plus two citywide sessions focused on youth (ages 13–24) and independent creatives
- Launching pilot programs based on ideas generated in each District
- Engaging subject matter experts and soliciting public feedback on a citywide draft plan
- Delivering the final plan in Spring 2026 as part of Philadelphia's 2035 Comprehensive Plan

This work supports the City's "Safe, Clean, and Green" priorities and advances economic opportunity within the creative sector.

EXPAND ART IN CITY HALL

- Increase exhibitions cases from 15 to 25 to showcase a wider range of visual artists and organizations
- Increase the number of exhibitions in the City Hall Gallery (Rm. 116)
- Introduce new performing arts programming both within exhibitions and as stand-alone events
- Deepen community inclusion through advisory and selection committees
- Reflects the City's goal of a government that residents can "see, touch, and feel"

ADVANCE PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

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- Unveil the Harriet Tubman statue on the northern apron of City Hall
- Continue development of key works, including Healing Verse Germantown, the Blanche Nixon memorial and the Sadie T.M. Alexander statue (Fall 2026)

GROW ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ARTISTS

- Expand *Public Art: How to Start?* technical training for emerging artists, particularly those without formal education
- FY25 *Illuminate the Arts* funding will support creatives, enterprises, and small-to-mid-sized arts organizations

SUPPORT THE NIGHTTIME ECONOMY AND SPECIAL 2026 EVENTS

- Collaborate with community partners to create safe, vibrant, and inclusive nighttime arts and entertainment across Philadelphia
- Collaborate with arts and culture and other city agency partners to celebrate the Semquincentennial
- Reinforce cultural vitality while advancing public safety and economic growth



PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Actual Obligations	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Estimated Obligations	FY26 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY26 Proposed-FY25 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$0	\$0	\$714,833	\$714,833	\$714,833	\$0
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$0	\$0	\$130,768	\$130,768	\$380,768	\$250,000
Class 500 - Contributions	\$0	\$0	\$9,980,000	\$12,580,000	\$4,300,000	(\$8,280,000)
	\$0	\$0	\$10,825,601	\$13,425,601	\$5,395,601	(\$8,030,000)

Note that Creative Philadelphia was a newly formed department starting in FY25. This information is reflected in the Managing Director's Office for FY24 and prior years.

Note: Creative Philadelphia's contracts are with nonprofit vendors for which M/W/DSBE participation data is not applicable.

Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund budget totals \$5,395,601, a decrease of \$8,030,000 from Fiscal Year 2025 estimated obligation levels. This decrease is primarily due one-time allocations in FY25 for the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Illuminate the Arts Grant program, and the forthcoming Sadie Alexander statue.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$714,833 in Class 100, level with FY25. This funding will support staff salaries.
- \$380,768 in Class 200, an increase of \$250,000 over FY25. This funding will maintain level funding for Arts Programming and Preservation and support the Nighttime Economy Initiative.
- \$4,300,000 in Class 500, a \$8,280,000 decrease from FY25, due to one-time allocations in FY25. This funding will support contributions to the African American Museum of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

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STAFFING LEVELS

The department is requesting 10 budgeted positions for FY26, level with FY25.

Employment Levels (as of November 2024)			
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2024	FY26 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	10	7	10
Number of Exempt Positions	10	7	10
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		2	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$107,944	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$87,500	

NEW HIRES

New Hires (from November 2024 to April 2025)	
	Total Number of New Hires
White	1
Total	1

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PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:

Program Name: Arts and Culture

Program Number: 1

FY26 Proposed General Fund: \$5,395,601

Program Description:

Public Art: Creative Philadelphia's Public Art program manages a collection of over 1,000 public art pieces located in civic spaces, public facilities, recreation centers, libraries, police and fire stations, and the Philadelphia International Airport. This diverse collection includes traditional war memorials and monuments, as well as contemporary works in various forms and media. Public Art includes the Percent for Art Program, which requires new City construction or major renovation projects to include site-specific public art in the amount of up to one percent of the total budget; the process of commissioning new public artworks, including the Sadie T.M. Alexander and Harriet Tubman statues; and oversight of the donation, placement, and removal of City-owned public art.

Art in City Hall: Art in City Hall is an exhibits program that turns the public corridors of City Hall into a vibrant platform for the arts. It offers Philadelphia's diverse cultural organizations a space to showcase their creativity, amplify community voices, and foster healing and dialogue in the City's central civic building. The program highlights a wide range of artistic ideas and expressions, emphasizing the vital role of the arts in strengthening Philadelphia's communities.

Creative Partnerships: Creative Partnerships is a new initiative aimed at fostering creative activities citywide by providing grant funding and technical support. This program enhances the Department's reach and impact by collaborating with artists, organizations, and communities to bring arts and cultural experiences to every neighborhood in Philadelphia.

FY26 Strategic Goals:

- Creative Philadelphia will produce Philadelphia's first-ever Cultural Plan.
- Creative Philadelphia will expand the Art in City Hall program by increasing the number of exhibition spaces throughout City Hall and expand performance-based offerings in and around City Hall.
- The Department will deepen partnership with Mural Arts through programmatic offerings and collaborative projects.

FY26 Performance Measures:

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Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Target	FY26 Target
Public engagement ¹	25,477	26,000	26,000
Number of artists supported ²	983	500	700
Creative experiences ³	391,587	350,000	450,000

¹ Public engagement is measured by the number of people who participate in person or virtually in engagement meetings, surveys, and Creative Philadelphia exhibitions.

² The FY24 actual and FY26 target each reflect one-time funds. The FY26 target is based on funds allocated during the Mid-Year Transfer Ordinance for the Illuminate the Arts Grant.

³ Creative experiences are measured by the number of unique visitors to CreativePHL's websites, social media followers, and email subscribers.

OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

Creative Philadelphia received a \$20,000 grant from the PA Council on the Arts to support Philly Jazz Month (April 2025). This first-time grant was twice the typical grant amount (\$10,000) in support of the work.

CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts not applicable.

Non-Profit Vendor Demographics		
The Philadelphia Cultural Fund (2320424)	Minority %	Female %
Workforce	67.00%	83.00%
Executive	100.00%	100.00%
Board	69.00%	63.00%
Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (2320368)	Minority %	Female %
Workforce	Not available	Not available
Executive	Not available	Not available
Board	Not available	Not available