pennsylvania
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

PCA Creative Communities
Letter of Interest Coversheet

Lead Applicant Information

Organization: Spanish American Civic Association/South Central PaARTners at Miller

Address: SACA: 453 South Lime Street; SCPA 42 North Prince Street

City: Lancaster **Zip Code:** 17602

Municipality: Lancaster **County:** Lancaster

Phone: 717-3976267; 717-871-4207

Website: www.sacapa.org; www.southcentralpaartners.org

FEIN: 23-2364586 (SACA) 23-2397926

Contact Name: Carlos Graupera, SACA; Marci Nelligan, SCPA

Contact Title: Executive Director (Graupera)/Program Manager (Nelligan)

Contact Phone: 717-3976267; 717-871-4207

Contact Email: cgraupera@sacapa.org; marci.nelligan@millersville.edu

Organization Type: 501(c)3

☑ **By checking the box, you are indicating acknowledgment of and intention to comply with the local government resolution requirement, if your community is selected to participate in the Creative Communities Pilot Program. (See full application guidelines for more information on this requirement.)**

Letter of Interest (LOI) Submission Instructions: LOI deadline, Friday, June 28, 2019. LOIs must be submitted via email to RA-OAcreativepa@pa.gov.

a. Completed coversheet form with acknowledgment of and intention to comply with the local government resolution requirement, if your community is selected to participate in the Creative Communities Pilot Program.

b. Narrative (3 pages max.)
   - Brief community description.
   - Description of any existing cultural plans and/or experience implementing arts-based development strategies.
   - Description of successful community partnerships.
   - Description of community opportunity or challenge the organization would like to address through this program.

c. 3 Letters of Support (local government, planning, convention and visitors bureau (CVB), business improvment district (BID), chamber of commerce, local arts organization, etc.).

Creative Placemaking—the Southeastern Neighborhood of Lancaster, PA

The Spanish American Civic Association of Lancaster (SACA) and South Central PaARTners at Millersville University (SCPA) hereby express our intent to apply for a Creative Communities Grant. Through this grant, we will offer tangible opportunities for residents of the Southeastern neighborhood of Lancaster, addressing practical need with arts-based, community-driven strategies that build on civic partnerships and resident-led initiatives. This neighborhood is large and influential in the composition of the urban ecosystem but continues to suffer despite the growth and development of the city itself. Meaningful, inclusive change must come from those who live here, and we are uniquely situated to facilitate that change. SACA has built relationships and trust across every facet of the community since 1974, while SCPA has been bringing powerful public arts and community-driven programming to the region through our arts-in-education residency programs. We look to this grant as part of a longstanding, multi-faceted plan allowing us to use the arts to reestablish our vitality, to tell, learn and re-learn our stories and histories, to reimagine our possibilities, and gather our collective strength. With a pending five-year Implementation Grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation that centers on community engagement, SACA will match the annual $25k grant funding for four years, and then devote 100 percent funding in year five, ensuring the longevity and rich development of the creative placemaking programs we're implementing.

Who We Are: SACA has been addressing the revitalization and redevelopment of the SE neighborhood since 1974, reaching hundreds of residents on a daily basis through our services. Our Community Center offers bilingual information and referral, employment services, bilingual case management, free community lunch, translation services, mental health services, and drug and alcohol treatment. Our Senior Citizen Center is an official Lancaster County Office of Aging Senior Center, our Cigar Building hosts affordable housing and SACA broadcasting—a Spanish language radio and TV station. At Tec Centro, we remove barriers that may inhibit career advancement. SACA has earned the designation as an "Elm Street Community," providing both state technical assistance and increased funding opportunities.

SCPA, a partnership between the PA Council on the Arts and Millersville University, places skilled teaching artists in meaningful, in-depth residencies in K-12 schools, senior centers, and other community organizations. Our residencies are change-agents for the communities we support, and we employ the arts strategically to address social, psychological, educational, and economic issues facing those we serve.

Advising artists—Salina Almanzar and Josh Graupera will be working as paid consultants to determine and guide our process. Salina is a Puerto Rican and Dominican artist, educator, writer, social-justice advocate from Lancaster, PA. Her art and scholarship examine the intersections of Latinidad, feminism, decolonial practice, and Taino spirituality. She is specifically interested in what it means to be *ni de aqui y ni de alla*—part of a diaspora that is between spaces and between cultures. She graduated from Franklin and Marshall College in 2013, and Drexel University's Arts Administration and Museum Leadership program where her Master's thesis examined Creative Placemaking in the Lancaster Latinx community. She is the co-facilitator of the Latino Empowerment Project and the youngest person—and first Puerto Rican person—ever elected to the School Board for the School District of Lancaster. Josh is a Philadelphia-based artist and activist raised in the Southeast neighborhood of Lancaster, PA. His practice explores the relationship between visual art and community organizing, using painting, screen printing and socially-engaged process. Josh is an Arts and Media organizer with Stadium Stomper, a worker-owner of Bonfire Media Collective and the Operations Assistant at YallaPunk.

Our Community Largely African American and Latino, the Southeast has faced the challenges frequently visited upon minority populations—poverty; racism; substandard employment, education, and housing; and urban renewal that decimated entire blocks of single-family homes and small businesses, replacing them with sprawling, blighted housing projects. Median income is half that of the county. Almost one-quarter of working age adults are unemployed, and only 35 % have high school degrees. Yet, within our blocks, there is

and has always been great vitality, self-actualization, grassroots activism, and strong community. Indeed, several regional centers for cultural engagement and social transformation have taken root here and flourished — organizations that have been essential not only to this neighborhood, but to the entire area. The neighborhood is predominantly residential, dominated by traditional older buildings, portions of which are within Lancaster's designated historic district and many of which are original residential structures of Lancaster City. This lends the SE charm, beauty, and historical significance.

Existing cultural plan/experience implementing arts-based development strategies: SACA is currently completing its second five-year comprehensive, resident-driven plan for the SE. Livability, economic development, and community connectedness are all key elements of this plan, which will yield a five-year, 1.25 million dollar investment from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. The plan is nearing completion and centers its activities on using art as a story-telling mechanism by which residents can connect to the neighborhood and the broader community. Planning components will include creating a registry of neighborhood artists, earmarking funds for collaborations with SCPA and others, as well as strategies that address the practical issues of parking, litter, lighting and more. The arts continue to play a role in everything SACA does. This includes SACA Broadcasting's "Young Producers" program that engages youth to create artistic videos celebrating their culture, as well as engaging local artists to populate the walls of Tec Centro and SACA's offices with their work. We have hosted poetry readings and musical events, and last year brought nationally acclaimed queer Puerto Rican poet Raquel Salas-Rivera to read during Pride Month.

SCPA has developed numerous residencies in the community around economic development, the environment, public improvements, tourism and education, including:
The Great Lebanon Community Watershed Program with Lebanon City, 2016-18: Two high school residencies allowed students to design and paint a mural on a pedestrian bridge in the center of the city, and, using materials pulled from a nearby creek during stream cleanup, make found-object sculptures of fish endangered by pollution.
Mural Project, Ephrata Borough, 2018 The Ephrata Downtown Development Organization funded a residency at the neighboring high school for murals on the Visitor's Center, which educate tourists about the community.

Description of successful community partnerships:

- SCPA and the SOWE neighborhood organization (adjoining the SE) jointly funded three nationally acclaimed Neighborhood Bridges residencies at local schools, measurably improving student outcomes.
- With a grant from the PCA, SCPA will be conducting five mini-residencies in the School District of Lancaster bringing teaching artists of color to schools where educators do not, by and large, represent the cultural makeup of their student bodies.
- In partnership with the National Wildlife Federation, SCPA is designing and building native pollinator gardens at schools throughout the city that double as laboratories for artist-in-residency programs.
- SCPA offered trainings in Creative Placemaking for artists, nonprofits, and municipal leaders in 2018.
- SACA continues to partner with the City's VISTA program for deploying Love Your Block Projects in nine distinct areas of the Colonial Grid, including nine resident-driven block projects that incorporate cleaning and greening, and a future mural at the Mix at Arbor Place.
- The Elm Street Steering Committee is guiding the comprehensive five-year plan. Half of the 18 member Steering Committee are residents; and the others are people with deep ties to the SE including the African American Historical Society, Lancaster Health Center, Crispus Attucks and the Mix at Arbor Place.
- Tec Centro training program engages in an ongoing partnership with Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in a half dozen curriculum areas.

We are primed for early action. Last summer and fall, PACE artist, Josh Graupera initiated gatherings and workshops to generate a future vision for art, culture and service in the SE. Working with six neighborhood organizations and the City, Josh hosted a series of celebrations where he gathered information from the community. Then, using a roving pushcart inspired by piragua carts used by Latinx entrepreneurs selling water ice and fruits, Josh roamed the streets in the SE to start conversations with neighbors. His findings mapped out a detailed array of residents' needs and desires, which we are addressing directly through our programming.

Description of community opportunity or challenge your project is addressing: When you walk the streets of the SE, you see an inadequate reflection—indeed a distorted one—of the people who live here, because their rich cultural legacies have little evident expression. They have not authored their neighborhood—or when they have, it has been re-authored by municipal housing or urban development projects. Our vision for addressing these challenges involves paying two artists—one Latino and one African American—who, with guidance and mentoring from our advising artists, will plan and execute community-driven arts initiatives in the neighborhood. Using extensive input from Josh's research, we have also identified structural ways to address some of the neighborhood's needs and challenges. These include:

- Reinventing the seven-block-long linear park into a focal point for sculpture, staged performances, murals, dances, art workshops, and more.
- Hosting a monthly Sunday Brunch series that will feature performances by local musicians, potluck feasts, an arts market, and community arts planning sessions. This will anchor our community project development and allow neighbors to cohere as a group.
- Hosting intergenerational residencies that will teach students interviewing techniques and creative writing, allowing them to gather their elders' stories and use them to generate work that will be shared through community performances. Their interviews will be also broadcast on SACA radio. Our lead artists will have access to these stories to inform other projects.
- Activating public spaces as informal spots for people to meet, dance, and perform on a regular basis—both indoors and outdoors. We will hire local musicians and other performers to seed interest and facilitate these sessions at the outset. The Ware Center (SCPA's home) will offer free opportunities for neighbors to perform at First Friday events and at other times as needed. This will be an incubator for the permanent Cultural Center the community is asking for.
- Celebrating our history through installations, pop-up museums, web-based museums, and self-guided cell-phone walking tours.
- Working with local universities/colleges to find music, dance, and visual arts instructors to give informal, inviting workshops that help residents see the threads that unite their cultures. For instance, there used to be a thriving Puerto Rican drum circle in the neighborhood. Church World Services is trying to start a drum circle for African refugees. We could bring in an ethnomusicologist to give a talk on the history of drumming that unites these groups and encourage collaboration. The same is true for mask making, dance, and a host of other topics. The lead artists can then use this information to inform other community projects.

We have so many resources and so many people lined up to assist. We need only create the circumstances by which they can be brought together to make this program—and the neighborhood—flourish. We're confident that the strength our organizations bring to the table, our strong connections with the community and other partner organizations, and our partnership with artists who have already begun this vital work—make this a program worthy of funding.

Ms Sarah Merrit, Special Assistant to the Executive Director
PA Council on the Arts
c/o Jack Howell, Elm Street Project Coordinator

Dear Ms Merrit:

The African American Historical Society is currently part of an effort to complete a five-year comprehensive, resident-driven plan for the Southeast of Lancaster. The Arts, History, Livability, economic development, and community connectedness are all key elements of this plan, which will yield a five year, 1.25 million dollar investment from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. The plan is nearing completion and focuses on using art as a story-telling mechanism by which residents can connect to the neighborhood and the broader community. Already, we have launched major efforts in both oral histories of SE residents between 1930 and 1980 as well as commemorative markers at historically important locations.

Planning components will include creating a registry of neighborhood artists, earmarking funds for collaborations with SCPA and others, as well as strategies that address the practical issues of parking, litter, lighting and more. The arts continue to play a role in everything SACA does. We look forward to being an active partner in this process.

Sincerely,

Leroy T. Hopkins, Jr., Ph.D.
President

Ms. Sarah Merritt
Special Assistant of the Executive Director and Council
PA Council on the Arts
Harrisburg, PA

June 27, 2019

Dear Ms. Merritt,

The Latin American Alliance of Lancaster strongly supports the efforts of SACA and South Central PaARTners at Millersville University to secure a four-year Creative Communities Grant. We have been working with South Central PaARTners on several projects over the last two and half years and have been impressed with the work they're doing both in terms of its scope and quality.
I serve on the Advisory Board for South Central PaARTners and am well acquainted with the ways they have grown and developed over the last two years. I have also noticed that they use their residency program to further community development and to educate residents about the cultural richness of our region.

As an example of the community collaboration, the Program Director, Marci Nelligan, contacted me when she realized that a school with which she was working could use the cultural reality of our organization to enhance a long standing Fiesta day for its sixth grade to culminate a year of studying and exploring a Latin American country in a predominantly white school. Because our organization's purpose is to bring together Latinos in educational and other activities to encourage all in the preservation, development, celebration, and promotion of the spirit, diversity and richness of the Latin American cultural heritage and to share it with non-Latinos, she thought this was a wonderful opportunity for our organization with all its authentic resources to partner with the school and hold a truly educational celebration of Latin American culture. We brought Latino musicians, dancers, food, games, and storytelling to the sixth grade and have been asked back for the second consecutive year. It has been a great experience for all involved—we love interacting with the young people as Latinos and they anticipate and enjoy the unique, authentic full day experience.

This illustrates how this partnership has been mutually beneficial to our organizations. We believe that a Creative Communities grant will allow us to collaborate in new and exciting ways going forward, and strongly support South Central PaARTners and SACA in this application.

Sincerely,

Jaime E. Zabala
Founder/President
Latin American Alliance

School District of Lancaster
Michael J. Slechta
Coordinator for Music, Art, Humanities & 21st Century Skills
Office of Teaching and Learning
251 South Prince Street, 3rd floor Administrative Offices, Lancaster, PA 17603
Office: 717-735-1488; Fax: 717-396-6817
Email: mjslechta@lancaster.k12.pa.us

Sarah Merritt, Special Assistant to the Executive Director and the Council
PA Council on the Arts

June 26, 2019

Dear Ms. Merritt,

The School District of Lancaster strongly supports the efforts of SACA and South Central PaARTners at Millersville University to secure a four-year Creative Communities Grant. We have been working with South Central PaARTners on a number of projects over the last two and half years and our schools and neighborhoods have benefited from their support.

They have organized and funded Neighborhood Bridges residencies in two schools, Price Elementary School and Fulton Elementary School. This nationally recognized critical literacy program has shown dramatic improvements for our students, most notably at Price, where the partnership has truly flourished. There, our fourth grade students' PSSA scores in English Language Arts were three times higher than anticipated, and well above the school average. The only difference between this class and the two other fourth-grade classes was Bridges. At Elizabeth Martin Elementary and next year at Price, students have designed and installed native pollinator gardens that they're using as laboratories for art and observation, and have done so with the support of the National Wildlife Federation.

Our district was invited to make giant puppets and march in a county-wide parade to celebrate the Governor's Award for the Arts. South Central PaARTners coordinated this effort and provided free trainings for our teachers and staff with puppet experts from Philadelphia. Next year, we will be implementing a diversity initiative made possible by a grant from South Central PaARTners. This will allow us to bring five artists of color to five schools for short-term residencies, helping us to balance the representation of teachers of color in the district and better mirror the student body.

South Central PaARTners has actively sought our collaboration, and has consistently brought high quality programming to our schools. We believe that a Creative Communities grant will allow them to serve our district in new and powerful ways, and that this will offer wonderful opportunities for our students and schools.

Please let me know if you need any additional information to support their application for a Creative Communities Grant! Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Michael J. Slechta

Ms. Sarah Merrit, Special Assistant to the Executive Director
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
% Jack Howell, Elm Street Project Coordinator

Dear Ms. Merrit, 26 June, 2019

The Seventh Ward Oral History Project has been engaged in southeast Lancaster for the past four years collecting video and audio stories relating to their lives growing up in this particular section of Lancaster. Our goal is to present these stories as an inspiration to those who meet today's challenges. We plan to use these testimonials as guidance for young people who have been stigmatized by a negative reflection on their neighborhood.

To date we have produced videos which have been presented to special audiences, however we plan to convene groups of people to share experiences in forums designed to excite participation. We have a website (www.7thwardoralhistory.org) that will be used to host the videos, pictures, oral interviews, and artifacts that have been produced in southeast Lancaster.

Our goals are in line with the goals of the Elm Street Project enlightening the community through story telling and recognizing the intricacies of their own neighborhood. We plan to enhance these efforts by offering them in different media forms. School children are a target of our efforts. We want young people to be proud of their community and also feel free to express themselves though a variety of different ways.

Sincerely yours,

Gerald E. Wilson Jr.
7th. Ward Oral History Project Team

Office of the President

THADDEUS STEVENS
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
FOUNDED 1905

June 24, 2019

Sarah Merrit
Special Assistant to the Executive Director and the Council, PA Council on the Arts
Care of Jack Howell,
SACA Elm Street Coordinator

Dear Ms. Merritt,

At Thaddeus Stevens, our mission is to "educate Pennsylvania's economically and socially disadvantaged as well as other qualified students for skilled employment in a diverse, ever changing workforce and for full effective participation as citizens." Having the arts integrated into the lives and educations of those applying to our school benefits us tremendously, because it gives those students an advantage in the workforce and makes our student body stronger. Increasingly, 21st Century job skills rely upon the ability to think creatively, to approach work with critical thinking and problem solving skills, and to be able to collaborate, innovate, and communicate effectively. Such skills are embedded in the arts. The Southeast of Lancaster is our home, and home to many of our students. We benefit when the neighborhood benefits, and we look for opportunities to offer our services and our students' expertise to our community. SACA has long been a vital partner to us, and we see this Creative Communities grant as an opportunity for interesting new way to collaborate and grow together.

Best regards,

William E. Griscom, Ed.D.
President

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