



## NEWS RELEASE

*Office of Communications  
217 East Redwood Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS:

Karen Glenn  
410-767-6318  
kglennc@choosemaryland.org

### **GOVERNOR O'MALLEY INVITES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION LAUNCHES *IMAGINE MARYLAND* TO STRENGTHEN CREATIVE COMMUNITY**

**BALTIMORE, MD (June 18, 2008)** – Governor Martin O'Malley today announced *Imagine Maryland: 2008-2013*, a state-wide community collaboration and cultural planning initiative to identify opportunities and ideas that will enhance the roles of the arts in Maryland in order to stimulate economic development, enhance quality of life, attract visitors and nurture artists and arts organizations. Coordinated by the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC), an agency of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, *Imagine Maryland* invites the public to participate by attending a regional town hall meeting, an issue based forum, and/or completing an on-line survey.

In making the announcement, Governor O'Malley said "Maryland has one of the strongest state supported arts programs in the country because we value access and diversity by all citizens - to all types of arts experiences. We know by the number of people participating in the arts – and the growing number of locally based arts programs – that our steadfast commitment has nurtured a growing creative economy. *Imagine Maryland* will guide us as this growth continues and be an important tool and to help us better serve our citizens' artistic endeavors."

Over the next few months, the Arts Council will host six regional meetings and more than ten issue forums throughout the state. The regional meetings will be held in Cumberland, Bethesda, Easton, Dorchester, Baltimore and Prince Frederick. The general public, community and elected officials, artists and arts organizations representatives are invited to attend the meetings. The ten in-

depth issue forums will focus on interest areas such as disabilities and the arts, arts education, seniors and the arts, individual artists and emerging art forms and include statewide leaders in these fields.

MSAC Chair Scott Johnson, an intellectual property lawyer with Ober, Kaler, Grimes and Shriver and former chair of the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, strongly endorsed Maryland's strategic planning efforts saying, "This important process allows us to develop a blue print that reflects the talent and experience of the state's dynamic arts community and embraces the ideas and interests of our diverse and growing population." He added, "Our future success depends not only on our ability to support established arts organizations, but our commitment to include the creative energy of emerging artists and initiatives such as public art and Maryland's arts and entertainment districts that are using the arts to revitalize communities statewide." Johnson serves as chairman of the *Imagine Maryland* Advisory Committee comprised a broad base of public and private sector leaders.

Kelly Barsdate, Chief Program and Planning Officer for the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, provided technical assistance to the MSAC and helped design a broad-based, inclusive planning process that reflects the best practices of state arts agencies nationally. Barsdate has assisted many states with strategic planning and applauded Maryland for providing so many avenues for input, participation and creativity, saying, "An inclusive planning process helps a state arts agency to stay attuned to a changing environment and provide strong support for a state's diverse arts community. But a participatory process offers benefits to citizens and communities, too, who come together to exchange ideas, share their visions for the future, and discuss trends that affect the well-being of the arts and community life statewide."

"Maryland is fortunate to have the leadership of Governor O'Malley who understands that our creative assets – individual artists, cultural institutions and grassroots arts organizations - form the very foundation of Maryland's high quality of life," said David Edgerley, DBED Secretary, adding "Our citizens are truly fortunate to have this opportunity to participate in such a rewarding process, and *Imagine Maryland* will create a bright future for the arts that embraces the imagination and spirit of its citizens." For information on the open meetings and how to participate, visit [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org).

An agency of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, the MSAC is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. In 2007, non-profit arts organizations and arts programs that received operating support from the MSAC contributed more than \$1.2 billion to the State's economy and provided 15,000 jobs to Maryland residents. For information call (410) 767-6555 or TTY (410) 333-4519.

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**imagine** MARYLAND  
MARYLAND STATE ARTS COUNCIL 2008-2013

## FAQ's

### **What is the purpose of developing a Statewide Strategic Plan for The Arts?**

A Strategic Plan provides a blue print for the organization that is transparent, measurable and accountable. A plan provides a report card to measure progress through public input, thereby promoting accountability of a state agency. The strategic plan will reflect current community input and respect the Arts Council's goals such as supporting the arts and artists, ensuring access to the arts for all Maryland's citizens, and promoting a state-wide awareness of the arts. It will also reflect the diversity of Maryland, identify opportunities and challenges, determine how best our resources are to be invested and determine new initiatives. This strategic plan meets the requirements of best practices for state arts agencies as recommended by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Association of State Arts Agencies.

### **Who is coordinating this effort?**

The Maryland State Arts Council is the state's official arts agency and will spearhead the Strategic Plan. The agency was founded in 1967, and has a 17 member board appointed by the governor and the legislature. MSAC funds more than 300 grants per year for Maryland arts initiatives.

### **When will the plan be completed?**

The strategic plan will be completed and available for public comment in December and disseminated to the public in February 2009.

### **How is the planning process organized?**

The process is divided in three stages: 1) information gathering; 2) data analysis; and 3) public dissemination. Information will be gathered using various types of assessment tools including public opinion polls, constituent surveys, regional meetings, issue-based forums and interviews with key leaders and Maryland youth. The collected data will be analyzed by a planning consultant and staff, who will then determine a set of goals and strategies and organized into a 5-year strategic plan.

### **Who is the Advisory Committee?**

The Advisory Committee is a 35-member group of Maryland leaders from the arts, economic development, and corporate communities. These individuals work with the MSAC Consultant and Staff to synthesize information and help develop the Strategic Plan. They will provide guidance, offer feedback, respond to assessments and analysis, approve the final documents, and champion the process.

## **What are the Regional Meetings?**

The regional forums are meetings, coordinated in partnership with the county arts agencies, in order to gather information from the public regarding their interests and ideas on the Maryland arts community. They will be held in the six different regions of the state: Western, Capital Region, Central, Eastern Shore (upper and lower) and Southern Maryland, during the second and fourth week of July at various times of the day.

## **What are Issue Forums?**

The issue forums are focus groups in which members of the Maryland community are invited to attend and discuss specific areas of focus within the arts and cultural sector. These meetings will target such issues and populations as Arts and Education, Seniors and the Arts, Corporate Philanthropy and Foundation Giving, and Emerging Arts. MSAC will partner with organization such as Erickson Retirement Communities, Maryland State Department of Education, and Very Special Arts to host these meetings. We will also work with area schools and interviewing students in grades K-12 to learn what type of interests our youth have.

## **How can I participate in the Strategic Plan process?**

The general public can participate by attending a Regional Meeting or completing an on-line survey. MSAC is very interested in learning what Maryland citizens would like from their arts community and intend on designing new programs and initiatives that meet the public's interests. Should you wish to participate in a Regional Forum, please RSVP to MSAC at 410-767-6555 or [msac@msac.org](mailto:msac@msac.org).

## **Where do I find the On-Line Survey?**

Visit the Maryland State Arts Council website at [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org) and click on the Strategic Plan button in the banner. The survey will be available August 1, 2008.