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Settlement tops list of grant recipients

The music school got \$600,000 from Pew, which awarded \$3 million to 18 groups.

By Matt Flegenheimer
Inquirer Staff Writer

After months of dogged staff- and salary-trimming to keep his operation afloat, Settlement Music School executive director Robert Capanna has a fresh perspective on the funding game.

"A \$200,000 grant doesn't make or break you," said Capanna, who took a 10 percent salary cut in April, during his 27th year on the job. "But by the time you get to the fourth or fifth \$200,000 grant, it becomes pretty important."

Thank heavens, then, for the Pew Charitable Trusts, which announced Thursday that it would give more than \$3 million in grant money to Settlement and 17 other area organizations as part of its Philadelphia Cultural Leadership Program (PCLP). Nearly 20 percent of the funds - \$600,000 - will go to Settlement, the largest beneficiary in this cycle.

Pew also renewed its \$4.7 million grant to the Philadelphia Cultural Management Initiative (PCMI), which offers regional arts and cultural groups services ranging from direct financial support to training workshops on management and fund-raising.

"Each of these organizations in their own way is impressive," said Gregory Rowe, Pew's director of culture initiatives. "It really reflects the amazing diversity of work that goes on here."

There are no restrictions on how the 18 organizations - all of which have received previous grants from Pew - can use the grant money. According to Rowe, the open-ended purpose is to provide "general operating support."

Recipients, of course, appreciate the freedom.

"An unrestricted grant pays for your core mission," Capanna said. "The problem with grants that are not unrestricted is that they tend to force an organization to do something out of the usual, which usually means it becomes an expense as well as a revenue."

For some smaller-scale programs trying to navigate the tumultuous economic current, such assistance couldn't come at a better time. The Asian Arts Initiative, recently displaced by the expansion of the Convention Center, has been strapped for cash in its quest to secure a new facility. With the Pew grant, it has an additional \$32,000 from which to draw.

"I wish I could give a sexier answer," said executive director Gayle Isa. "This is money that can help us pay our rent."

Monetary considerations aside, many groups relish the credibility boost a Pew grant can provide. Glen Knapp, executive director of Philadelphia Young Playwrights, which will get a \$54,000 grant, cites the "imprimatur" that comes with the Pew name. ArtReach executive director Michael Norris calls it "empowering and inspiring" to be recognized by the region's largest funder. His program, a nonprofit that will receive \$45,000, brings arts and cultural events to many of the area's disabled and disadvantaged communities.

"Especially for an organization like ArtReach, which kind of flies below the radar given the people that we work with... an award like this is especially valuable," he said.

Still, for all the intangible benefits organizations derive from the grants, the money itself is a chunk of change they can really believe in.

"Boy oh boy," said Capanna. "In these times, it's really a relief."

Others benefiting from the grants are the **Academy of Vocal Arts** (\$96,000); **Arden Theatre Company** (\$168,000); **Astral Artistic Services** (\$48,000); **Bucks County Historical Society** (\$120,000); **Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance** (\$144,000); **Michener Art Museum** (\$240,000); **Tyler Arboretum** (\$96,000); **Library Company of Philadelphia** (\$80,000); **Main Line Art Center** (\$84,000); **Pennsylvania Ballet** (\$300,000); **People's Light and Theatre** (\$516,000); **Philadelphia Chamber Music Society** (\$96,000); **Philadelphia Folklore Project** (\$32,000); **Wilma Theater** (\$300,000).

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