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## Grants for Artists FY2025 Guidelines

**DEADLINE: January 17, 2025**

**SUPPORT PERIOD: March 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025**

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This publication is available as a PDF on the MSAC website: [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org).

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# Program Overview

## Purpose

The purpose of the Grants for Artists (GFA) program is to contribute to the sustainability of artists' livelihoods by providing funds that support working or living expenses.

The GFA program aims to provide artists with holistic support rather than support that focuses solely on a particular product or project-based needs. A primary goal of the program is to strengthen the creative workforce, which is a vital part of Maryland's economy and culture.<sup>1</sup>

## Grant Cycle

### Funding

GFA grants are \$2,500 each. Grantees will be chosen at random from eligible applications.

GFA grants are available annually.

Grantees of the GFA will receive funding in one payment approximately 6-8 weeks from the date of receipt of a fully executed Grant Agreement Form.

### Support Period

GFA funds support activities taking place during the fiscal year (FY) in which funds are awarded. MSAC's FY 2025 is July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025.

Grantees agree to spend or obligate all funds by June 30, 2025. Obligation means that awarded funds are expended, encumbered, or otherwise legally committed to be used, such that returning the unspent funds would cause the grantee legal harm.

### Use of Funds

Grant funds may be used for:

- Administrative costs, consultant fees, contractual services, daycare services, entry fees, equipment rental, exhibition costs, financial tools or planning, food, housing, insurance, studio or workspace costs, materials and supplies, marketing costs, medical costs, payment to technical crews, fabricators, or collaborators, professional memberships, performance costs, production costs, student loans, submission fees for grant or residency applications, travel and transportation, utilities, website development, and other costs associated with independent artists' working and living expenses

Any applicant with questions about eligible uses of funds is encouraged to reach out to relevant MSAC staff, as listed above

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Activities performed as part of regular, continuing employment with an entity (e.g., non-profit organizations, LLCs, institutions, government agencies, etc.)
- Capital improvements or purchases of permanent equipment
- Activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members
- Contributions to any persons who hold, or are candidates for, elected office

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<sup>1</sup> A resource to assist with understanding this document is the MSAC Glossary, which provides an overview of terms commonly used in MSAC grant guidelines, on the website, and in other published materials. Access the Glossary by [clicking here](#).

- Contributions to any political party, organization, or action committee
- Activities in connection with any political campaign or referendum
- Lobbying activities
- Expenses for activities or projects already completed at the time of grant application
- Expenses for which the applicant has been awarded funds through another MSAC grant program. (i.e., an applicant may only be awarded MSAC funds once for any individual project expense; contact MSAC staff with questions)

## Timeline

The grant timelines below are estimates and may change according to application volume, funding changes, constituent needs, staff capacity, or other factors. Learn more on MSAC's site [by clicking here](#). Subscribe to MSAC communications to be notified of any public information sessions and other program updates [by clicking here](#).

- Applications
  - Publication: December 9, 2024
  - Deadline: January 17, 2025
- Application review
  - January - February, 2025
- Notification
  - late February 2025
- Reports
  - Deadline: August 15, 2025

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be an independent artist and meet the requirements listed below.

Applicants must be:

- Artists who engage in a consistent creative practice, independent of affiliation with a larger organization or institution.
- Maryland residents (i.e., owning or renting residential property in Maryland six months prior to the application's submission and throughout the funded project or program) who are 18 or older; those experiencing homelessness are encouraged to reach out to MSAC staff for details on how to apply.
- In good standing with MSAC at the time of application, have met all reporting and obligations for any MSAC grants previously received.

Applicants must *not* be:

- Enrolled in any matriculated high school, undergraduate or graduate degree program at the time of application and throughout the grant activities outlined in the application.
- Recipient of a FY 2024 GFA award. A grantee receiving funds in FY 2024 must wait until FY 2026 to re-apply to GFA.
- An arts organization or arts program
  - Entities (e.g., non-profit organizations, LLCs, institutions, government agencies, etc.) are not eligible for support through the Grants for Artists program.
- Collaborative Groups
  - Collaborative groups are not eligible for support through the Grants for Artists program, though members of collaborative groups may apply individually, provided they meet eligibility requirements.

The eligibility guidelines listed above provide an overview only. In some cases, MSAC staff might make eligibility determinations addressing situations not described here but in support of the mission of the agency and the Department of Commerce.

# Application, Review, and Award

## Application and Review

### SmartSimple

Applications are submitted via the secure, online grants management system, SmartSimple. Log in or create a free account by [clicking here](#).

- Except in the situation of certain accessibility requests, as described later in this document, applicants are required to complete and submit 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 any revision deadlines requested after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be withdrawn

### Application form and review criteria

The grant application is a digital form available in SmartSimple and consisting of prompts requiring dropdown menu selections, fill-in answers, and external file uploads.

Application review for GFA is solely based on eligibility. Eligibility criteria correspond with the prompts in the application form. The criteria provide guidance on evaluating an applicant's response to a prompt and determining eligibility.

Application prompts and eligibility criteria are provided below, for reference.

Application prompts	Eligibility criteria
<u>General Eligibility:</u> Are you a Maryland resident (i.e., have you owned or rented residential property in Maryland six months prior to this application's submission), and are you 18 years of age or older?	Eligible: "Yes" Response Ineligible: "No" Response
<u>General Eligibility:</u> Are you enrolled in a degree-granting high school, undergraduate, or graduate program?	Eligible: "No" Response Ineligible: "Yes" Response
<u>General Eligibility:</u> 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.)?	Eligible: "No" Response Ineligible: "Yes" Response
<u>General Eligibility:</u> Were you awarded the Grants for Artists grant in 2024?	Eligible: "No" Response Ineligible: "Yes" Response
Please share one sentence summarizing the purpose of	[Not used for eligibility review]

this grant request.	
<p><u>Artist Details:</u> Select each discipline in which you regularly make work as an independent artist.</p>	<p>Eligible: Applicant makes work within an artistic discipline supported by MSAC and provides a clear description and proof of an eligible artistic practice. This includes a link to a website or social media platform showcasing their work, an up-to-date resume, and/or relevant work samples that demonstrates sustained creative practice.</p>
<p><u>Artist Details:</u> Include a brief, basic description of your sustained work as an independent artist and the type(s) of art you create.</p>	<p>Ineligible: Applicants may be considered ineligible if they do not create work within a supported artistic category, do not provide a clear description of their work as an independent artist, or do not submit sufficient evidence of a sustained creative practice.</p>
<p><u>Artist Details: Proof of Artist Status</u> In what form (site and/or upload) would you like to provide proof of your status/work as an independent artist? [If providing a site link, you must provide the full url link to the website or social media page. A social media handle (@handlename) will not be accepted. Please ensure that your page is visible to the public and matches up with the description you provided.]</p>	<p>Eligible: Applicant includes a spending plan consisting of allowable expenditures.</p> <p>Ineligible: Applicant spending plan is either missing, unclear, or unallowable per program guidelines.</p>
<p><u>Financial Information*</u> Indicate how you would use GFA funding.</p>	

In addition to responding to the prompts above, all applicants are required to submit a current, signed [W-9 form](#) upon application submission. The address on the W-9 form must match the address entered in SmartSimple, both on the application form and under the SmartSimple account profile. If awarded, grant funds will be made payable to the person or entity indicated on the W-9 and sent to the address listed in the form.

### Selection Process

Because GFA support is based primarily on eligibility, as described above, application review is completed by MSAC staff. Eligible applicants are then entered in a selection process through which grantees are determined at random. Therefore, all eligible applicants have the same chance at receiving a grant.

## Award

### Notification

After application review, applicants will be notified of their status as soon as possible, and, if approved, receive instructions to access a Grant Agreement Form (GAF) to review and sign electronically via SmartSimple.

The individual listed as the primary contact in the application will receive all notification. Automated notifications from SmartSimple will be sent from [noreply@smartsimple.com](mailto:noreply@smartsimple.com). Please adjust email notification and security settings to ensure receipt of these notifications. Check your spam folder if a notification has not arrived to your inbox.

## Payment

The payment process begins when the GAF has been fully executed. The grantee will receive notification of full execution from SmartSimple. This notification will include a PDF copy of the fully executed GAF, which will also be accessible in the grantee's SmartSimple profile.

The grantee will receive payment six to eight weeks from the date of notification of the fully executed GAF. More information on MSAC's payment processing timeline can be found by [clicking here](#).

MSAC grants are generally considered taxable income. Payments are issued directly by the State of Maryland, not by MSAC, and no Social Security, state, or federal income taxes are withheld. Individuals receiving grant awards of more than \$600 will receive, via mail, a 1099 form from the State of Maryland. This form will arrive after the end of the calendar year in which the grant was paid. To request or access your 1099 electronically, register and log in on the General Accounting Division (GAD) Online Service Center site by [clicking here](#). Specific questions regarding the taxability of your award should be directed to the IRS, the Office of the Maryland Comptroller, or your tax advisor.

Grantees are encouraged to sign up to receive payment electronically via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Those with existing state vendor profiles can sign up for EFT payments [by clicking here](#) to complete the relevant forms on the Comptroller's site. Typically, those who have previously received MSAC grants have an existing state vendor profile.

New grant recipients will receive grant funds via check made payable to the name and address indicated on the grantee's W-9. They will be able to sign up for EFT for any subsequent payments.

## Payment Status

Grantees are encouraged to deposit grant payment checks immediately. If the grantee has not received payment within eight weeks of notification of a fully executed GAF, the grantee should contact MSAC to inquire about payment status. The grantee is responsible for following up with MSAC staff if payment is not received during the fiscal year in which it was awarded. If the payment was lost in transit, the State of Maryland is able to re-issue payment. However, MSAC is unable to guarantee that funds will be available for re-issue after the end of the fiscal year in which a grant was awarded.

If the grantee owes any Maryland state taxes or other state liabilities, GAD may intercept grant payments and hold them until the liability is resolved. Should this be the case, GAD will send written notice of this directly to the grantee via mail. MSAC is not provided further information, as it is confidential. Grantees can find more information and discuss options with the Central Collections Unit at 410.767.1220 or 888.248.0345.

## Changes in Funded Activities

If there are significant changes to the proposed activities for which a grant has been awarded, the grantee is responsible for contacting relevant staff to inform them of such changes before proceeding. Staff will help ensure that any proposed changes remain in alignment with the GAF and program guidelines.

## Reporting

All grantees must file a final report in SmartSimple. The report will be added to the grantee's SmartSimple profile as soon as the GAF is fully executed.

The final report deadline for GFA grants is August 15, 2025.

The final report form collects information about the grantee and grant activities, including optional demographic information, data for the National Endowment for the Arts, summary of activities and use of grant funds, and other program-specific information and documents, as relevant.

Grant funds may not be used to offset grantees' state liabilities; as such, grantees whose grant payments were intercepted by GAD due to state liabilities, as outlined in the Payments section above, are not exempt from submitting required reports. Grantees must either return the funds to MSAC or follow through with their proposed grant activities and submit reports accordingly.

Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current or future MSAC grants and may result in the required return of grant funds. Before any funds are distributed, grantees are also required to submit any outstanding reports or address requirements for any other MSAC grants they have received.

## Ineligible and Declined Applications

Applications that do not receive funding generally fall into one of two categories: ineligible or declined.

An application is marked ineligible if it is not complete or does not comply with the eligibility requirements of a particular grant program. A rating of ineligible is typically made by staff early in the review process. However, an application can be marked ineligible at any time during the review process.

An application is declined if it is eligible but was not selected for funding through the GFA's randomized selection process. The level of MSAC's funding does not allow for the funding of all eligible applications.

## Contact Information

MSAC staff offer technical assistance throughout the application process. This includes professional development related to grant writing and program requirements; one-on-one conversations; and tailored feedback.

For more information on the GFA application process, contact:

- Program and application strategy assistance
  - Jess Porter, Senior Program Director
    - [jess.porter@maryland.gov](mailto:jess.porter@maryland.gov)
    - 667.355.7983
- Grants logistics and technological assistance
  - Catherine Teixeira, Grants Director
    - [catherine.teixeira@maryland.gov](mailto:catherine.teixeira@maryland.gov)
    - 443.799.7256
  - Tammy Oppel, Grants Management Associate
    - [tammy.oppel@maryland.gov](mailto:tammy.oppel@maryland.gov)
    - 410.326.5555
  - Kirk Amaral Snow, Grants Management Associate
    - [kirk.amaralsnow@maryland.gov](mailto:kirk.amaralsnow@maryland.gov)
    - 410.767.8865



# MSAC Overview

## Description

MSAC is an appointed body of 17 Maryland citizens, 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 nonprofit arts organizations, arts programs, and individual artists, and provides application assistance, professional development, and other resources 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.

Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lieutenant Governor  
Kevin Anderson, Secretary of Commerce  
Steven Skerritt-Davis, Executive Director, MSAC

## Staff

MSAC maintains a professional staff to administer its programs. For staff listing, visit the MSAC website by [clicking here](#).

## Meetings

Council and panelist 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 panelist meetings may be obtained from the MSAC website by [clicking here](#), or by contacting MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) or (410) 767-6555.

## 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 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

[Click here](#) to read MSAC's 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. 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

MSAC is committed to making sure all Marylanders can access its programs and services. Everyone is welcome, and all MSAC events and activities 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. See the "Grantee Requirements" section below for more information on the accessibility-related expectations of all grantees.

### Accessibility Web Page

MSAC has a dedicated accessibility page available by [clicking here](#). It 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, other accessibility resources for artists and arts organizations, and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) images.

### Language Access

MSAC offers language accessibility services. 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 at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) or (410) 767-6555 for more information.

En Español/Spanish: MSAC pone a disposición servicios de traducción y accesibilidad de idiomas. Contacte [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto: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](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) 了解更多信息。

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

## Feedback

If constituents would like to provide general feedback about the accessibility of programs funded or produced by MSAC, contact MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) or (410) 767-6555.

## Grievances

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 a constituent wishes to file a grievance, see the following steps.

- For questions or discussion prior to filing a grievance, contact MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) or (410) 767-6555
- To file a formal grievance, contact Dan Leonard, Director of EEO & Fair Practices and ADA Coordinator for the Department of Commerce, at [daniel.leonard@maryland.gov](mailto: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
- For situations in which a constituent feels a grievance was not handled appropriately by the sponsoring organization, or if a response from the organization has not been provided within 30 days, file a formal grievance by contacting MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) or (410) 767-6555

MSAC will work with constituents to provide assistance as appropriate.

## Grantmaking

### Review Panels

To assist MSAC in its decision-making, Maryland residents with expertise in the arts are selected to serve on a variety of grant application review panels. The function of panels is to evaluate applications from organizations and individuals. Each year, MSAC publishes several open calls, and approximately 150 individuals serve as panelists for MSAC grant programs, including Grants for Organizations, Arts in Education, Independent Artist Awards, Public Art Across Maryland, Creativity Grants, Presenting and Touring, Professional Development Opportunity, Folklife Network, Folklife Apprenticeships, Heritage Awards, Special Requests, Arts Capital, and County Arts Development. In addition, MSAC occasionally releases calls for residents to serve as program editors evaluating grantmaking policies and procedures, and jurors or judges for various arts activities supported by MSAC. Anyone wishing to serve is encouraged to [click here](#) for detailed information and links to application forms for any open calls.

Constituents may also get involved with MSAC by creating a profile on the Arts Directory, an online resource for raising the profile of Maryland artists and arts organizations, by [clicking here](#); or by attending regularly scheduled virtual and in-person professional development sessions by [clicking here](#).

## Appeals

MSAC strives to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial or amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, an application 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 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 notification; the letter should (1) request a reconsideration of the decision, (2) state the grounds for the request, and (3) certify that the applicant first discussed the problem with the program director and provide the date and time the discussion occurred.

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

## Grantee requirements

All MSAC grantees 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
- Comply with Title IX, Section 1681 et seq. of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101-6107, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or age
- Maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant
- Give credit to MSAC in accordance with published recognition guidelines, available by [clicking here](#), whenever and wherever credit is being given
- Notify the appropriate MSAC staff person in writing if a significant change is made in any MSAC-funded program or project

In addition to the requirements above, all MSAC 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:

- Comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, as amended
- Prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin; of (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
- Designate an Accessibility Point of Contact to ensure compliance, receive accommodation requests, and document grievances, as well as publish direct contact information for the Point of Contact to the public

- Create and publicly share a grievance procedure to allow stakeholders to address any events or programs that are inaccessible
- Upon request, submit documentation of operations and compliance with the above

### **Disclosure of personal information**

Certain personal information requested by the Department of Commerce, MSAC's parent agency, is necessary in determining eligibility for grants. Failure to disclose this information may result in the denial of one or all benefits or services, including funding, provided by MSAC. 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 may be shared with state, federal, and local governments if legally required.