

INFORMATION SESSION

FY27 “How to Apply” Webinar GFO Application & Next Steps

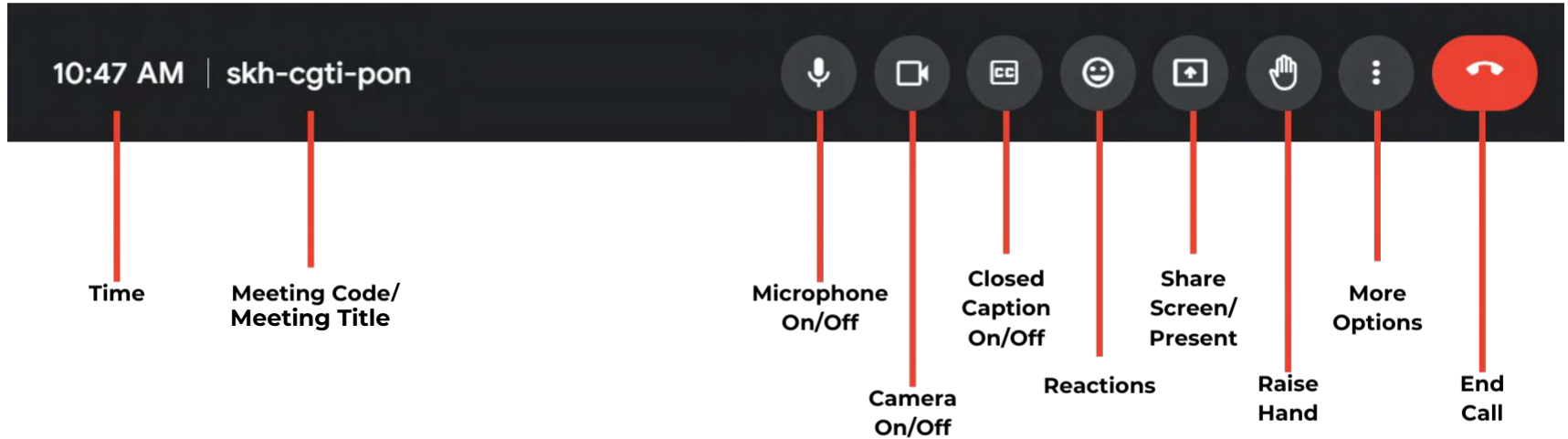
Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Presented by:

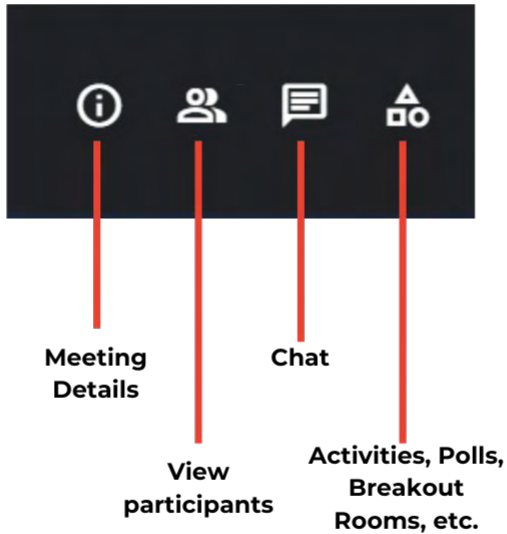
Emily Sollenberger & Laura Weiss
Program Directors, Arts Services



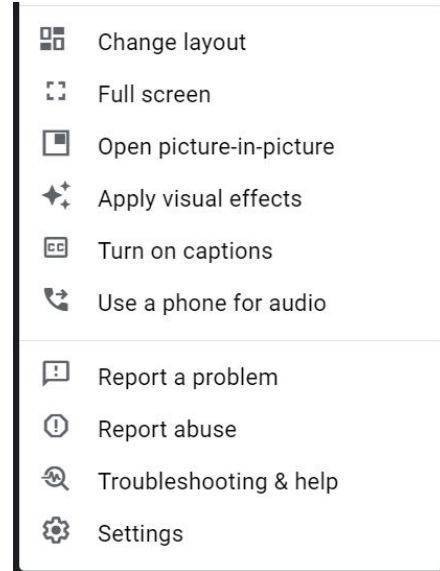
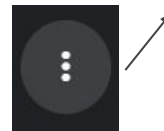
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Reference Shot of Features (2 of 2)



In “More Options”



Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge the lands and waters now known as Maryland are the home of its first peoples: the Accohannock Indian Tribe, Assateague People's Tribe, Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, Choptico Band of Indians, Lenape Tribe, Nanticoke Tribe, Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Piscataway Conoy Tribe, Piscataway Indian Nation, Pocomoke Indian Nation, Susquehannock Indians, Youghiogheny River Band of Shawnee, and tribes in the Chesapeake watershed who have seemingly vanished since the coming of colonialism. We acknowledge that this land is now home to other tribal peoples living here in diaspora. We acknowledge the forced removal of many from the lands and waterways that nurtured them as kin. We acknowledge the degradation that continues to be wrought on the land and waters in pursuit of resources. We acknowledge the right of the land and waterways to heal so that they can continue to provide food and medicine for all. We acknowledge that it is our collective obligation to pursue policies and practices that respect the land and waters so that our reciprocal relationship with them can be fully restored.

Equity and Justice Statement

The arts celebrate our state's diversity, connect our shared humanity, and transform individuals and communities. The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our organization and across communities of our state.

MSAC and its grantees are committed to embracing equity and non-discrimination regardless of race, religious creed, color, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, class, language, and/or ability.

Vision

MSAC plays an essential role ensuring every person has access to the transformative power of the arts.

Mission

MSAC advances the arts in our state by providing leadership that champions creative expression, diverse programming, equitable access, lifelong learning, and the arts as a celebrated contributor to the quality of life for all the people of Maryland.

MSAC Strategic Plan - Pillars and Goals

Access

Bolster access to arts experiences and resources

Awareness

Amplify the stories of Maryland's arts sector and the value of public support

Connection

Foster networks within and beyond the arts sector

Equity

Cultivate a thriving arts ecosystem centered in equity

Leadership

Commit to a culture of care and innovation

Creative Meeting Actions

Celebrate being in the space with other creative people.

Engage with everyone's presence as a gift.

Acknowledge that together we know a lot.

Enter the conversation with curiosity and inquiry.

Share your idea and trust that it will be heard.

Use "I" statements.

Focus your language on the task at hand.

Hold one another accountable with care.

Honor all perspectives and build on shared ideas.

Balance speaking with listening.

Professional Development

- Info sessions
- Topic-specific sessions
- Coffee with the Council
- Office hours
- Maryland Arts Summit (visit mdarts.org)

Share ideas: <https://msac.org/contact>

Eventbrite: <https://tinyurl.com/pkw7pcrk>

Endorsement disclaimer:

<https://msac.org/terms-use-and-disclaimer-policy>



Ways to Get Involved

MSAC relies on a diverse array of constituents from across the state to give input in a variety of ways.

- Panelists review and score applications
- Editors give input on program policies
- Schedule of public calls and details at msac.org/about/ways-get-involved
- Apply in SmartSimple
- Training and support
- Compensation provided for service



Today's Agenda

- Review of the Grants for Organizations (GFO) Program
- Eligibility guidelines
- Revision Overview
- Full Application Process
- GFO Timeline/Next Steps
- Funding formula
- Smart Simple
- Q&A



Grants for Organizations (GFO) Overview

Grants for Organizations Overview

Note:

- This presentation is an overview of the GFO revision process along with a focus on the Full FY27 Application today.
- If you are not already in the GFO program OR if your Intent to Apply application was not accepted, you would not be eligible to submit an FY27 application at this time

Grants for Organizations Overview

Purpose of program:

- Provides operating support that strengthens and sustains Maryland's arts infrastructure
- In FY26, MSAC awarded over \$18 million in GFO funding to **305** organizations across the state.

Grants for Organizations Overview

FY27 Deadlines:

ALL FY27 GFO Application: **Saturday, November 15, 2025** at 11:59pm

technical assistance will not be available after normal business hours of Monday - Friday, 8am - 4pm. Since this is a new process with a new application, we highly encourage you to submit a few days prior to the deadline, as there will be no assistance on 11/15

Grants for Organizations Overview

1. **Returning applicant** (received FY26 GFO award): you have already been accepted into the GFO program and do not need to complete an Intent to Apply → you'll move straight to the application due **November 15**.
2. **New applicant** (did not receive a FY26 GFO award): you are required to submit an Intent to Apply application due **September 15**, and accepted into the program to then apply for the full application **November 15**.
 - If you are a new organization that does not submit an Intent to Apply (or it wasn't approved), you will not be able to submit a Full Application for FY27 funding.

GFO Eligibility & Use of Funds

GFO - Who Can Apply?

Arts Organizations - General Operating Grant (GOG)

- Nonprofit organizations whose purpose is producing or presenting the arts through public programs or services. Applicants must be arts organizations, organizations whose mission/purpose is producing or presenting the arts through public programs or services, such as art museums, orchestras, galleries, theaters, arts centers, etc.

GFO - Who Can Apply?

Art Programs (PRG)

- Organizations whose primary purpose is other than producing or presenting the arts, but who provide ongoing public arts activities through public programs. The mission of these organizations is not specifically dedicated to the arts but they do have ongoing arts programming. These are considered non-arts organizations for MSAC purposes. Examples include: community centers, places of worship, non-art museums, libraries, universities, etc.

GFO - Who Can Apply?

< GUIDELINES ORGANIZATION INFORMATION CONTACT INFORMATION ELIGIBILITY PROG

GFO Arts Organization or Arts Program (Set by MSAC): Arts Organization

GFO Discipline (Set by MSAC): Theatre - Group 2

GFO Assigned Program Director (set by MSAC): Laura Weiss

GFO Application Cycle for FY27 (For more information, refer to page 4 of the guidelines):

Year 3: Application and Staff Conversation

Your designation as an Arts Organization OR an Arts Program can now be found in Smart Simple within the GFO application under the “Organization Information” tab

GFO - Who Can Apply?

- *Must be previously funded through GFO or be invited to complete the Full Application via the Intent to Apply process*
- Arts Organizations/Programs
 - Must be 501(c)3 nonprofit, unit of government, school
 - Can be fiscally sponsored under Model A agreement
 - Be incorporated in Maryland as a nonprofit or have significant physical presence in Maryland.
 - Have operated as an arts organization or arts program for one full fiscal year and be able to submit a financial statement for the most recently completed fiscal year at the time of application
 - **NEW!** Have allowable income over \$10,000 (previously \$50K)
 - aligns with the Creativity program shifts

GFO - What can it support?

- General Operations!
 - This is not a project-specific grant program
 - Support of ongoing programming and operations of your organization
- Programming materials/supplies
- Marketing and Promotional activities
- Personnel and associated expenses
- Operations, such as rent, utilities, internet, etc.
- Professional development activities

Grants for Organizations- What can't it support?

- Re-granting, scholarships
- Capital improvements
- Activities that aren't open to the public
- Activities that are primarily therapeutic
- Travel outside of MD
- As with any MSAC grant, the funds cannot be used for political contributions
- Not sure? Ask!

Revision Process & What's Next in FY27

GFO before FY25 Revision Process

The GFO program has been the “flagship” funding program of MSAC for many years. It last underwent a significant editing process for the full program in 2018, along with a revision to the funding formula in 2021.

For many years, the GFO program included multiple steps, within a 3-year cycle:

- Intent to Apply (new orgs)
- Two 2 different applications with different deadlines (On year / Off year)
- On Year = Review by public panelists (every 3 years)
 - Included review of written application, Artistic Site Visit, In-Depth Conversation, Panel meeting, resulting in a panel % score
- Staff reviewed applications and financial statements
- Final report

Creativity Grant before FY25 Revision Process

You might have applied/received funds from the **Creativity Grant program**, which allowed for organizations to apply for general operating funds from FY19 - FY26 if not receiving general operating from another program (*GFO, County Arts Agencies, Arts & Entertainment Districts, Folklife Network*)

- Creativity has a different application process throughout the year.
 - Apply within the fiscal year on a rolling basis, generally July - March.
 - Applications reviewed and awarded monthly for up to \$4,000 (\$5,000 in FY25)
 - Reviewed by public panelists
 - Application included 3 questions
 - Required financial statement from last completed fiscal year.
 - Final report required

GFO Editing Process

Note: Previous sessions have outlined the full Editing Process.

- If you're interested in learning more, please watch the **GFO Revision Process & Application webinar recording (September 9th)**, available on msac.org.

GFO Editing Process

Arts Services Program Directors Emily Sollenberger and Laura Weiss have overseen the GFO program (and Creativity Grant) since 2019. Based on experience and feedback, Emily and Laura recommended a public editing process throughout FY25 to address overarching and persistent issues:

- Inherent nature of panelist subjectivity
- Variances in scoring (year to year, panel to panel, etc.)
- What is essential in the process to provide support to grantees?
- Substantial growth in the program/growing demand and needs for:
 - general operating support as other funding sources diminish
 - technical support for applying organizations
 - support and management of panelists

GFO Editing Process

The Editing Process included:

- Public Call for Editors (late summer 2024)
 - 10 individuals, with varied levels of experience, from GFO-funded organizations and previous GFO panelists selected to review materials and develop policy recommendations
- Survey of GFO grantees (late summer 2024)
 - 51 responses provided feedback to shape policy development
- Research (Fall 2024)
 - Staff and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) compiled research about national trends and best practices

GFO Editing Process

- 3 Editor meetings (October and November 2024)
 - Editors participated in staff-guided discussions about issues and possible policies to address them
 - Editors completed “homework” in between meeting
 - The group came to a consensus of ideas and recommendations to work towards
- Two Public Listening Sessions (February 2025)
 - Over 110 people attended
 - Editor recommendations were shared
 - Overall, we heard positive feedback and general agreement on the proposed changes
- Policy Development (December 2024 - April 2025)
 - Emily and Laura developed recommendations, consulting with staff and keeping councilors apprised of work
- Presentation to Committee and Council (May - June 2025)
 - Council voted to approve all changes

Topics we asked Editors to consider

1. What is *essential* in the GFO process to provide funding to arts organizations?
2. Should there be a role for the public (as a panelist or other reviewer role) in the process?
3. Building off of the last two discussions, is there a new GFO structure entirely to consider?

These questions drove our overall revision of the GFO program, resulting in the new process we'll share with you today.

What we heard from the Editors

Regarding the Application:

- General information (mission, vision, etc.) is important to know about an organization
- Significant application changes are needed for the On Year/Full Application
- Suggested Addition of including goals/benchmarks set by the organization within the Application
- Financials + Organizational attachments in the Application remain the same

Regarding the Public Role:

- Yes, there is a role for the public
- Concerns with consistency of the panelists and their reviews from year to year
- There is value in the public visits with organizations; and there's a connection to public dollars

Regarding Other Elements of the Process:

- Consider a Compliance model + Artistic Visits
- Remove panel meetings and scoring elements from the process
- Consider a new cycle structure to account for the number of organizations / visits

Goals of the Revised GFO Program

Increase equity and accessibility

- Removal of scoring helps eliminate bias which leads to inequitable reviews of applications
- More organizations will be eligible for funding through this new process

Simplify, Shorten, and Streamline!

- Simpler process overall
- Less Time on Application = More Time for Your Organization's Work!
- Increases equity and access

GFO Intent to Apply Application

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- ***Remember - if you were approved for FY26 GFO funding, do NOT complete the Intent to Apply!***
- The Intent to Apply application is primarily focused on eligibility and compliance of the applying organization/program
- If your Intent to Apply is “approved,” this does not guarantee funding. This simply means you are invited to complete the full application to then be considered for funding (more on this later)

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- The New Intent to Apply Process has a more in-depth application than the previous Process
 - The Full Application, if invited to submit, is significantly shortened from the previous version
 - Our goal is to get details concerning your organization's eligibility and compliance upfront through the Intent to Apply process, and then move to a streamlined full application process, annually.

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- **Organizational Information**
- **General Information + Eligibility Questions**
 - The artistic category that most accurately characterizes the work of your organization
 - Has your organization operated for one full fiscal year?
 - Does your organization have a mission, vision, and stated goals/values?
 - Does your organization have ongoing programs to produce or present the arts to the public?

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

General Information + Eligibility Questions

- Are you applying for an arts organization (organization's mission and programming is entirely arts-based) or for an arts program (arts programming is within a non-arts based organization, such as a program of a college or university, or larger entity)?
- Is your organization incorporated in Maryland or have a significant physical presence in Maryland?
- Within your Geographic Area of Service, identify the percentage of programming serving the community

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

General Information + Eligibility Questions

- Does your organization have a Board of Directors or another type of governing body?
- Tell us about your organizational structure - click on all the groups that apply to your organization
- Upload a graphic/chart of the organization's staffing structure (include board, staff, artists, volunteers, etc within the chart).
- Does your organization have a long term or strategic plan?

GFO Intent to Apply - Application

Financial Questions and Information

- Is your organization's total allowable income from FY2025 or CY2024 at least \$10,000?
- Will your organization have an authorized financial statement for its most recently completed fiscal year (Fiscal Year 2025 or Calendar Year 2024) at the time of the application?
- Please list the dates of your most recently completed fiscal year (for example: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025; Jan 1, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024)
- Does the organization have established procedures for financial oversight, which would include monitoring/approving of the organization's finances and annual budgeting process?

GFO Full Application

GFO Full Application - Overview

- **Organizational Information**

- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) required - ensure it's active!
- Fiscal Sponsorship information - if applicable
- **NEW! Updates within Organizational Profile**

- **Eligibility Questions**

- **Program Details**

- **Financials**

- **Attachments**

GFO Full Application

- **Organizational Profile Information - NEW!**
 - See the **“Edit Org Profile”** yellow button to make updates to your profile. That information, along with information MSAC will be tracking, will be pulled into the application.
 - Contact information
 - IRS Date
 - Mission, Vision, Goals, and Values

2027-40575

< GUIDELINES **ORGANIZATION INFORMATION** CONTACT INFORMATION ELIGIBILITY PROGRAM DETAILS



Please note, some of the fields below are populated from your organization's profile. Please make sure that the *E sections are completed by clicking on the "Edit Org Profile" button below.

Click on the "Edit Org Profile" button below to insert and/or edit the information below

Edit Org Profile

Organization Name: THE EVERYMAN THEATRE INCORPORATED

Address:

315 W FAYETTE ST
BALTIMORE, MD
21201-3405

GFO Full Application

Organizational Profile Information - NEW!

- Mission, Vision, Goals/Values
 - Provided space in the profile to keep this updated throughout the year, but reminder at GFO submission to ensure anything that has changed is updated here.

GFO Full Application

- **Contact Information**

- See the **“Edit Profile”** yellow button to make updates to your profile. That information will be pulled into the application.
 - Contact information
 - Update if your primary contact has since changed!

< GUIDELINES ORGANIZATION INFORMATION **CONTACT INFORMATION** ELIGIBILITY PROGRAM DETAILS

To make edits to any of the information in your profile, click the Edit button below.

Edit Profile

Grant Contact Name: Elliott Kashner

Phone: 443-615-7055

Email: ekashner@everymantheatre.org

Address: 315 W FAYETTE ST

City: BALTIMORE

State: MD

Zip Code: 21201-3405

GFO Full Application

Organizational Profile Information - NEW!

- Are you an Arts Program?
 - We'll ask that you complete the Annual Programming information with all your programs (non-arts and arts-based) to get a sense of the % that is arts-based.
 - Within the full list of your programs, indicate what is arts-based

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section

- **Has your organization operated for one full fiscal year?**
Dropdown: (Yes/No)
- **Is your organization incorporated in Maryland or have a significant physical presence in Maryland?** Dropdown: (Yes, Inc. in MD; Yes, Sig Presence in MD; No)
- **Does your organization have ongoing programs to produce or present the arts to the public?** Dropdown: (Yes/No)

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section - Programming

- **Upload a list (no more than 2 pages) of all public programming in your organization's current fiscal year. In your response, include a brief description of each type of program/event (ie - Main Stage Season, Exhibition Series, Educational Programming) and who the program/event serves. If an activity is tuition/fee-based (such as summer camp, classes, etc.), describe how the activity is serving the community beyond those that are paying to participate.**

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section - Programming

- **Do you anticipate any significant changes to the programming in the next fiscal year? (Yes/No)**
 - If Yes, provide a brief explanation of what significant changes you anticipate.

Significant changes would include situations in which a type of programming is being added/eliminated or there will be a significant increase/decrease in budget allocation for a particular program

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section - Programming

- For **Arts Programs**, please include a list ALL programming that your organization offers (whether arts-based or not). Within this list, indicate what is an arts-based program with an asterisk (*).
- **Arts Programs:** What percentage of your current fiscal year's operating budget is allocated to your arts-based programming?

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section

- **Does your organization have an authorized financial statement for its most recently completed fiscal year at the time of the application?** (Note - If the organization has allowable income of over \$750,000, an audited financial statement will be required as part of the full application. See more details in the Financial and Attachments section) Dropdown: (Yes/No)

GFO Full Application

Eligibility Section

- **Tell us about your organizational structure - click on all the groups that apply to your organization:**
 - A board of directors with officers or another type of governing body
 - Paid staff members (full time, PT, and/or contractual)
 - Volunteers (as staff, committees, etc.)

GFO Full Application

Program Details Section

- Share up to **5 significant updates and/or highlights** about the organization from the past fiscal year. These should include significant changes to mission/vision/goals of the organization, staffing/leadership, operations, programming or other artistic activities, finances, etc. Within your response, include steps the organization has taken to address these changes, and any additional details to why these changes occurred.
- Please note: You must include at least one update, but may include up to five total. If you are a new organization, consider including at least three updates.
- Reminder: If you shared an update in the above section regarding your mission/vision/goals, please update your Organizational Profile with the updated mission/vision/goals

GFO Full Application

Program Details Section

- Optional - Are there any challenges that you'd like MSAC to be aware of, or ways we can support your organization in ways beyond your grant award?

GFO Full Application

Program Details Section

- List up to **5 goals/priorities of the organization** over the next 5 years.
 - Keep in mind indicators of success, ways to measure goals, and/or how you would implement
 - Tell us about the timeframe for completion. These can be short term or long term goals.
For example: "Complete by end of FY26", "By April 2026", "Start in Jan 2026, complete by Dec 2026", etc.
 - Goals/priorities may include activities associated with capacity building, finances, board/staff development, programmatic development, audiences/community engagement, new initiatives, etc.
- Please note: You must include at least one organizational goal, but may include up to five total.

GFO Full Application

Program Details Section

- The stated goals/priorities will later connect to the Final Report of the application
 - You'll be asked for updates in the report
 - Goals don't necessarily need to be completed - but you'll be asked for details on progress
 - The FY27 GFO Final Report will be due on August 15, 2027
 - Keep this in mind when selecting the goals you share

GFO Full Application

Financials Section

In the Financial Table, enter the income and expenses for your arts organization's or arts program's most recently completed Fiscal Year (FY25 or CY24).

- For more information on allowable and non-allowable income/expenses, please refer to the FY27 GFO Guidelines

Financial Table

- Should you need a spreadsheet template of the Financial Table, you can access a copy from a Program Director, and one will be added to the website as a resource in the upcoming weeks.

GFO Full Application

Financials Section

- Are there any significant changes within your financial statement from the previous year?
 - Please share if you've had a 20% surplus/deficit change, significant changes in income sources, or unexpected expenses, etc.

GFO Full Application

Attachments

- Signed Form w-9
- IRS Letter of tax determination
- Most recently completed fiscal year Financial Statement (FY25/CY24)
 - Under \$750K Allowable Income - signed Profit & Loss or similar statement.
 - Over \$750K Allowable Income - audited financial statements
 - Arts Program - additional Arts Program statement

Electronic Signature

GFO Full Application

Financial Statement Attachments

Organizations with Allowable Income **below \$750,000:**

- Submit your most recently completed fiscal year statement, signed by a professional accountant or the organization's fiscal officer.
- This should be a statement showing a full year of income and expenses, such as a Profit & Loss statement.
- NOTE- a Form 990 statement will not be accepted.

GFO Full Application

Financial Statement Attachments

Organizations with Allowable Income **over \$750,000:**

- Submit your most recently completed fiscal year Independent Audit, prepared by a CPA firm.
- If your most recently completed fiscal year audit is not finalized at the time of the application deadline, contact your Program Director prior to the deadline to discuss the option of submitting your audit after the deadline, which must be received by the Program Director on or before **March 1, 2026**. If this is not possible, the organization would be required to submit the previous year's completed audit as part of the application.

GFO Full Application

Financial Statement Attachments

Arts Programs must submit a full organizational statement from the organization or parent organization, along with an Arts Program statement.

- Arts Program Financial Statement should be from the most recent fiscal year - including income/expenses directly connected to your arts programming only, and not the full organization financials.

GFO Next Steps

Grants for Organizations - New Full Application

Starting with the FY27 application cycle, all GFO applicants will complete the SAME application every year (*previously there were “On” and “Off Year” applications that varied from year to year*).

→ All GFO applications will be due on **November 15th** of each year.

Grants for Organizations - New Panelist Role

In the past, Panelists were asked to review and score all written applications. Panelists also conducted “Extension Assignments,” which included Artistic Activity Visits and In-Depth Conversations with applicants. Their work culminated in a Panel Meeting, where the final score of each applicant was discussed and determined.

Panelists will still be involved in the review process, but in a new way:

- Panelists will review (not score) written applications and complete Artistic Activity Visits
- MSAC Staff will review (not score) written applications and complete In-Depth Staff Conversations

Grants for Organizations - New Panelist Role

Artistic Activity Visit— a panelist will attend or view a form of public programming, such as a performance, exhibit or other event that is an example of artistic programming from the organization, once every four years or as determined by MSAC staff if an organization is put into a one-year application cycle.

- The Artistic Activity Visit is not scored.
- It is intended to show evidence of programming that is open to the public and aligns with the written application and the organization's mission/vision/goals.
- Just as in the previous GFO program, artistic quality or excellence is not evaluated during this Visit.
- More details to come on this later in the year.

Grants for Organizations - New Panelist Role

Staff Conversation - MSAC Program Directors for Arts Services will conduct In-Depth Conversations as a required part of the application review process once every four years, or as determined by MSAC staff if an organization is put into a one-year application cycle.

- MSAC staff will speak with organizational personnel, such as staff leadership, board members, etc, to discuss organizational and programmatic development, goals, etc.
- This conversation will last 30 minutes and will be scheduled by MSAC staff. More details to come on this later in the year.

Grants for Organizations - New Review Cycle

The Artistic Activity Visit and Staff Conversation elements of the review process will occur once every four years on a rotating schedule. An example of the review schedule would include:

- **Year 1: Application + Artistic Activity Visit**
- **Year 2: Application Only**
- **Year 3: Application + Staff Conversation**
- **Year 4: Application Only**

Your organization will be assigned to a certain year in the cycle depending on your Artistic Discipline

All NEW organizations (completing the GFO application following the Intent to Apply application) will also complete BOTH the Artistic Activity Visit AND Staff Conversation in their first review cycle. Following that, if approved, they will fall into schedule per Artistic Discipline

Grants for Organizations - New Review Cycle

FY27 Cycle Schedule - By Discipline

→ (A) Required to submit application +
Artistic Site Visit:

- o Dance
- o Folk/Traditions
- o Theatre - Group 1
- o Visual/Media - Group 1

→ (B) Required to submit application only

- o Music - Group 2
- o Service
- o Visual/Media Group 2

→ (C) Required to submit application +
Staff Conversation

- o Literary
- o Multi-Discipline - Group 1
- o Theatre - Group 2

→ (D) Required to submit application only

- o Multi-Discipline - Group 2
- o Music - Group 1

Grants for Organizations - New Review Cycle

Emails were sent in September that shared which Artistic Discipline/Group you are in

- Some Artistic Disciplines are broken into groups due to the size of the overall discipline
- Some Artistic Disciplines have 'merged' (i.e. Music C is now in Music)
- This information is also auto-populated into your GFO application now!

We will share separate recordings later this fall concerning the Artistic Activity Visits and In-Depth Conversation requirements

- We will discuss timing, scheduling, etc at that time

Note: All new organizations will complete BOTH an Artistic Activity Visit and In-Depth Conversation in their first review cycle. Any organization can also have one or both of these elements added to their review process, as determined by the Program Director.

Grants for Organizations - Timeline

October 9: FY27 GFO Application opened within Smart Simple; Intent to Apply notifications were sent

November 15 at 11:59pm: GFO Application due

January - April: MSAC staff reviews your application and financials. Panelists and Staff complete assigned Site Visits and In-Depth Conversations

May/June: Recommendations for funding are made to the Council by staff; grant amounts are determined based on MSAC's budget

After July 1: Notifications of all FY27 GFO grants are sent via Smart Simple

August 15: (FY26) Final Report due; Final Report from the previous fiscal year has to be approved before FY27 disbursement can be processed

Ongoing: MSAC staff are available to answer questions, provide support, meet with staff/board, attend programs and events, etc.

Creativity Grant for General Operating Support

With the revision of the GFO program, the Creativity Grant for General Operating Support will be closing permanently on **December 31, 2025**.

→ All General Operating Support for Arts Organizations/Programs will be housed under the GFO program moving forward.

→ The Creativity Grant for Project-Based Support will continue! If you do not receive General Operating Support or are not eligible for the GFO program, you can still choose this as an option for Project Support.

GFO Funding Formula & FAQs

GFO - Previous Funding Formula

Total Allowable Income x Panel % x Cap Allocation % = Grant Award

- Total Allowable Income: provided by organization within the annual application, based on updated statements
- Panel Score %: determined through the On Year application review process every 3 years
- Cap Allocation %: determined by MSAC GFO budget and organization Tier each year

Example:

$\$500,000 \times 90\% \times 7\% = \$31,500$

GFO - Revised Funding Formula

Total Allowable Income x ~~Panel %~~ x Cap Allocation % = Grant Award

- Total Allowable Income: provided by organization within the annual application, based on updated statements
- Cap Allocation %: determined by MSAC GFO budget and organization Tier each year

Removing the Panel % will leave two variables to determine awards each year

GFO - Equitable Funding Formula

Grant = Allowable Income x Panel % x **Cap Allocation %**

Cap Allocation %s are based on budget size, with organizations divided into five budget Tiers.

Tier 1: (**\$10K*** - \$500K) **previously \$50K-\$500K*

Tier 2: (\$500K - \$1.5M)

Tier 3: (\$1.5M - \$5M)

Tier 4: (\$5M - \$10M)

Tier 5: (\$10M+)

****moving into year 4 of 5 year transition that started in FY24***

GFO - Equitable Funding Formula

Grant = Allowable Income x ~~Panel %~~ x **Cap Allocation %**

Grant Amount Cap:

Year 1: \$1.4M; Year 2: \$1.3M; Year 3: \$1.2M; **Year 4: \$1.1M**; Year 5: \$1M

Transition Priorities (over 5 year transition in alignment with program allocation):

- Tier 1 increases at a faster rate during the 5 year transition.
- Tier 2 increases steadily over the 5 year transition.
- Tier 3 remains stable during the transition.
- Tiers 4 & 5 do not decrease at a rate greater than 1.5% annually.

GFO Scoring % Phase Out Schedule

In an effort to support the budget and funding stability of GFO organizations over 3 years.

Fiscal Year	FY26 Scores of 90%+	FY26 Scores of 80% to 89%	FY26 Scores of 70% to 79%
FY27	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)	Rounded up to 90% in funding formula	Rounded up to 80% in funding formula
FY28	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)	Rounded up to 90% in funding formula
FY29	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)

Larger organizations (Tiers 4 and 5 - \$5 million+) who join the GFO program as **New Organizations** in FY27 - FY29 would also have a “phased in” process to the funding formula to ensure budget stability within the program.

Fiscal Year	Grant Amount
FY27	Would be eligible for 70% of total grant amount
FY28	Would be eligible for 80% of total grant amount
FY29	Would be eligible for 90% of total grant amount
FY30	New orgs could be eligible for 100% of total grant amount (end “phase in” process)

Match Requirements

Previously, all GFO grants had a required 3:1 match in cash (excludes funds or services from the State and in-kind contributions). This match is checked by Program Directors in the Final Report.

NEW - the Match Requirement will be based on the organization's Tier in the GFO program

- Tier 1 and Tier 2 organizations (less than \$1.5 million in total allowable income) must match GFO funds at least **1:1 in cash**
- Tier 3, 4, & 5 organizations (allowable income \$1.5 million+) must match GFO funds at least **3:1 in cash**
- Funds or services from the State of Maryland, In-kind contributions, or donated services may not be used as part of the match

FAQs

GFO - FAQs

I've received GFO funding for the current year (FY26), do I need to complete an Intent to Apply?

No - you are already considered in the program. Only new organizations or organizations who did not receive GFO funding for FY26 are required to complete the Intent to Apply

I just have a one-time activity that needs support, should I apply to GFO?

Probably not – GFO funding is to support the ongoing general operations of our arts organizations and programs. There is likely another program that will fit the one-time request for support.

GFO - FAQs

Do I need to submit an audit with my application?

Possibly - all organizations have to submit a financial statement(s) from the last completed fiscal year. Those with income under \$750K can submit a signed statement such as a Profit & Loss; those with income over \$750K are required to submit a board-approved audit with their application.

My organization's planned budget for the upcoming year is over \$10K, can I apply for GFO funding? Maybe - but keep in mind that the GFO program looks back to your most recently completed fiscal year financials (actuals). When determining funding, we only review completed financials. If the total allowable income for the last fiscal year is under \$10K, you would not be eligible for consideration at this time.

Smart Simple & Questions

Smart Simple

All applications must be submitted through Smart Simple
(marylandarts.smartsimple.com)

As an applicant, you will need to register with Smart Simple to apply.

Login

✉ Email

✉ Password

Login

[Forgot Password?](#)

New to the System?

Register

Welcome to Maryland State Arts Council Portal

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) encourages and invests in the advancement of the arts for all Marylanders. Its grants and programs support artists and arts organizations in their pursuit of artistic excellence, ensure the accessibility of the arts to all citizens and promote statewide awareness of arts resources and opportunities.

Google Chrome is the recommended browser for completing applications in SmartSimple.

Go to marylandarts.smartsimple.com to register and/or log-in

My Applications

2

Opportunities

0

In Progress

1

Submitted

12

Approved/Declined/Closed

Click on “Opportunities” on your Smart Simple dashboard

Opportunities

×Q 1-11

Opportunity Details

Arts and Entertainment Annual Impact Report

Apply Now

Arts in Education Grant

Apply Now

Creativity Grant - General Operating

Apply Now

Creativity Grant - Project

Apply Now

Grants for Organizations

Apply Now

- Full Application

Touring Grant

Apply Now

Click the **“Apply Now”** button to open the application



1. Click "Save Draft" at the bottom of this screen to begin the application. Please note, you will not be able to begin work on the application until you click "Save Draft."
2. Click "Save Draft" after completing each tab in order to save your work.
3. To navigate between tabs, click on the desired tab or use your browser's back button.
4. Click on the MSAC logo in the top left corner to go back to your profile. Be sure to click "Save Draft" at the bottom of the application prior to returning to your profile page.

Please note: To return to a saved draft application, click "In Progress" from the Grantee Home dashboard. From there, select the draft application to be edited and/or submitted. Do not return to the Funding Opportunities area to search for the grant application again, as this will result in creating multiple applications.



Starting September 1, 2022, the Unique Entity ID (UEI) field will be a REQUIRED field for all organizations (including nonprofit organizations, government entities, and schools/universities) applying for funding from MSAC. This will take the place of a DUNS number, which will no longer appear on organizational profiles. After 9/1, an organization without a UEI may be considered ineligible for funding. Independent Artists do not need to obtain a UEI.

Webinar Video (~57 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLCuPo2cQ4U>

Quick Start Guide: <https://msac.org/media/570/download?inline>

CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM DETAILS

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ATTACHMENTS

ELECT

SIGNATURES

Grant Contact Name:

NEXT >

Save Draft

✓ Submit

You have to click **"Save Draft"** to begin any application!

Upcoming GFO Office Hours

Friday, October 31st, 10am to 11am (meet.google.com/qjn-hjob-fpx)

Thursday, November 6th, 2pm to 3pm (meet.google.com/hhy-gwth-ndd)

Friday, November 14th, 10am to 11am (meet.google.com/eap-mvgz-qzn)

Join Program Directors us in an informal space to gather and address any questions that come up along the way regarding the GFO application process. These sessions will not be recorded. Registration is not required - just use the links (which were also emailed to you).

Questions

We are here to help!

Emily: emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov

Laura: laura.weiss@maryland.gov

Thank You!



GRANTS FOR
ORGANIZATIONS

To learn about similar topics, news & to keep in touch, please join our mailing list at tinyurl.com/MSACsMailingList