PHILADELPHIA VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS

Impact Report

1315 Walnut St, #300
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107
pvla.org

Who We Are

Founded in 1978, **Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts** has long served as the sole legal aid organization in the Philadelphia area dedicated to supporting the arts and culture sector. For decades, PVLA has bridged the gap between the legal and creative communities, providing pro bono services that protect intellectual property, resolve disputes, and advance equity for those in the arts. We strive to foster a thriving arts ecosystem where creatives have the tools to protect their work, sustain their practices regardless of financial means, and enrich the cultural vitality of Greater Philadelphia.

With direct services, educational programs, and community partnerships, we have empowered hundreds of creatives to navigate complex legal and business challenges. Our impact reaches beyond individual artists, strengthening the city's arts ecosystem and fostering a more informed, resilient creative community.

While we are not accepting new client matters, PVLA remains fully committed to our mission: empowering underserved artists and arts organizations in the Philadelphia region by providing access to free legal services, knowledge, and resources. Our board and staff are dedicated to keeping that mission alive and finding new ways to serve the creative community.

An Update from PVLA

Fiscal Year 2026 was a year of preservation for Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (PVLA). Over the past year, PVLA delivered on its mission in powerful ways. We presented educational programming in partnership with Drexel University, University of Pennsylvania, CraftNOW, NextFab, the Free Library of Philadelphia, Creative Philadelphia's Shape Philly: Idea CoLABs incubator, Forman Arts Initiative, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, and the U.S. Copyright Office. These sessions drew hundreds of artists and attorneys, providing practical guidance on pressing topics including artificial intelligence, intellectual property, business formation, and legal basics for creatives.

We also provided direct legal assistance across diverse artistic disciplines, including visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, and multimedia, completing 63 cases. Each case represented not only a legal resolution but also a tangible investment in the creative economy, helping artists and small organizations protect their intellectual property, resolve disputes, and sustain their practices. These mission-driven outcomes were made possible through the dedication of our volunteer attorneys, the trust of our clients, and the generosity of our donors and funders.

Even amid these successes, we recognize the continuing challenges that PVLA faces. The organization still carries debt from a 2020 SBA loan and continues to navigate the lasting effects of years of underinvestment. In late June 2025, we made the strategic decision to pause new client intake to allow time for organizational stabilization and planning. Since then, we have remained deeply committed to serving our community through pipeline case placement and legal education workshops. This pause in operations represents a strategic reset rather than organizational failure, positioning PVLA to emerge stronger and more sustainable.

To that end, we launched a planning process in late June 2025 to chart a comprehensive restructuring plan—one that will evaluate partnership opportunities, diversify business models, and strengthen the infrastructure needed to secure PVLA's long-term future. This work builds on new leadership, renewed board engagement, and lessons learned through candid self-assessment.

As of June 2025, PVLA's leadership and board have undertaken an active restructuring effort focused on preserving access to services through a sustainable regional partnership model.

PVLA is currently collaborating with consultants to evaluate the formation of a modified entity that would maintain services in Philadelphia while creating opportunities for broader regional collaboration and shared infrastructure.

Impact by the Numbers

8 Legal Workshops

63 Cases Closed

350+ Workshop Attendees

400+ Volunteer Attorneys

Thank You to our Supporters

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Jordan Strauss
Fred Strober
John Viscardi
Ralph Wellington
Frederic Wilf

Your commitment ensures that our work remains sustainable, forward-thinking, and accessible. Together, we create opportunities for artists to thrive and contribute to the cultural vitality of our city.

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. We apologize for any unintentional errors or omissions.

Leadership

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Restructuring Consultant

Sezgi Hermans
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How You Can Help

Our mission is made possible by the generosity and engagement of our supporters. There are many ways to get involved and help ensure that artists and creatives have the legal guidance, resources, and advocacy they need to thrive.

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pvla.org

To Donate:

https://pvla.org/thank-you/