

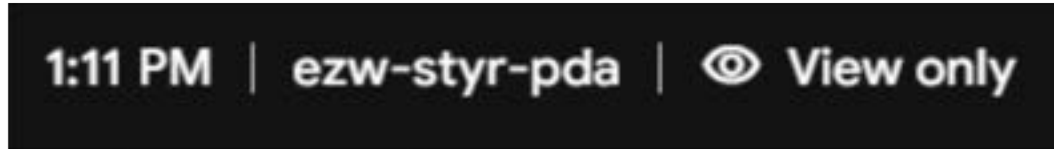
# How to Apply FY26 Grants for Artists

February 18, 2026 at 1:00 pm

**Presented by:**

**Jess Porter, Senior Program Director, Maryland State Arts Council**

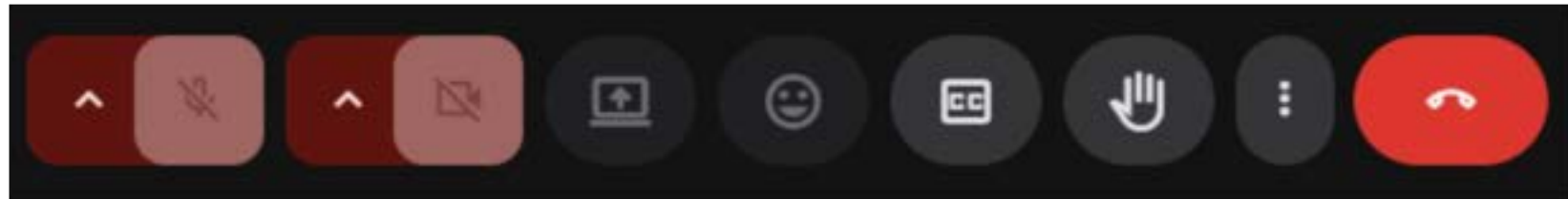
# Reference Shot of Features (1 of 2)



Time

Meeting code

Guest status



Audio settings

Video settings

Share screen

Share reactions

Closed captions

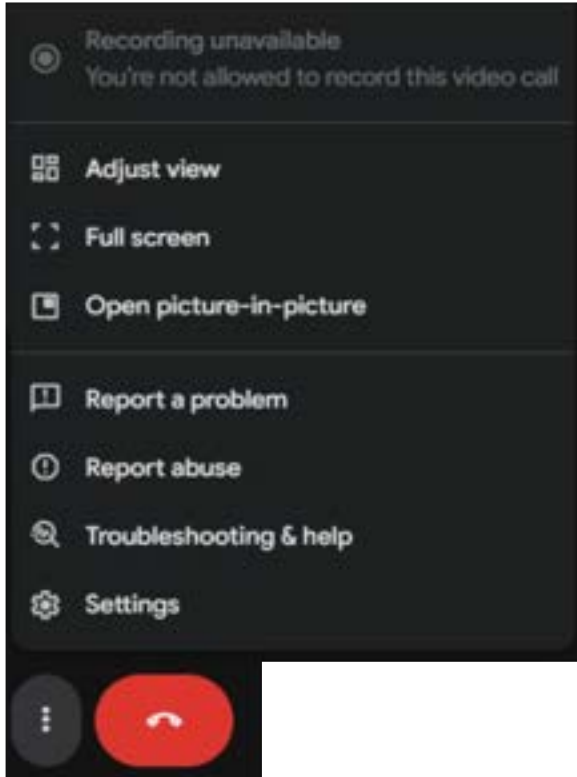
Raise hand

More options

Leave meeting

In keeping with State of Maryland guidance on generative AI, please do not use AI to record or transcribe. Virtual assistants and notetakers appearing in the meeting will be removed

# Reference Shot of Features (2 of 2)



In 'More options'



Meeting info   Attendees list   Chat messages   Meeting activities

# 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](https://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.

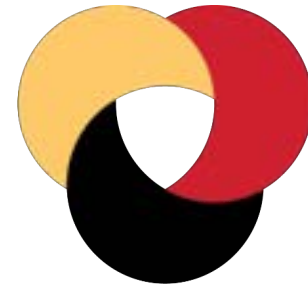
- Panelists review and score applications
- Editors give input on program policies
- Schedule of public calls and details at [msac.org/about/ways-get-involved](https://msac.org/about/ways-get-involved)
- Apply in SmartSimple
- Training and support
- Compensation provided for service



The screenshot shows the MSAC website's 'Ways to Get Involved' page. The header includes the MSAC logo, navigation links for 'SmartSimple', 'News', 'Resource Center', 'Contact', and 'My Profile', and a search icon. A banner image of colorful yarn is at the top with the text 'EXPLORE THE ARTS IN MD'. Below the banner, the page title 'Ways to Get Involved' is displayed, followed by a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > About > Ways to Get Involved'. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Public Calls: Paid Opportunities' and 'Employment Opportunities'. Under 'Public Calls: Paid Opportunities', there are two expandable sections: 'Panelists' and 'Editors', each with a plus icon to its right. Under 'Employment Opportunities', there is one expandable section: 'Current Openings', also with a plus icon to its right. The footer contains the MSAC logo, social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and links for 'Privacy', 'Terms of Use', 'Accessibility', 'Careers', and 'Translate'. The copyright notice at the bottom right reads '© 2023 Maryland State Arts Council'.

# Today's Agenda

- Grants for Artists (GFA) Program Overview
- What's New for FY26
- Guidelines: Eligibility and Use of Funds
- Application Form and Review Criteria
- Smart Simple Grant Platform
- Q&A



**GRANTS FOR ARTISTS**

# Program Overview

Grants for Artists (GFA) annually awards **\$2,500 grants** to eligible independent artists to be used towards **working or living expenses**.

- Support is holistic, not tied to a particular product or project.
- Applications collect info to evaluate eligibility (general, artistic practice, spending plan). No detailed budget or project description required.
- Applications are not evaluated for merit or “scored”.
- Grant awards are distributed to eligible applicants through a randomized selection process.

# FY26 Grants for Artist

GFA is an **annual** grant program.

FY26 Grant Cycle Timeline:

- Opened: February 10, 2026
- **How to Apply Webinar - Today!**
- Deadline: **March 9, 2026**
- Application Review: March - April 2026
- Notification: April 2026
- Grant be spent or obligated: August 15, 2026
- Final Report: August 15, 2026



# What's New for FY26

The following program updates were made between the FY25 and FY26 grant cycles:

- Capital expenses (for home or workspace-related improvements) and purchases of permanent equipment are now eligible expenses.
- To ensure fair geographic representation, grants are allocated proportionally based on the # of eligible applications from applicants residing in each county or jurisdiction.
- 2 work samples are now required and social media (such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) is no longer accepted as an eligible work sample.

## Eligibility

**Eligible applicants must be an independent artist**, an artist making work unaffiliated with an institution or an organization, and....

- Currently engaged in a sustained artistic practice in a discipline supported by MSAC, including forms of dance, music, visual art, public art, folk and traditional arts, media arts, literary arts, and theatre.
- Maryland residents who are 18 or older.
- In good standing with MSAC.

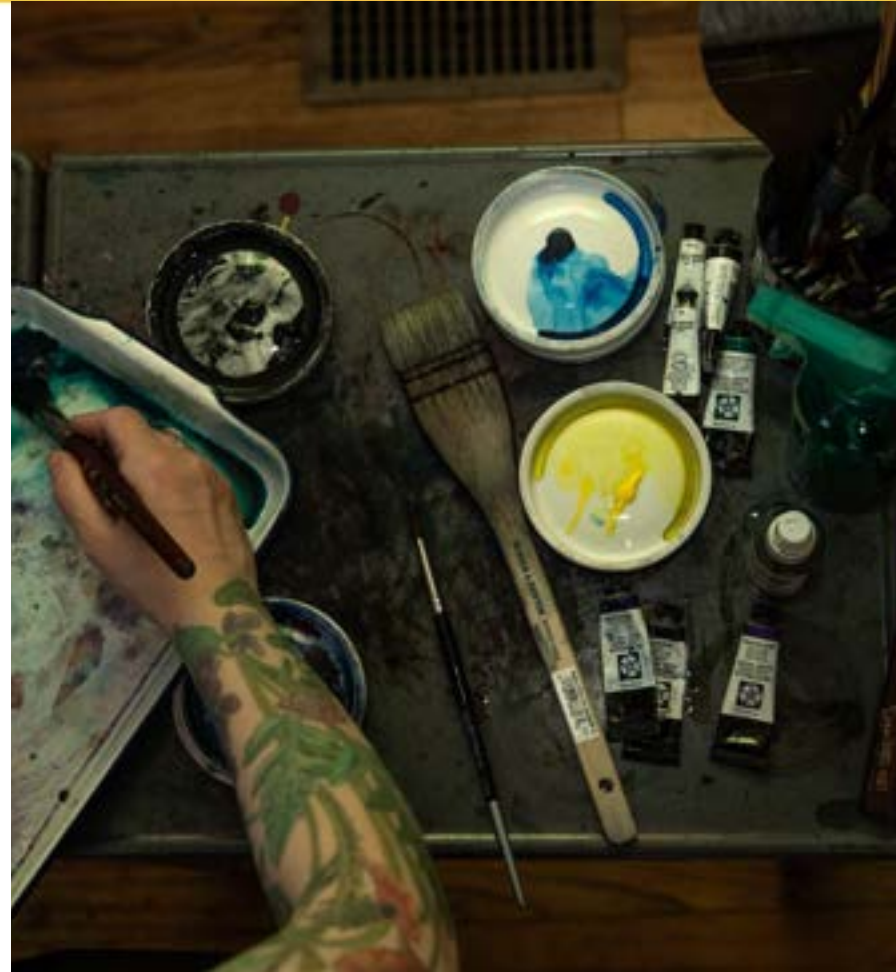
**Sustained:** the artistic practice is ongoing, active, and intentional over time, *rather than* occasional or solely historical.

## Eligibility

### Applicants must not be:

- Enrolled in any matriculated high school, undergraduate or graduate degree program.
- A recipient of a GFA award in the most recent cycle.
- Collaborative groups, though members may apply individually.

Image features Joanna Barnum, a FY25 GFA recipient, in home studio. Credit: Human Beings Productions (HBP), 2025



## Use of Funds

Grant funds may be used for artists' **working** or **living expenses** with a few restrictions.

Image features Lisa Naas, a FY25 GFA recipient, in home studio. Credit: HBP, 2025



## Eligible Working Expenses

- Administrative costs
- Consultant fees
- Contractual services
- Entry fees
- Equipment or equipment rental
- Exhibition costs
- Financial tools or planning
- Studio or workspace costs  
(including capital expenses)
- Materials and supplies
- Marketing costs
- Payment to technical crews,  
fabricators, or collaborators
- Professional memberships
- Performance costs
- Production costs
- Submission fees for grant or  
residency applications
- Travel and transportation
- Website development

## Eligible Living Expenses

- Childcare services
- Food
- Housing
- Home improvement projects or capital expenses
- Insurance
- Medical costs
- Students loans
- Utilities

Image features Barbara Perez Marquez, a FY25 GFA recipient. Credit: HBP, 2025



## Grant Funds May Not Be Used For



- Activities related to regular, ongoing employment.
- Political contributions (candidates, parties, PACs).
- Political campaigns or referendums.
- Lobbying.
- Projects or activities completed before applying.
- Expenses already funded by another MSAC grant.

Image features Lisa Naas, a FY25 GFA recipient.  
Credit: HBP, 2025

# Application Overview

**Must be submitted via SmartSimple  
by March 9, 2026.**

Application sections:

1. General Eligibility Screen
2. Artist Details
3. Work Samples
4. Financial Info / Spending Plan
5. W-9
6. Signature verification



Image features Dinah Myers Schroeder, a FY25 GFA recipient. Credit: HBP, 2025

# Review and Grantee Selection

1. Applications are reviewed for eligibility by MSAC staff.
2. Geographic Allocation
  - a. Staff calculate the % of eligible applications submitted from artists in each county/jurisdiction.
  - b. Grants are distributed proportionally based on that percentage.
3. Grantees are selected at random from within each county/jurisdiction pool.

**Example:**  
**If 10% of eligible applications come from Worcester County, ~10% of awards go to Worcester County.**

# Application Form

## General Eligibility

1. Are you a MD resident, are you 18 years of age or older? **YES**
2. Are you enrolled in a degree-granting high school, undergraduate, or graduate program? **NO**
3. Are you applying for this grant in support of activities that are affiliated with or on behalf of an entity (e.g., nonprofit organization, LLC, institution, government agency, etc.)? **NO**
4. Were you awarded the Grants for Artists grant in 2025? **NO**

# Application Form

## Artist Details

1. Select the discipline(s) or category that best fits your work as an independent artist.

Dance

Folk & Traditional Arts

Literary Arts

Media Arts

Music

Public Art

Theatre

Visual Art

Other (please explain)

2. Include a brief description of your work as an independent artist, the type(s) of art you create, and your ongoing engagement in your artistic practice.

# Application Form

## Artist Details Review Criteria

**Eligible:** Applicant indicates and describes a sustained artistic practice within an artistic discipline supported by MSAC.

**Ineligible:** Applicants may be considered ineligible if they indicate a practice that is not within an artistic discipline supported by MSAC or they describe a practice that is occasional or solely historical in nature.

# Application Form

## Work Samples

Submit 2 work samples of your **original work** that reflect your current, sustained practice as an independent artist.

- Submissions must include a brief description of your role in the provided work sample and how the sample reflects your described artistic practice.
- Samples may be of completed works created within the last 5 years of the application deadline *or* works in progress.

# Application Form

## Work Samples

For GFA, **original work** refers to work that reflects the applicant's own creative practice and artistic choices, whether as an artwork or as the interpretation or performance, of existing works, compositions, choreography, or traditional practice. Submitted creative outputs must not be copies or simple reproductions of another artist's work, though they may incorporate existing source material if it is substantially transformed to create something new. Applicants will be asked to certify that all submitted work samples represent their own original creative outputs.

# Application Form

## Work Samples Review Criteria

**Eligible:** Works submitted are in accepted formats, complete with the required description, and the work is either in-progress or completed within the past 5 years.

**Ineligible:** Work is not in the required format, not original to the applicant, the description is incomplete or is not clearly representative of the practice described, or one or more of the submissions was created or was a work in progress over five years ago. Work submitted is entirely generated by AI.

# Work Sample Requirements

## Direct Website Links

Acceptable links must lead to work samples that are clearly attributed to the applicant and publicly accessible (**no login required**).

- An artist website or online portfolio.
- An independent artist profile listing (such as the Baker Artist Portfolios or MSAC's Presenting and Touring Roster or Public Art Roster).
- For performing artists: direct links to work samples hosted on platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, or similar.

# Work Sample Requirements

## File Uploads

Acceptable formats:

- Image
- Audio
- Video
- PDF or Word Document

Max file size: 500 MB

Image features artwork by Joanna Barnum, a FY25 GFA recipient, Credit: HBP, 2025



# Work Sample Selection

Select a type of documentation that best represents your artistic practice.

- **Visual documentation:** Images of artwork, installations, or exhibitions.
- **Audio or video recordings:** Excerpts from performances, rehearsals, compositions, or other time-based work.
- **Written materials:** Excerpts, scripts, scores, or documentation of literary or dramatic work.

Excerpts are acceptable and encouraged for longer works.

# Work Sample Requirements

The following info is required for each work sample:

## **Work Sample Descriptions (in field provided - up to 40 words)**

Briefly describe your role in the work sample provided and how this sample reflects your described artistic practice. For collaborative projects, identify your specific contribution.

## **Work Sample Date (in field provided in format of Year/Month/Date)**

With each submission, include the date the work was completed/performed. For works in progress, indicate the last date you work on this piece.

# Use of AI in Work Samples

- Applicants must disclose whether generative AI was used in any submitted work sample (via a checkbox in the application).
- If AI is used, applicants must:
  - Identify the AI tool(s) used
  - Explain how the tool was used
  - Describe their own artistic decisions and creative control
- Work created with AI as a supportive tool is eligible if the artist retains primary creative control.
- Work samples entirely generated by AI are not eligible.

# Application Form

## Financial Information

1. Indicate how you would use GFA Funding.

**Eligible:** Applicant includes a spending plan consisting of allowable expenditures.

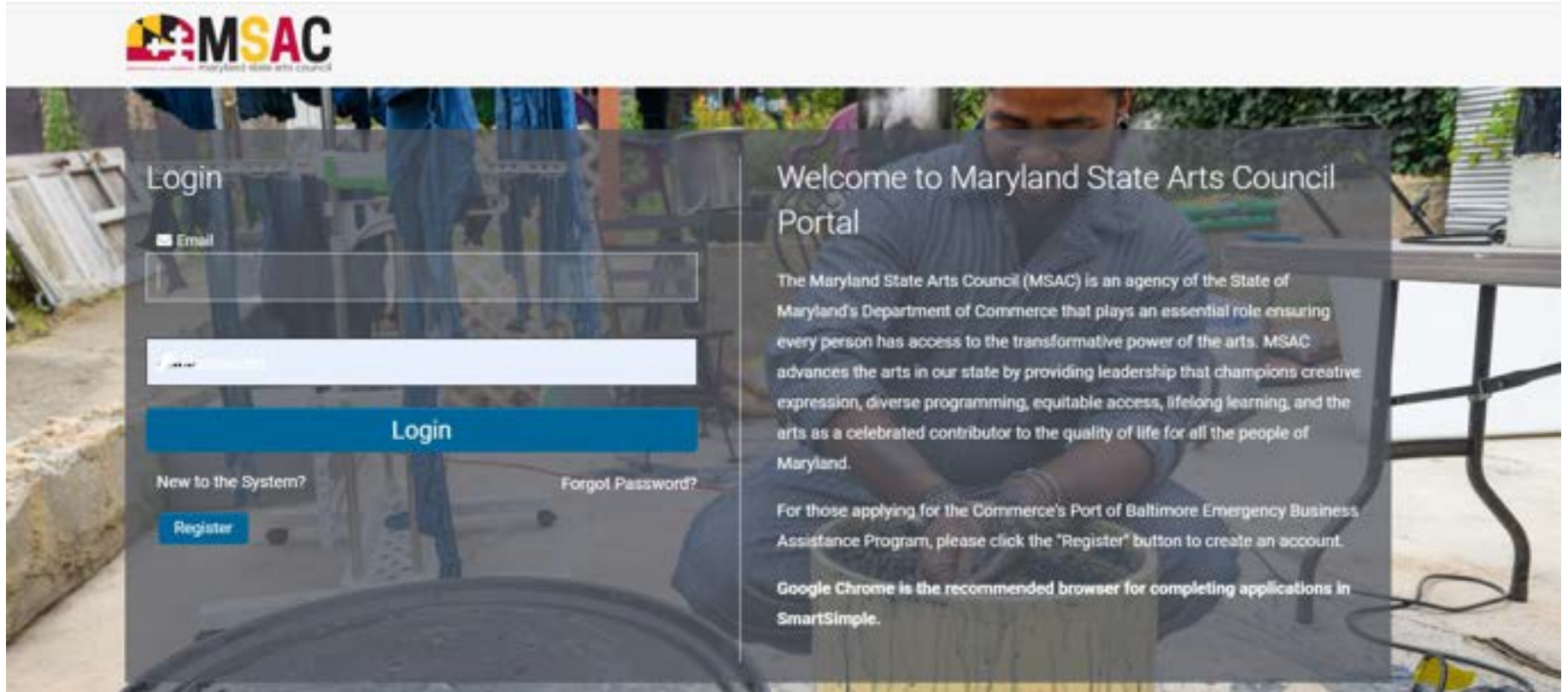
**Ineligible:** Applicant spending plan is either missing, unclear, or unallowable per program guidelines.

# SmartSimple


All applications must be submitted through SmartSimple  
([marylandarts.smartsimple.com](http://marylandarts.smartsimple.com))

As an applicant, you will need to register (if you haven't already)  
with SmartSimple to apply.

# SmartSimple



The screenshot shows the login interface of the Maryland State Arts Council's SmartSimple portal. The background is a photograph of a person working on a wooden project. The interface is overlaid on this image and includes the MSAC logo at the top left. On the left side, there is a 'Login' section with an 'Email' input field, a password input field, and a blue 'Login' button. Below the login fields are links for 'New to the System?' and 'Forgot Password?', with a blue 'Register' button positioned under the first link. On the right side, there is a 'Welcome to Maryland State Arts Council Portal' section. This section contains a paragraph describing MSAC as an agency of the State of Maryland's Department of Commerce, followed by a paragraph for users applying for the Commerce's Port of Baltimore Emergency Business Assistance Program, and a final line recommending Google Chrome as the browser for completing applications.

 Maryland state arts council

## Login

Email

  
  
[New to the System?](#) [Forgot Password?](#)

[Register](#)

## Welcome to Maryland State Arts Council Portal

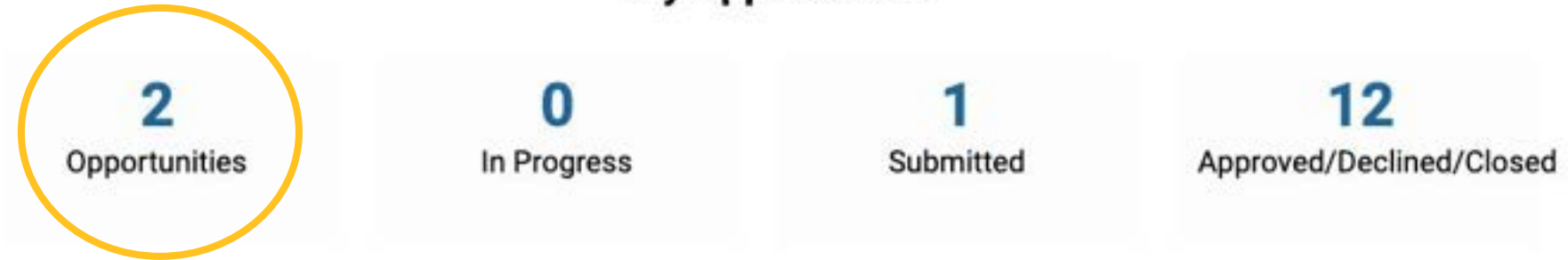
The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is an agency of the State of Maryland's Department of Commerce that plays an essential role ensuring every person has access to the transformative power of the arts. MSAC advances the arts in our state by providing leadership that champions creative expression, diverse programming, equitable access, lifelong learning, and the arts as a celebrated contributor to the quality of life for all the people of Maryland.

For those applying for the Commerce's Port of Baltimore Emergency Business Assistance Program, please click the "Register" button to create an account.

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

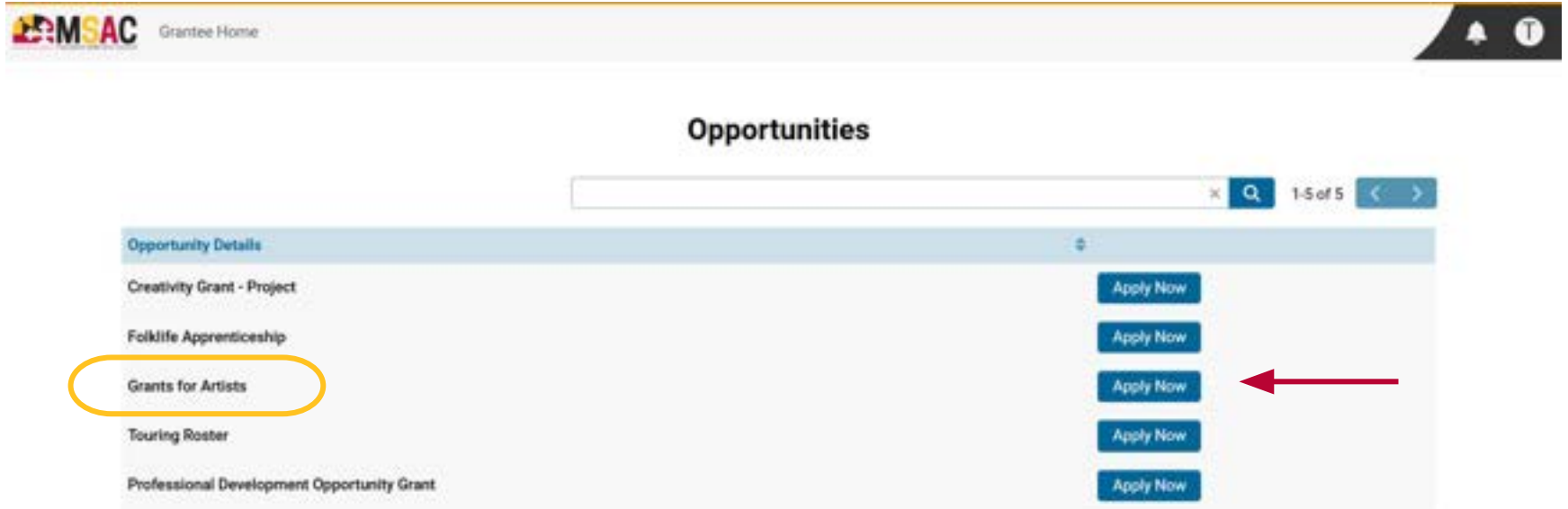
# SmartSimple

## My Applications



Click on **“Opportunities”** on your Smart Simple dashboard

# SmartSimple



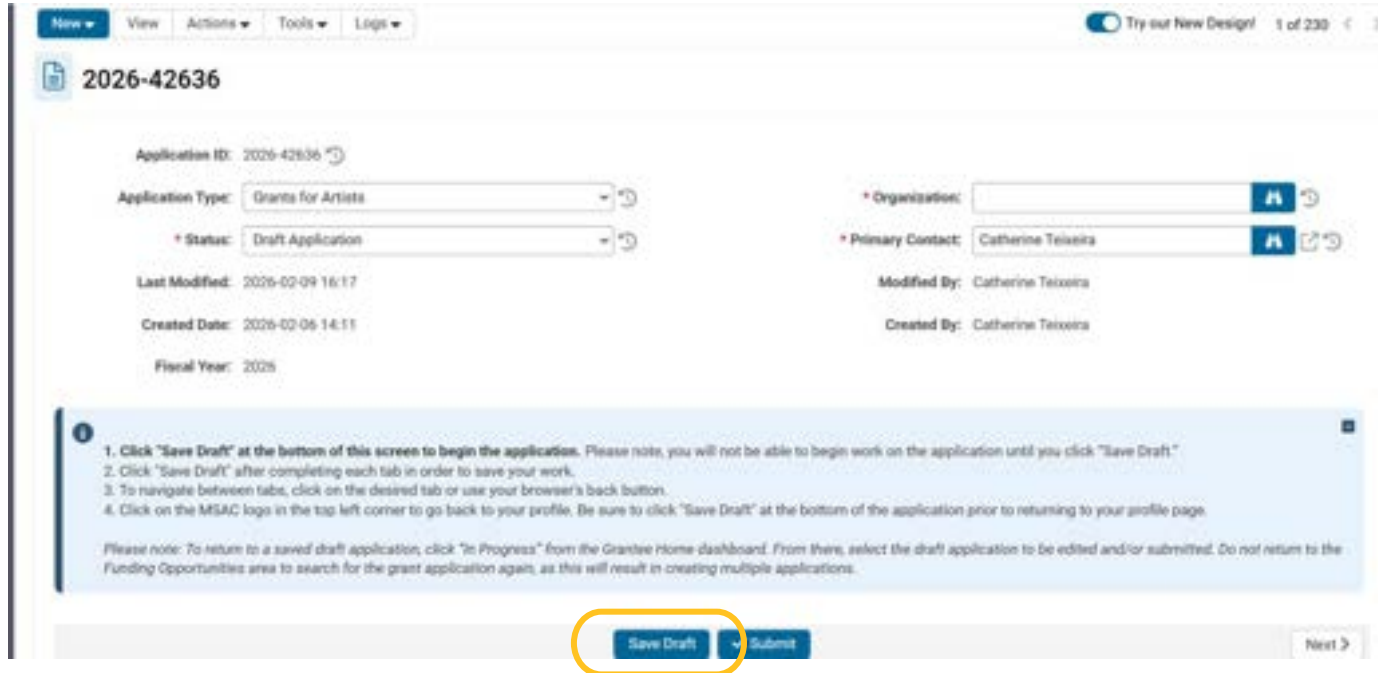
The screenshot displays the 'Opportunities' section of the MSAC SmartSimple portal. At the top, there is a search bar and a notification icon. Below the search bar, a list of opportunities is shown under the heading 'Opportunity Details'. The list includes:

- Creativity Grant - Project
- Folklife Apprenticeship
- Grants for Artists** (highlighted with a yellow oval)
- Touring Roster
- Professional Development Opportunity Grant

Each opportunity has a blue 'Apply Now' button to its right. A red arrow points to the 'Apply Now' button for the 'Grants for Artists' opportunity.

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

# SmartSimple



2026-42636

Application ID: 2026-42636

Application Type: Grants for Artists

\* Status: Draft Application

Last Modified: 2026-02-09 16:17

Created Date: 2026-02-06 14:11

Fiscal Year: 2026

\* Organization:

\* Primary Contact: Catherine Teixeira

Modified By: Catherine Teixeira

Created By: Catherine Teixeira

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.

Save Draft Submit Next

You have to click **“Save Draft”** to begin any application!

# FY26 Grants for Artist

GFA is an **annual** grant program.

FY26 Grant Cycle Timeline:

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- How to Apply Webinar - Today!
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- Grant funds must be spent or obligated: August 15, 2026
- Final Report: August 15, 2026

# Resources

<https://msac.org/programs/grants-artists/>

- [FY 2026 GFA Guidelines](#)
- [FY 2026 Work Sample Guidance](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- *How to Apply* session recording (coming soon)

Image features Barbara Perez Marquez, a FY25 GFA recipient. Credit: HBP, 2025



# Questions

**We are here to help!**

[jess.porter@maryland.gov](mailto:jess.porter@maryland.gov)

# Thank You!

Join our mailing list!



[tinyurl.com/MSACsMailingList](https://tinyurl.com/MSACsMailingList)