

Arts Blog

CULTURAL POLICY | APRIL 8, 2025

Trump's Impact on the Arts: A Running List of Updates

UPDATE—Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Yesterday, the American Library Association and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees were the latest agencies to **file a lawsuit** asking the court to block the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services as directed by the Trump **executive order**.

"Libraries and museums contain our collective history and knowledge, while also providing safe spaces for learning, cultural expression and access to critical public resources," said AFSCME President Lee Saunders **in a joint statement**. "They represent the heart of our communities, and the cultural workers who keep these institutions running enrich thousands of lives every day. Library workers do everything from helping people apply for jobs to administering lifesaving care all while facing increasing violence on the job. Their work deserves support, not cuts. On behalf of the 42,000 AFSCME cultural workers, we're suing to stop the wrongful closure of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and protect this critical resource for our communities."

UPDATE—Monday, April 7, 2025

On Friday, a coalition of 21 state attorneys general **filed a lawsuit** against the Trump administration's **executive order** that called for dismantling multiple federal agencies including the Institute of Museum and Library Services, whose entire staff was placed on administrative leave on March 31.

Humanities Executive Director, Eugene Zieren. "The consequences are both immediate and devastating for our sector nationally. PA Humanities relies on NEH support to deliver programs, grants, and research on the cultural sector. This decision affects all 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils across the country."

UPDATE—Friday, April 4, 2025

A lawsuit **filed last month** by the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Rhode Island against the National Endowment for the Arts **has been denied**. The lawsuit, which was filed in a federal court on behalf of multiple arts organizations, addressed the NEA's requirement that grant applicants agree to not promote "gender ideology" in alignment with President Trump's recent executive order. While the court agreed that the NEA's requirement likely violates the First Amendment, the **ACLU reports** that the court ruled it could not get in way of the agency's decisioning making process because the organization is "currently in the process of determining whether to reimpose that ban."

In other news, **NPR confirms** that 80% of the staff at the National Endowment for the Humanities have been placed on paid administrative leave effective immediately.

UPDATE—Thursday, April 3, 2025

The Trump administration is canceling millions of dollars in previously awarded federal humanities grants awarded to arts and culture organizations, according to **NPR**. This includes PA Humanities, which has announced it received "an abrupt notice" last night from the Department of Government Efficiency that said their general operating grant was terminated.

"The implications are staggering and PA Humanities will be directly affected," the nonprofit shared **in a statement**. "We rely on NEH support to deliver essential programs and provide funding to our grantees and partners across the Commonwealth. Cultural organizations and our economy will also be deeply impacted. Federal funding is the single largest source of support for the cultural sector in our state, which helps generate a \$30.4 billion annual impact and provides 189,700 jobs."

Another concerning news story this week is the report that Kevin Young, director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture, was placed on personal leave last month for an "undetermined period," according to the **Washington Post**. The poet, who became director in 2021, has been absent from the position since March 14—just weeks before President Trump took aim at the Smithsonian for "**anti-**



The National Endowment for the Humanities, which provides funding for museums, academic research, and historic sites, may face grant reductions and staff cuts of up to 80%, according to the **New York Times**.

"NEH staff ensure that small and large organizations alike have access to federal funds. Moreover, they are tireless in their efforts to ensure that U.S. tax dollars are spent well," advocacy coalition National Humanities Alliance shares in **a statement**. "Cutting NEH staff who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their positions guts the NEH itself. This puts unnecessary barriers in the way of the agency's mission to distribute federal dollars to American communities."

Learn what steps you can take to help save the NEH in their toolkit here: **Take Action to Save the NEH Today**

UPDATE—Monday, March 31, 2025

This morning, the entire staff of the Institute of Museum and Library Services was **placed on administrative leave**, following President Trump's previous executive order that called for the elimination of the agency.

Last Thursday, President Trump **issued an executive order** instructing the removal of "divisive, race-centered ideology" from Smithsonian museums, as well as from educational and research institutions and the National Zoo.

With a constant stream of new threats to arts and culture occurring on a nearly daily basis, it sometimes feels impossible to pinpoint which items are of the utmost concern in the immediate future. To help you navigate the latest updates, here are some additional news articles that we've found valuable in recent weeks.

- **Writer Claire Willett on how Trump upended federal grants for the arts and journalism, from Nieman Storyboard**

As anti-DEI and anti-trans language gets battled in court, the grant writer offers advice on how journalists, writers, and artists should proceed.

Highlight: "I think the elephant in the room is that the arts are treated like a luxury thing—a trivial thing. The NEA is one of the government's smallest agencies. We're also



that's a false premise.

- **What Art Collectors Need to Know About Trump's Tariffs, from Artsy**

Tariffs imposed by President Trump have caused massive uncertainties in the art market. Here, Artsy explains what art collectors need to be aware of.

Highlight: "For a wide range of galleries, the tariffs and retaliatory measures could skyrocket the cost of participating in art fairs—which is already an expensive endeavor."

- **'This is injustice': inside Trump's attack on funding for LGBTQ+ arts, from The Guardian**

The president has demanded that the National Endowment for the Arts denies grants to projects promoting 'gender ideology,' leading to protest and legal action

Highlight: "If the 'gender ideology' order was to have been in place, say, in the last 20 years then we would not have had a *Kinky Boots*, we would not have not had productions of *La Cage aux Folles*. There are objections within the 'gender ideology' that theatres could not even have a character that was that, let alone the theme of the play."

- **Trump and the Fate of the Government's Massive Art Collection, from Vanity Fair**

With a cult of cost-chainsawing threatening every facet of the US government, what might become of the tens of thousands of important works by essential American artists the feds own and oversee?

Highlight: "'The decision by the current administration really jeopardizes the preservation, the security, and the continued public ownership of this work that are really integral parts of the country's cultural patrimony and heritage,' said Julie Trébault, the director of Artists at Risk Connection. The international group helps protect creative freedom in autocratic-leaning states and other at-risk countries; it has recently expanded its presence in the United States."

- **Breaking News Updates Impacting the Arts & Culture, from American for the Arts Action Fund**



UPDATE—Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Recommended read: [Pittsburgh museums and libraries face possible federal funding turmoil](#), a new story published by WESA, provides additional context on how local organizations are responding to the new executive order that calls for dismantling The Institute of Museum and Library Services

UPDATE—Monday, March 17, 2025

On Friday, March 14, President Trump signed [an executive order](#) that calls for the elimination of seven federal agencies he labeled as “unnecessary,” including the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) provides critical federal funding for library and museum grants, policy development, and research.

“Museums are vital community anchors, serving all Americans, including youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans,” [reads a statement from the American Alliance of Museums](#). “Museums are not only centers for education and inspiration but also economic engines—creating jobs, driving tourism, and strengthening local economies. This Executive Order threatens the critical roles museums and museum workers play in American society and puts jobs, education, conservation, and vital community programs at risk.”

A number of Pittsburgh-area institutions [have received grants](#) from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in the past two fiscal years, including:

- **Carnegie Mellon University Libraries**
\$164,340 for 2024 National Leadership Grants - Libraries
- **Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh**
\$369,159 for 2024 21st Century Museum Professionals Program
- **Heinz History Center**
\$183,621 for 2024 Museums for America
- **Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens**
\$10,000 for 2024 National Medals for Museum Service
- **University of Pittsburgh, Department of Library and Information Science**
\$249,917 for 2023 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program



\$240,520 for 2023 Museums for America

- **Children's Museum of Pittsburgh**
\$238,623 for 2023 Museums for America
- **Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens**
\$426,058 for 2023 National Leadership Grants - Museums
- **Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation**
\$750,000 for 2023 Save America's Treasures

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council joins others in opposition to this executive order and stresses the value that museums and libraries add to our region's cultural and educational ecosystem.

In addition to the organizations listed above, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has also previously benefited from federal funding. On its website, the Institute of Museum and Library Services is **thanked for a National Leadership Grant**, which helped restore over half a million pages of Pittsburgh industry-related content to their digital collections.

"Americans have loved and relied on public, school and academic libraries for generations," reads **a statement from the American Library Association**. "By eliminating the only federal agency dedicated to funding library services, the Trump administration's executive order is cutting off at the knees the most beloved and trusted of American institutions and the staff and services they offer."

At the Arts Council, we experience this value firsthand. We host weekly team meetings in the Carnegie Library's **free meeting rooms** and applaud their continued investment in local artists through programs such as their **Artist-in-Residence series**.

Call to Action

The American Library Association encourages supporters to express their concerns to elected officials and **Show Up For Our Libraries**.

The American Alliance of Museums has provided **templates of scripts, letters, and social media copy** to use when contacting your representatives, including members of Congress, state, and local officials.

UPDATE—Tuesday, March 11, 2025



According to [Hyperallergic](#), the ACLU is seeking an injunction to fully block the restrictions before the March 24 grant deadline, with a hearing set for March 18.

UPDATE—Thursday, March 6, 2025

Today, the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Rhode Island [filed a lawsuit](#) against the National Endowment for the Arts for requiring that grant applicants agree to not promote "gender ideology" in alignment with President Trump's [recent executive order](#).

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council was one of many organizations which raised concerns last month over additions to the [Legal Requirements and Assurance of Compliance section](#) of NEA's guidelines for arts grants, which included that applicants must agree to not use federal funds to "promote gender ideology" or operate any programs promoting "diversity, equity, and inclusion" that violate anti-discrimination laws.

Today's lawsuit was filed in a federal court on behalf of multiple arts organizations including National Queer Theater, Rhode Island Latino Arts, Theatre Communications Group, and The Theater Offensive. According to [the lawsuit](#), each organization has "created and promoted art in the past that promotes and affirms the lived experiences of transgender and nonbinary people, by casting transgender and nonbinary actors, and by promoting and producing art that features transgender and nonbinary themes."

"The National Endowment for the Arts is critical in supporting the arts and communities nationwide," reads a statement from Erin Harkey, incoming CEO for [Americans for the Arts](#), in response to the lawsuit and NEA's recent changes to their grant requirements. "The current Administration's new Executive Order has implications beyond the NEA and raises serious constitutional issues, and we support any effort to address these concerns. We hope the NEA and the courts will clarify any guidance on their enforcement before the upcoming grant deadlines."

In addition to arguing that the NEA's enforcement of the gender ideology mandate, which only recognizes "two sexes, male and female," ACLU Staff Attorney Vera Eidelman told [Hyperallergic](#) that the suit is "basically a bar on anyone getting NEA funds, or even being eligible for NEA funds, because they express a message that the government doesn't like and that is very much contrary to what the First Amendment allows."

As reported by the [New York Times](#), today's lawsuit followed countless concerns from [artists](#) and [arts institutions](#) across the nation, including [a joint statement](#) from four leading



UPDATE—Thursday, February 13, 2025

"The dissolution of Challenge America removes an entry-level funding opportunity designed for smaller organizations, which could make it harder for first-time applicants to access NEA support," Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council CEO Patrick Fisher shares in a news story published today by WESA, Pittsburgh's NPR News Station.

The [Challenge America grant](#), as shared in our February 6 update, was recently canceled for FY 2026. The program provided funding for small arts organizations serving underserved communities, including [The Genesis Collective](#), a nonprofit in Beaver County.

Learn more in WESA's report, [Pittsburgh arts groups confront rapidly shifting National Endowment for the Arts rules](#).

UPDATE—Wednesday, February 12, 2025

On February 12, 2025, President Trump announced on Truth Social that he was "unanimously elected" as the new chair of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Trump replaces former Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter, who was terminated, according to the [The New York Times](#).

As of 5 p.m., Rutter's bio on the yet-to-be-updated [Kennedy Center website](#) described her as one of the "strongest leaders in the arts today, combining artistic daring with fiscal sustainability and community-driven solutions." It also stated that during her tenure, "Rutter has expanded programming to represent the diversity of art in America and led initiatives to integrate the arts into the daily lives of all Americans."

Until recently, [according to NPR](#), the Kennedy Center's 36-member board was bipartisan, with an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. On Wednesday, the center announced [a new list of board members](#), all appointed by Trump.

UPDATE—Monday, February 10, 2025

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is continuing to monitor the impact of recent executive actions by President Trump that threaten arts leadership at the national level.



"I am pleased to announce that Ric Grenell will serve as the Interim Executive Director of The Kennedy Center," Trump posted. "Ric shares my Vision for a GOLDEN AGE of American Arts and Culture, and will be overseeing the daily operations of the Center. NO MORE DRAG SHOWS, OR OTHER ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA — ONLY THE BEST. RIC, WELCOME TO SHOW BUSINESS!"

The Kennedy Center has long been a thought leader in arts and arts education, providing professional development for educators, supporting partnerships with schools, and offering training programs that benefit artists and arts organizations nationwide. By placing direct control of the institution's leadership under the authority of the White House, this unprecedented move raises serious concerns about political interference in the arts and the future of arts education and programming across the country.

For the arts community in Pittsburgh and beyond, this decision could have significant consequences:

- **Potential Loss of Nonpartisan Leadership:** The Kennedy Center has historically operated with a diverse board representing various artistic disciplines and perspectives. The removal of these directors may shift decision-making in ways that prioritize political interests over artistic representation and accessibility.
- **Impact on Arts Education and Professional Development:** Many educators and arts organizations across the nation rely on the Kennedy Center's workshops, training programs, and curriculum resources. A change in leadership could jeopardize these initiatives and alter the content or availability of these resources. As recently as January 2025, the **University of Pittsburgh hosted** the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, a national theater program that provides professional development opportunities for students. As of February 10, **the festival's website** affirmed its commitment to promoting "inclusion and diversity."
- **National Precedent for Arts Governance:** We are witnessing the political reshaping of the Kennedy Center—a federally designated cultural institution—and the National Endowment for the Arts—a federal funding agency—in real time. This shift raises concerns that these institutions could be turned into tools for political propaganda.



Upon further review, we are also **joining other organizations** in raising concerns over additions to the NEA Guidelines for Arts Grants. This includes additions to the guidelines' **Assurance of Compliance page**, which states that applicants must agree to the following if selected as a NEA grant recipient:

- The applicant will comply with all applicable Executive Orders while the award is being administered. Executive orders are posted at [whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions).
- The applicant's compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the U.S. Government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code, pursuant to Executive Order No. 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, dated January 21, 2025.
- The applicant will not operate any programs promoting "diversity, equity, and inclusion" (DEI) that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws, in accordance with Executive Order No. 14173.
- The applicant understands that federal funds shall not be used to promote gender ideology, pursuant to Executive Order No. 14168, Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government.

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is currently in conversation with legal experts on how the impact of DEI-related executive orders and new grant guidelines might affect non-profit organizations. We will share updates as everyone's understanding, including ours, becomes clearer.

We encourage artists, educators, and arts advocates to stay informed and to voice their concerns to their elected officials. The arts must remain a space for creativity, education, and public service—free from undue political influence.

UPDATE—Thursday, February 6, 2025

On February 6, 2025, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) **announced updates** to its FY 2026 grantmaking programs, which will impact Pittsburgh-area arts organizations planning to apply for federal funding. With the changes, local organizations should prepare for a revised application process, including new deadlines and updated eligibility requirements. Here's a breakdown of what you need to know.



Updated Deadlines for Grants for Arts Projects

In addition to the cancellation of Challenge America, the NEA has revised the Grants for Arts Projects (GAP) guidelines for FY 2026. The previous February 2025 deadline has been replaced with two new application windows:

- **March 11, 2025** for the first round of funding (GAP 1)
- **July 10, 2025** for the second round (GAP 2)

Please note that if your organization had already submitted an application for the February 2025 deadline, you will need to resubmit it under one of these new deadlines. It's crucial to stay updated and plan your application accordingly.

Focus on America250

One significant update is that the NEA is prioritizing funding for projects that align with the America250 initiative, which commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. Pittsburgh-based organizations have the opportunity to align their artistic work with a national celebration. Projects related to the history, culture, and heritage of the United States can receive priority consideration, and this can include integrating America250-related themes into larger creative endeavors.

New Eligibility Requirements

The updated guidelines also include a new eligibility requirement: applicants must demonstrate at least five years of arts programming before the application deadline. If your organization's programming was affected by the pandemic, you can include examples from 2018 or 2019 to meet this requirement, but anything earlier will not be considered. Virtual programming is also now an acceptable form of arts programming for eligibility.

Important Note on Application Categories

Organizations can no longer submit applications for both Grants for Arts Projects and the Our Town category in the same fiscal year. However, applicants are still able to apply for separate funding in the Research Awards category.

How Can Local Organizations Get Prepared?

Here are a few next steps for local arts organizations looking to take advantage of these updated NEA grant opportunities:



2. **Consider how to incorporate America250:** Think about how your project can align with the celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary. Is there an opportunity to incorporate local history, cultural narratives, or national themes into your upcoming projects?
3. **Prepare your eligibility documentation:** If you haven't already, ensure your organization meets the five-year programming requirement. Gather materials from 2018 or 2019 if necessary.
4. **Plan your application timing:** Mark the new application deadlines of March 11 and July 10, 2025. With these new windows, there's still time to refine your project proposals.
5. **Attend the NEA webinar:** The NEA will host a free webinar on February 18, 2025, at 2 p.m. to walk through the updated guidelines and answer questions. **Registration** is required, but a recording will be made available afterward.

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is committed to ensuring our region's artistic community continues to thrive with access to vital funding and opportunities. Our team will continue to update this blog post with more information as we monitor these changes and how they impact our region. We will also provide updates on how we can further help as we learn more.

For more details on the updated guidelines, visit arts.gov/grants.

UPDATE—Thursday, January 30, 2025

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council is closely monitoring the developing situation around the **January 27th White House Office of Management and Budget memo** ordering a freeze on all federal agency grants and loans. As of January 29, 2025, **the memo has been rescinded** by the White House, but a looming threat on federal funding sources crucial for individuals and organizations of the arts and culture sector remains.

Disruptions to federal funding sources could have numerous impacts on the arts and culture sector. Between 2020 and 2024, the National Endowment for the Arts distributed \$32.6 million to Pennsylvania organizations to fund creative projects, new artwork, arts research, and more. \$3.3 million of these funds were distributed within 50 miles of Pittsburgh alone. In addition, data from our **2024 Artist Community Survey** indicates that about 36% of local artists utilize at least one publicly funded program to meet their basic needs.



As we await additional updates, we encourage you to proactively **reach out to your representatives** and share your support for federal arts and culture funding. Leaders of organizations can also **fill out this survey** about your federal funding sources to help our team quickly pivot into action to protect funds from any future threat.

ORIGINAL POST—Wednesday, January 22, 2025

Within his first 24 hours in office, President Trump rescinded many of former President Biden's previous executive orders. Among these was **Executive Order 14084 – Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services**.

At the time of its authorization by President Biden in September 2022, EO 14084 recognized arts, culture, and humanities as being vital to the **“well-being, health, vitality, and democracy of our Nation.”** It paved the way for federal agencies to be more actively involved in supporting creative and cultural institutions, ensuring their benefits are accessible to everyone, including underserved and underrepresented communities. It also called for increased funding and support for museums, libraries, and arts initiatives, ensuring they have the resources to serve their communities effectively.

EO 14084 also re-established the **President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities**, a body responsible for advising the president on cultural policy issues. President Trump's decision to rescind this order also dismantles this committee for a second time. The first dissolution of the group occurred after **its members resigned in protest over President Trump's reaction to the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia**. Before this, the committee, established in 1982, had existed under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

Federal support of arts and culture is **essential** to ensuring these benefits reach all Americans and their communities.

The Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council affirms that our nation's creative and cultural assets are vital to our education, economic growth, and social cohesion. As our CEO Patrick Fisher

rescind Executive Order 14084 will impact the arts nationally and locally, we will continue to monitor the impact of this action and share opportunities to take action as they arise.

Category

[Cultural Policy](#)

Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council

The Arts Council staff is working remotely.

MAILING ADDRESS:

3706 Butler St. // Pittsburgh PA 15201

Tel: [412.391.2060](tel:412.391.2060)

info@pittsburghartscouncil.org

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The Arts Council respectfully acknowledges that we operate and reside on the traditional, ancestral, and stolen lands of many native peoples in the Greater Pittsburgh region. The Adena, the Delaware, the Hopewell, the Iroquois, the Monongahela, the Osage, the Seneca, and the Shawnee stewarded this land throughout the generations. The process of knowing and acknowledging the land we stand on is a way of honoring and expressing gratitude for the ancestral people who were on this land before us.

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