



Arts & Entertainment (A&E) Districts Operating Support FY2024 Guidelines

DEADLINE(S): April 1, 2023

SUPPORT PERIOD: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



Individuals who do not use conventional print may contact the Maryland State Arts Council to obtain this publication in an alternate format. 410-767-6555 or msac.commerce@maryland.gov



For individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
TTY: Maryland Relay 1-800-735-2258 or 711

This publication is available as a PDF file on the MSAC website: www.msac.org.

Maryland State Arts Council

Overview

The Maryland State Arts Council (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.

The Council comprises an appointed body of 17 citizens from across the state, 13 of whom are named by the Governor to three-year terms that may be renewed once. Two private citizens and two legislators are appointed by the President of the Senate and by the Speaker of the House. All councilors serve without salary.

To carry out its mission, MSAC awards grants to not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations for ongoing arts programming and projects. MSAC also awards grants to individual artists and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. MSAC reserves the right to prioritize grant awards.

MSAC receives its funds from an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. and, on occasion, contributions from private, non-governmental sources.

Authority

MSAC is an agency of the State of Maryland under the authority of the Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts.

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lieutenant Governor
R. Michael Gill, Secretary
Signe Pringle, Deputy Secretary
Thomas B. Riford, Assistant Secretary
Steven Skerritt-Davis, Executive Director, MSAC

Mission and Goals

MSAC's mission is to advance 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's most recent strategic plan outlines five goals:

1. Increase Participation: Broaden MSAC's constituency, providing avenues designed to increase pathways to engagement.
2. Provide Intentional Support: Embrace thoughtful and targeted approaches to serving known and yet to be known MSAC constituents.
3. Build Capacity: Work strategically to further build organizational and governance capacity to ensure that MSAC is capable of vigorously delivering on its mission.
4. Leverage Connections: Further enhance current relationships and involve additional collaborators, and constituents who will benefit from and advance the work of MSAC.
5. Bolster Maryland Arts: Showcase the high caliber, diverse and relevant work of Maryland's artists and arts organizations; their contributions to community vitality and MSAC's role as a catalyst.

Visit the About Us page at msac.org to read the full strategic plan and learn more about implementation actions.

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) and its supporting collaborators are committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our organizations 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, class, language, and/or ability.

The driving goals of MSAC's granting processes are:

- To yield a greater variety of funded projects
- To eliminate biases that may be found in any part of the granting process (e.g., applications, panelist procedures, adjudication systems)
- To acknowledge positions of privilege while questioning practices, shifting paradigms of status quo arts activities, and taking more risks
- To expand deliberations to include criteria beyond current conventions or Western traditions

Accessibility Policy

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is committed to making sure all Marylanders can access our programs and services. Everyone is welcome, and all events and activities sponsored by or operated within MSAC must be fully accessible both physically and programmatically. MSAC complies with all applicable disability-related statutes and regulations and seeks to ensure meaningful participation by all Marylanders regardless of need or ability.

Feedback Procedures

If guests would like to provide general feedback to MSAC about accessibility for MSAC's programs or programs funded by MSAC, contact MSAC at msac.commerce@maryland.gov.

Grievance Procedures

For programs or services provided by MSAC

If a program or service operated by MSAC, facilities operated by MSAC, or public meetings conducted by MSAC are inaccessible to persons with a disability or is illegally discriminatory and you want to file a grievance:

- If you have any questions or would like to discuss the situation before filing a grievance, contact the Accessibility Coordinator.
- To file a formal grievance, contact Dan Leonard, Director of EEO & Fair Practices and ADA Coordinator: daniel.leonard@maryland.gov

For programs or services that are not provided by, but are funded by MSAC

- Communicate the grievance to the sponsoring organization.
- If you think your grievance was not handled appropriately by the sponsoring organization, or if you have not received a response from the organization within thirty (30) days, contact MSAC to file a formal grievance at 410-767-6555 or msac.commerce@maryland.gov.

MSAC will work with you to provide assistance as appropriate.

Accessibility Web Page

MSAC has a dedicated accessibility page on msac.org that includes contact information for the accessibility coordinator, federal and state regulations, the organization's Equity and Justice statement, grievance procedures, an emergency preparedness plan, accommodation policies, and other accessibility resources for artists and arts organizations, and PECS images.

Language Access

MSAC makes language accessibility services available. Services include making translations of grant materials, remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, subtitles, braille translation, translation into languages other than English, and more. Please contact msac.commerce@maryland.gov for more information.

En Español/Spanish: MSAC pone a disposición servicios de traducción y accesibilidad de idiomas. Contacte msac.commerce@maryland.gov para más información.

中文普通话/Mandarin Chinese: 马里兰州艺术委员会(MSAC)提供翻译和语言无障碍服务。请联系 msac.commerce@maryland.gov 了解更多信息。

한국어/Korean: MSAC 는 한국어 지원을 돕고 있습니다. 자세한 문의사항은 msac.commerce@maryland.gov 로 연락 주시기 바랍니다.

Professional Grants Review Panels

To assist the Council in its decision-making, professionals in the arts are appointed to a variety of grants review panels. The function of panels is to evaluate applications from organizations and individuals and to offer policy recommendations to the Council. Each year, MSAC publishes an open call, and more than 100 individuals serve as grants review panelists for the Council's programs, including Grants for Organizations, Arts in Education, Independent Artist Awards, Public Art Across Maryland, Creativity Grants, Maryland Touring Grants, Maryland Touring Artist Roster, Maryland Traditions grants, and County Arts Development. Anyone wishing to serve should visit msac.org for detailed information and application forms for any open calls.

Staff

MSAC maintains a professional staff to administer its grants programs and Council-initiated programs. Staff members are available to provide technical assistance to the arts community.

Meetings

All Council and Grants Review Panel meetings are open to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act set forth in Title 3 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The dates, times, and locations of Council and Grants Review Panel meetings may be obtained from the MSAC website at www.msac.org or by contacting MSAC offices at (410) 767-6555.

Requirements For Grant Recipients

- Must comply with Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that no persons, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to, the arts.
- Must comply with Title IV, Section 1681, of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or age.
- Must maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant.
- Must have filed a satisfactory reporting with MSAC for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- Must file a final report in alignment with the program requirements. Necessary reporting methods will be provided by MSAC in ample time to meet the deadline. Failure to report may jeopardize any future grant being received by the organization and may result in the organization being required to repay grant funds.

- Must give credit to MSAC in accordance with the [Recognition Guidelines](#) whenever and wherever credit is being given.
- Must notify the appropriate MSAC staff person in writing if a significant change is made in any MSAC-funded program or project.

Accessibility Requirements for Grant Recipients

Grantees must ensure that any programming remains accessible to all, and if needed, conduct programs in accessible venues other than their own organization in order to meet accessibility requirements. Grantees are required to:

1. Comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, as amended.
2. Prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin; or (b) gender expression, sex, or age, except when age or sex constitute a bona fide occupational qualification; or (c) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.
3. Designate an Accessibility Point of Contact to ensure compliance, receive accommodation requests, and document grievances, and publish direct contact information for the Point of Contact to the public.
4. Create and publicly share a grievance procedure to allow stakeholders to address any events or programs that are inaccessible.
5. Upon request, submit documentation of operations and compliance with the above.

Notice: Certain personal information requested by the Department of Commerce is necessary in determining eligibility for grants. Failure to disclose this information may result in the denial of one or all of these benefits or services. Availability of this information for public inspection is governed by the provisions of the Maryland Public Information Act, Title 4 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This information will be disclosed to appropriate staff of the Department, or to public officials, for purposes directly connected with administration of the program for which its use is intended. Such information is routinely shared with state, federal, or local government agencies.

Appeals Process

MSAC takes great care during the grant review process to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, a grant request may be reconsidered if a procedural impropriety or error has affected its review.

Grounds for such reconsideration are:

- A decision based on review criteria other than those stated in these guidelines.
- A decision based on material provided to panelists and/or Councilors that was substantially incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete despite the applicant having provided the staff with correct, accurate, and complete application information.

Based on the above, if an applicant believes there is legitimate reason for an appeal, the following steps must be taken:

- The applicant must discuss the problem with the program director who handled the application.
- To pursue an appeal, the applicant must write a letter to the MSAC Executive Director within 60 days following receipt of the grant award or denial letter requesting a reconsideration of the Council's decision and stating the grounds for the request.

- The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 90 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

A&E Districts Program Overview

A&E Districts Program Goal

The State's goal for the A&E Districts program is to develop, promote, and support diverse artistic and cultural centers in communities throughout Maryland that preserve a sense of place, provide unique local experiences, attract tourism, and spur economic revitalization and neighborhood pride.

Strategies supported by the program include but are not limited to:

- creating accessible and unique arts destinations;
- leveraging the State's regional identities, natural resources, and heritage;
- facilitating opportunities for dynamic arts experiences that actively engage community members and attract visitors;
- enabling artists of all disciplines to live, work, and create an economically prosperous future; and
- investing in the power of place.

In addition, A&E Districts further Maryland's goals of reinvesting in existing communities and creating places that help people, businesses, the economy, and the environment thrive as articulated in the Maryland Department of Planning's [Reinvest Maryland](#) strategy. To this end, districts must be located within Priority Funding Areas and are expected to carefully coordinate with local plans and policies for economic development, including by thoughtfully engaging with other state designation programs.

Activities

MSAC recognizes that each A&E District is designated to promote its unique identity and leverage local connections to further its own goals as well as the designation program's goal. Districts may engage in a variety of activities in the course of this work, as determined by local needs and opportunities. This work ultimately networks the district in order to maintain a healthy ecosystem of artists, businesses, and spaces. Activities of A&E Districts may include:

- General promotion of the district, its benefits, and the activities and businesses within it
- Event/festival production and management
- Business attraction
- Providing support services for local artists (local artist registries, connections between artists and businesses, professional development workshops, etc.)
- Providing arts-related support services for businesses (creating opportunities and connecting non-arts businesses with artists, attracting and promoting arts-related businesses, etc.)
- Public art project management and implementation
- Promoting available real estate
- Managing partnerships/collaborations
- Facilitating coordination with overlapping designation programs (e.g. Main Streets Maryland)
- Other general activities, including: fundraising, board management, advocacy, etc.

Expectations

The expectations of MSAC and of A&E Districts receiving operating support outlined below are intended to support A&E Districts' abilities to best serve their local constituencies and meet district goals while furthering the State's goal for the program.

MSAC is responsible for:

- Providing funding, guidance, resources, and support to aid in the creation and implementation of A&E Districts long-term planning efforts.
- Providing tools and resources to aid in A&E Districts' infusion of equity and justice in all aspects of their work.
- Maintaining MSAC grantmaking and reporting schedules, facilitating A&E Districts' access to MSAC application and reporting materials, and providing technical support as needed.
- Soliciting professional development needs and providing professional development opportunities for A&E District managers as well as technical assistance to individual districts and their constituents as needed or requested.
- Publicizing A&E Districts' opportunities, programs, and events.
- Sharing the impact of A&E Districts statewide.
- Responding to local needs and concerns communicated by A&E Districts through scheduled reports and other communications.
- Making at least one site visit per fiscal year to each district to meet with leadership, board, and/or constituents to assess needs and share ideas and opportunities.

Each A&E District is responsible for:

- Adhering to all grantmaking, crediting, and reporting requirements, as communicated by MSAC.
- Maintaining programs, events, projects, communication tools, vendors, and resources that are responsive to identified needs of the community and equitably benefit all district constituents.
- Maintaining a website or website page that publicizes the A&E District as well as its tax credits and other incentives, opportunities, and events, with links to MSAC's site and relevant opportunities for local constituents.
- Maintaining a distribution list of local constituents.
- Sending regular communications (email, social media, and/or print, etc.) promoting A&E District and MSAC opportunities.
- Maintaining a current profile page on MSAC's website.
- Notifying MSAC at least two months ahead of deadlines of available local grant opportunities relevant to artists.
- Providing MSAC with ongoing updates of local needs and concerns through scheduled reports and additional communications.
- Arranging at least one site visit per year for MSAC to meet with A&E District leadership, board, and/or constituents to assess needs and share ideas and opportunities.

A&E Districts Operating Support Grant Overview

Grant Purpose

Arts & Entertainment Districts Operating Support (AEDOS) grants provide financial support to the management entities of Maryland's designated Arts & Entertainment (A&E) Districts to support the district and state designation program's goals.

Application Submission and Review Process

Districts submit one of the following forms annually for funding:

- On-Year
 - To request funding in the fifth fiscal year post-designation, district management entities submit updated goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes as well as revised management and marketing plans and a proposed budget for A&E District activities for the next fiscal year.
- Off-Year
 - All other years (including redesignation years), districts submit a shorter application outlining the proposed budget for A&E District activities for the next fiscal year and providing updates as needed.

The A&E Districts Advisory Committee reviews on-year applications, provides feedback and an opportunity for revision (if needed), and recommends funding. MSAC Staff review and recommend off-year AEDOS applications, ensuring that districts' intended use of the funds meets program requirements and providing technical assistance as warranted or requested. Funding recommendations are subject to approval by the Council and the Secretary of Commerce.

MSAC staff, A&E Districts Advisory Committee members, the Secretary of Commerce, or councilors may require an A&E District's management entity to submit an On-Year application in any subsequent fiscal year for reasons including but not limited to: submission of a weak five-year plan, grant noncompliance, or significant changes in budget, programming, operations, or leadership.

If a management entity does not submit an on-year application to request funding for their fifth year post-designation but wishes to apply in a subsequent year, they must submit an on-year application to re-enter the funding cycle.

If the designated management entity of a district changes, the new management entity must submit a on-year application to enter the funding cycle.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for AEDOS funds, the applying entity must be the appointed management entity for a designated A&E District in the State of Maryland. Management entities must be appointed by the county or municipality(ies) holding the A&E designation, and an annual agreement signed by the management entity's leader, the Chief Elected Official (CEO) of the county or municipality(ies), and MSAC's A&E Districts Program Director must accompany the AEDOS application. If the applying entity is not a branch of the county or city's government, it must be registered as a non-profit corporation in Maryland exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. 501(c)(3) management entities are required to submit a current memorandum of understanding or contract affirming the relationship between the municipalities(ies) or county

holding the designation and the management entity that outlines specific responsibilities and any financial arrangements.

Requirements

An A&E District management entity receiving funding is required to:

- work toward the general goals of the program as well as the goals submitted its most recent application for designation, redesignation, or general operating support;
- maintain a Board or Advisory Board of at least five (5) individuals that oversee A&E District activities;
- submit an annual letter of agreement signed by the management entity's leader, the Chief Elected Official (CEO) of the county or municipality(ies), and MSAC's A&E Districts Program Director
- maintain at least one part-time employee whose job responsibilities include oversight of A&E District activities; and
- acknowledge MSAC as a funder.

Allowable/Unallowable Expenses

AEDOS funds may be used for:

- Salaries and administrative expenses
- Events, programming, and projects in the A&E District
- Marketing of the A&E District and/or its businesses, artists, events, etc.
- Regranting to local organizations
- Services for district artists, businesses, and arts organizations
- Other operating expenses

AEDOS funds may not be used for:

- Professional development for A&E district staff (please see MSAC's [Professional Development Opportunity Grant](#) to access funds for this purpose)
- Programming not open to the general public
- Capital asset and capital improvement expenditures*
**refer to MSAC's online glossary for additional information msac.org/resources/msac-glossary*
- Lobbying activities

Grant Amount and Matching Requirement

The Council determines the allocation for AEDOS grant program during its regular budgeting process during the spring preceding each fiscal year. The AEDOS allocation for the fiscal year is divided equally among approved management entities to determine individual grant amounts. The individual grant amount for FY2022 was \$16,571 per district. MSAC staff will be in touch with AEDOS applicants as updates about grant amounts are available.

There is no matching requirement for AEDOS funds. The full grant amount is disbursed upon approval of an application.

Payment

The grantee will receive payment 6 to 8 weeks from the date of receipt of a fully executed Grant Agreement Form. To receive grant payments via direct deposit, please follow the instructions and complete the required forms from the [Comptroller of Maryland](#).

Reporting Requirements

Per legislation, A&E Districts are required to submit an annual report to the State of Maryland, which collects data that MSAC and the Department of Commerce use to calculate the districts' economic impact. AEDOS grantees are required to submit a brief additional grant final report detailing the use of funds. Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current and/or future MSAC grants and may result in the required return of grant funds to the State of Maryland.

Contact Information

MSAC staff offer the following technical assistance throughout the application process:

- Professional development related to grant writing and program requirements
- One-on-one conversations and feedback

Contact Program Director David Mitchell at david.mitchell1@maryland.gov or (443) 934-0544 for assistance

A&E Districts Operating Support Grant Application

SmartSimple

All applications are submitted via the secure online grants management system SmartSimple. Log in or create a free account at marylandarts.smartsimple.com.

- Applicants are required to complete and submit their applications by electronic means, including the use of an electronic signature.
- Technical support for SmartSimple is available during regular office hours.
- Lost, misdirected or late applications are the sole responsibility of the applicant.
- Applicants must meet all revision deadlines after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be withdrawn.

On-Year Application

FY2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

Five Year-Plan

1. Describe the process for developing the district’s five-year plan. Who was involved in its creation, and how was community input solicited and incorporated?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: The plan shows clear evidence of soliciting input from a wide variety of stakeholders and incorporating community input.*
2. What are the district’s goals and objectives over the next five years?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: The district’s goals further the goals of the State program and address identified needs of the district and its constituents.*
3. What strategies will the management entity employ to meet the goals and objectives above? Complete the chart below, listing strategies the district’s management entity will employ to meet the district’s goals, the activities, projects, or programs that align with each strategy and the ways that each strategy aligns with the district’s goals and helps meet the designation program’s goals. Outline the expected timeline for the strategy and anticipated outcomes?

Strategy	District activity(ies), project(s) or program(s) that align with this strategy (<i>identify each as established, new, or planned</i>)	How will the strategy, activity(ies), project(s) or program(s) address the A&E District’s goals and objectives identified above?	How will the strategy, activity(ies), project(s) or program(s) address the goals of the State designation program?	What are the timeline and anticipated outcomes for this strategy?

- *Evaluation Criteria: Strategies are clear, fully address the district’s goals, and help meet the program’s goals. Activities, projects, and programs clearly align with strategies. Timelines are realistic. Outcomes are achievable.*
4. How will the success of the proposed activities be determined? What are the indicators and how will they be evaluated?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: Clear, specific, and realistic indicators of success for the proposed arts activity are communicated as is a clear process for evaluation of these indicators.*

Management Structure

5. What management structure will support the activities outlined above? Include information about paid employees, volunteers, collaborators, board, partners, etc.
 - *Evaluation Criteria: The management structure is clearly outlined and appropriate for the district's size and activities. The structure includes at least one part-time employee whose job responsibilities include coordination of district activities. A board of directors or advisory board - composed of at least five community members and representative of the populations, communities, and constituencies that the district serves - provides oversight of district activities.*

Marketing Plan

6. How will the management entity and the municipality(ies)/county market the proposed district to artists, businesses, and tourists? How will the state designation be recognized and marketed in broader marketing efforts?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: Clear description of a marketing plan that considers marketing the district to artists, businesses, and tourists and will support the activities of the district to help meet its goals.*

Budget

7. Enter the anticipated income and expenses for all A&E District activities in the coming fiscal year?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: The budget is clear and reasonable, given the activities and income sources provided.*

Additional Information

8. Give a brief overview of the district's past five years. Include successes and challenges.
9. What technical assistance from MSAC or the Department of Commerce would be helpful in implementing the district's five-year plan?

Attachments

- Signed Letter of Agreement
- MOU or Contract (for 501(c)(3) management entities)
- Board list and bios
- Staff bios
- Management Entity's Financial Statement or Audit (from the most recently completed FY)
- W9
- IRS Letter of Determination (if applicable)

Off-Year Application

FY2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

District Updates

Narrative Questions:

1. Have the District's goals, management plan, budget, or activities changed significantly since the district's most recent designation or AEDOS application? (Yes/No)
 - a. If yes, provide an update about the District's staffing, goals, activities, budget, etc. Include any changes to goals, management plan, budget, or activities
 - *Evaluation Criteria: Any changes to goals, management plan, budget, or activities are clearly described, in alignment with the program's goals, and serve to strengthen the district and its service to its constituents.*

Activities

2. What activities will be supported with AEDOS funding in the coming fiscal year?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: Clear description of activities that are allowable and align with district goals as stated in the district's most recent designation, redesignation, or AEDOS application.*
3. How will the success of the proposed activities be determined? What are the indicators and how will they be evaluated?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: Clear, specific, and realistic indicators of success for the proposed arts activity are communicated as is a clear process for evaluation of these indicators.*

Budget

4. Enter the anticipated income and expenses for all A&E District activities in the coming fiscal year?
 - *Evaluation Criteria: The budget is clear and reasonable, given the activities and income sources provided.*

Additional Information

5. What technical assistance from MSAC or the Department of Commerce would be helpful in implementing the district's five-year plan?

Attachments

- Signed Letter of Agreement
- MOU or Contract (for 501(c)(3) management entities)
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