pennsylvania
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

PCA Creative Communities
Letter of Interest Coversheet

Lead Applicant Information

Organization: Ardmore Business District Authority DBA Ardmore Initiative

Address: 56 E Lancaster Ave

City: Ardmore, PA **Zip Code:** 19003

Municipality: Lower Merion Township **County:** Montgomery

Phone: 610-645-0540

Website: destinationardmore.com & ardmoreinitiaitve.org

FEIN: 23-2753271

Contact Name: Nancy Scarlato

Contact Title: Executive Director

Contact Phone: 610-645-0540

Contact Email: nancy@ardmoreinitiative.org

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.).

June 28, 2019

Sarah Merritt, Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
216 Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Ms. Merritt:

Please accept this letter as notice of our intention to apply for the Pennsylvania Creative Communities grant for a transformative mural project at the heart of Ardmore's historic business district. The Ardmore Initiative will lead this exciting project in partnership with Haverford College.

The Ardmore Initiative is well-poised to implement an arts-based Main Street project with funding from the Creative Communities Pilot Initiative. Ardmore, a community within Lower Merion Township, is currently undergoing both an infrastructure and cultural renaissance and it's in large part due to the work of the Ardmore Initiative. Started as a downtown revitalization program in 1988, the Ardmore Initiative was formally designated as a municipal business district authority by Lower Merion Township in 1993. Its charter was most recently renewed in 2013 for a ten-year period.

The Ardmore Initiative's vision is to create a welcoming, walkable, and inclusive downtown that offers a vibrant business mix, including family-friendly independent and national retail stores and service businesses. Ardmore has become a regional dining destination, a vital destination for local residents and visitors, and has a yearlong calendar of well-regarded and highly anticipated special events. With new construction dotting its skyline and a train station reconstruction project on the horizon, the time is ripe to examine what literally meets people when they arrive in Ardmore – whether they're getting off the train, stepping off a bus, or parking their cars.

The Ardmore Initiative recently completed a series of planning documents to set the stage for the future direction of the business district and organization. A 2018-2023 Strategic Plan written in conjunction with Heritage Consulting, Inc. lays out four main strategies: experiential retail, family-friendly family-serving, specialty food and dining, and organizational sustainability. The arts are a major component of each of these goals. The Ardmore Initiative will focus on creating unique experiences for Ardmore's visitors, create playful areas within the existing streetscape, support a family-friendly downtown, and recruit creative and unique businesses to fill retail space in the downtown area.

The Ardmore Initiative's Streetscape Committee is keenly interested in implementing the recommendations of its recently completed Downtown Walk Audit. One of the recommendations of the report is to beautify the alleyways that connect rear public parking areas to the street on both sides of Lancaster Avenue, a heavily traveled corridor for pedestrians, drivers, and transit users. This alley design implements colorful seating, bright lights, planting, and a thorough cleaning of the area. We also propose a series of murals that would feature the history of Ardmore as a transportation hub and working class community.

There is a clear need for this project; the Walk Audit concluded that utilizing creative art pieces and welcoming designs could create new uses and add life back to these underutilized public spaces. Surveyed local citizens and business owners stated Ardmore's alleyways were "dark and uninviting at night and/or blank spaces during the day."

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Deteriorated paint, inoperable string lights and awkward public seating make this Downtown Ardmore alleyway uninviting.

New lighting, seating, and planters in addition to a mural will transform the space into a community hub and Main Street asset.

Above is an example of one of these alleys in its current state as well as a rendering of what it could look like with a little bit of work. A mural would be a great enhancement to what we originally visioned for this area. Visitors to Ardmore should not feel unwelcome, uncomfortable, or unsafe. Additionally, an uninviting space will hurt adjacent businesses if visitors are too intimidated by the local environment to visit Ardmore's shops.

We intend for this mural project to both enhance the Ardmore Initiative's ongoing community partnerships as well as build new ones. The Ardmore Initiative promotes Downtown Ardmore's variety of retail, restaurants, and service businesses, hosting special events and retail events, helping existing businesses expand while recruiting new ones, and marketing and communicating about the downtown and the organization. The organization works in close cooperation with the Ardmore Business Association, which also hosts special events in the downtown that are community focused. AI also works closely with Lower Merion Township, which expresses interest in helping to fund this project in their letter of support. But we also hope to work with community members, regardless of age or artistic ability, to make these murals a reality.

Haverford College will play a vital partner in the project's success by recruiting community-minded students to volunteer throughout the mural painting process and helping to publicize the project throughout the area. The College's Dean of Student Engagement, Mike Elias, sits on Ardmore Initiative's Board and has a long track record of leveraging Haverford College's resources to benefit students and community residents and merchants alike.

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The importance of this project cannot be understated. We know that these murals will help make visitors feel welcome and increase business attraction. This community mural project would also bring the Ardmore residents together to help them celebrate the unique aspects of this neighborhood. This project is a huge step towards accomplishing our organization's mission of making Ardmore a welcoming, walkable, and inclusive area for everyone to enjoy.

We at Ardmore Initiative would be honored to submit a full proposal to the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for the Pennsylvania Creative Communities grant. We look forward to speaking with you in more detail about the exciting art and community projects we have underway.

Sincerely,

Nancy Scarlato

Nancy Scarlato
Executive Director

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ARDMORE
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

June 28th, 2019

Paul Baker
Ardmore Business Association
Ardmore, Pennsylvania 19003

Dear Ms. Merritt:

I write on behalf of the Ardmore Business Association (ABA) in support of Ardmore Initiative's proposal to the Pennsylvania Creative Communities (PCC) grant to beautify alleyways in the Ardmore business district through arts-based change. As an organization which concerns itself with the wellbeing of Ardmore's local businesses and visitors, we strongly support Ardmore Initiative's grant application to beautify and revitalize downtown Ardmore's alleyways.

For the past 50 years, Ardmore Business Association has served Ardmore and Lower Merion Township as a business networking and promotional organization. Our organization's mission is to improve the local business environment in Ardmore by creating promotional events, providing business networks, and addressing the needs of the 350+ Ardmore businesses partnered with us. We strive to find ways to improve the Ardmore district for our local businesses and visitors. As such, we fully support Ardmore Initiative's proposal to beautify the alleyways since it significantly improves the experiences of both Ardmore's visitors and businesses.

By artistically enhancing alleyways in the Ardmore community, Ardmore Initiative intends to improve visitor comfort and local business traffic. Due to these significant benefits to the Ardmore community, Ardmore Business Association fully supports Ardmore Initiative's efforts as they seek funding to support an alleyway beautification program.

Sincerely,

Paul Baker
President, Ardmore Business Association

TOWNSHIP
OF
LOWER MERION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

75 E. Lancaster Ave.
Ardmore, PA 19003-2376
Telephone: (610) 645-6184

June 26, 2019

Sarah Merritt, Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities

Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

216 Finance Building Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Ms. Merritt:

This letter is to recognize the desire of Ardmore Initiative to apply under this program. The Township of Lower Merion; which Ardmore is one of eleven commercial areas within the Township, works closely with this organization, as they spearhead coordination of specific revitalization activities within downtown Ardmore. This coordination provides targeted assistance to the Ardmore commercial area and allows other Township resources to be distributed among other commercial areas within the municipality.

The proposed project by Ardmore Initiative may also be eligible for some matching funding from the Township, as the Township can partner with downtown/commercial revitalization organizations who implement streetscape amenities within their commercial boundaries.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the below address or phone number.

Sincerely,

Eric Persson
Economic Development Specialist
(610) 645-6184
epersson@lowermerion.org

HAVERFORD
COLLEGE

June 28th, 2019

Michael Elias
Haverford College
370 Lancaster Avenue
Haverford, PA 19041

Dear Ms. Merritt,

I am writing to express Haverford College's support for Ardmore Initiative's proposal to the Pennsylvania Creative Communities grant. Ardmore Initiative's plan to improve Ardmore's alleyways is not only a delightful idea to improve the downtown Ardmore area, but also presents a great opportunity for Haverford college students to engage with the Ardmore community through artistic and volunteer work.

Haverford College has teamed with Ardmore Initiative in the past; our partnership has always held one objective: to engage Haverford College students within our local Ardmore community. We want our students to be strong and active members of Ardmore's community. One vital method to accomplish this mission is volunteer work. Haverford has consistently encouraged its students to volunteer through popular programs and organizations such as Books Through Bars, Haverfarm, the Asian Arts Initiative, and others. Ardmore Initiative's alleyway renovation project presents another unique volunteer opportunity for our students. Ardmore Initiative's plan to paint murals in the alleyways is a great volunteer prospect for our arts-focused students. We would be excited to see our students express their artistic talents for the betterment of the Ardmore community. We would also be interested in having students paint, clean, and renovate Ardmore's alleyways as well.

Haverford College recognizes the benefits of Ardmore Initiative's beautification project to the Ardmore community. Their renovation project would encourage more people, including Haverford students, to visit the Ardmore business area. We also see a great opportunity for our students to express their values of artistic expression and community engagement through this project. As such, we are in full support of Ardmore Initiative and are happy to partner in this project.

Respectfully,

Michael Elias
Associate Dean of Student Engagement and Leadership Initiatives