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# Professional Development Opportunity Grant FY 2026 Guidelines

Applications accepted  
September 2, 2025 - March 31, 2026

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NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT for the ARTS  

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[arts.gov](http://arts.gov)



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](mailto: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 on the MSAC website: [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org).

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# Program Overview

## Purpose

The purpose of the Professional Development Opportunity Grant Program is to encourage and support relevant professional development opportunities for artists and arts organizations throughout Maryland by embracing the importance of growth, learning, and discovery.<sup>1</sup>

## Grant Cycle

### Funding

The Professional Development Opportunity Grant supports eligible activities of **Independent Artists** and **Arts Organizations**, with grants up to \$2,000.

The Professional Development Opportunity Grant Program accepts applications from September 2, 2025 - March 31, 2026. Applications are panel reviewed on a monthly basis, and Professional Development grants are awarded throughout the fiscal year until allocated funding is depleted. Applicants may only be funded once per fiscal year (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).

Grantees of the Professional Development Opportunity program receive funding in one payment (100% of award amount). Please note that, if approved for funding, 100% of the requested amount will be funded (this program does not offer a portion/percentage of the requested amount).

### Support Period

If awarded funds, grantees agree to spend or obligate all funds by: August 15, 2026 (for applications submitted between September 2025 and December 2025); or December 31, 2026 (for applications submitted between January 2026 and March 2026). 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

Professional Development Opportunity Grant funds may be used for expenses directly associated with the proposed eligible professional development activities, including but not limited to:

- Registration fees
- Artist payment/stipends
- Consultant fees
- Honoraria or contractual services
- Administrative expenses
- Transport
- Artistic materials and supplies directly connected to the learning experience

Examples of eligible Professional Development opportunities supported through the grant program include:

Participation in a

- Class or Workshop
- Conference
- Seminar or artist retreat

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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.

- Hiring a consultant to learn a specific skill or topic

Examples of ineligible opportunities in the Professional Development Opportunity Grant include:

- Participation in an event where sales and/or promotion is the primary goal (i.e. a vendor event, craft fair, etc.)
- Activities where you are leading the Professional Development (i.e. a class that you are teaching)
- Classes that are a part of a degree program
- Learning opportunities that are focused specifically on growth as a classroom teacher (and not as an independent artist)
- Completion of a specific project

If you have questions about eligible activities, please contact MSAC staff for clarification.

Professional Development Opportunity Grant funds may not be used for:

- Re-granting
- Activities that are principally recreational, therapeutic, or rehabilitative
- Travel outside Maryland to present or produce arts
  - Please note: Professional Development Opportunity Grant funds may be used for travel expenses outside of Maryland directly associated with professional development activities.
- Projects chiefly for classroom use or in school activities
- Activities not open to the general public
- Scholarships awarded by the applicant organization for its own activities
- Acquisition of capital assets
- 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
- Contributions to any political party, organization, or action committee
- Activities in connection with any political campaign or referendum
- Lobbying activities
- Activities that are primarily focused on the sale and/or promotion of merchandise
- 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)
- Institutional indirect costs in excess of 15 percent of the total grant amount

## Timeline

The grant timelines below are estimates and may change according to application volume, funding changes, constituent needs, staff capacity, or other factors. Subscribe to MSAC communications to be notified of any public information sessions and other program updates by completing [the signup form on our webpage](#).

- Applications
  - Publication: September 2, 2025
  - Deadline: Applications accepted through March 31, 2026
- Application review and notifications
  - Reviewed monthly according to the following schedule:

### **Applications received September 2 - 30, 2025**

Applications reviewed/scored October 1 - 31

Notifications sent to applicants early November

**Applications received October 1 - 31, 2025**

Applications reviewed/scored November 1 - 30  
Notifications sent to applicants early December

**Applications received November 1 - 30, 2025**

Applications reviewed/scored December 1 - 31  
Notifications sent to applicants early January

**Applications received December 1 - 31, 2025**

Applications reviewed/scored January 1 - 31  
Notifications sent to applicants early February

**Applications received January 1 - 31, 2026**

Applications reviewed/scored February 1 - 28  
Notifications sent to applicants early March

**Applications received February 1 - 28, 2026**

Applications reviewed/scored March 1 - 31  
Notifications sent to applicants early April

**Applications received March 1 - 31, 2026**

Applications reviewed/scored April 1 - 30  
Notifications sent to applicants early May

**Final Report**

- Deadline: August 15, 2026 OR December 31, 2026 (see Page 12 for details)

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants must meet the requirements listed below.

Arts organizations or arts programs must be one of the following:

- Nonprofit organization (i.e., an organization with an IRS-designated 501(c)3 status)
  - Organizations must be incorporated in Maryland or have significant physical presence in Maryland. For more information, please contact the program director for the artistic category for which this scenario applies.
- Nonprofit, Maryland-based fiscal sponsor organization applying on behalf of a Maryland-based group, project, or artist(s) with whom it has a Model A fiscal sponsorship agreement in place (i.e., comprehensive sponsorship, in which the assets, liabilities, and exempt activities collectively referred to as “the project,” are housed within the fiscal sponsor)
- Unit of government (e.g., town, city, county, state, etc., with the capacity to undertake an arts program)
- College or university (i.e., an established higher education institution in Maryland)
- School (i.e., a public or private school serving students in grades pre-Kindergarten through 12)

Additional Eligibility Requirements for Arts Organizations:

- An arts organization/arts program may only receive one Professional Development Opportunity Grant per fiscal year
- The organization/program must produce or present arts programs, services or projects that are relevant to its community and are available to the public

- The organization must be in operation as an arts organization or arts program for at least one full fiscal year at the time of application and be able to submit a financial statement for their most recently completed fiscal year at the time of application
- The proposed professional development activity may not have been funded by MSAC previously

Independent artists must be:

- An artist or collaborative group not directly affiliated with a larger arts organization or program
  - In the case of collaborative groups, having a membership comprising at least 50 percent Maryland residents, as defined below
  - In the case that an artist(s) is fiscally sponsored, the sponsored artist(s) must be a Maryland resident, as defined below
- 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
- Producing or presenting projects or programs that are accessible to the public
- The lead artist whose original work is included in the proposed activities
- Not 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

Additional Eligibility Requirements for Independent Artists:

- Only one application per named collaborative group will be considered for funding per fiscal year
- An independent artist may only receive funding for one application per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30)
- The proposed professional development activity may not have been funded by MSAC previously

Selected Professional Development opportunities must have a public, established practice of working with artists and/or arts organizations (for at least one year) OR be approved by the MSAC Program Directors.

- Private instruction or lessons are examples of Professional Development opportunities that need to be approved by MSAC Program Directors before applying.

Applicants are eligible to receive funding to support a Professional Development opportunity once; application submissions for annual or repeat opportunities (such as an annual conference) that have already been funded in the past are not eligible.

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 on the [SmartSimple registration page](#).

- Applicants are required to complete and submit applications by electronic means, including the use of an electronic signature. To make an accessibility request for an alternative submission method, please contact the program director listed in the Contact Information section.
- Technical support for SmartSimple is available during regular office hours.
- Applicants must meet any revision deadlines requested after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be considered withdrawn.
- By submitting an application to MSAC, whether via electronic means or otherwise, applicant agrees to allow MSAC to retain records per state and federal document retention laws and policies. Applicant is also agreeing to the Terms and Privacy Policy of SmartSimple as applicable to MSAC.

### Panelist service

MSAC convenes panelists, representing a range of arts expertise statewide, to evaluate applications electronically. Panelists are selected via public application process based on relevant experience and/or expertise. Opportunities to serve as panelists for various grant programs are posted throughout the year; individuals interested in panel service are encouraged to learn more and apply on MSAC's [Ways to Get Involved](#) webpage.

### 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 evaluation is based on review criteria that correspond with the prompts in the application form. The review criteria provide guidance on rating an applicant's response to a prompt.

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

### Independent Artists

Application prompt	Review criteria
1. Describe the selected Professional Development opportunity you will participate in (including location, date, length, format, etc.). Provide details explaining your artistic practice (including how the public experiences your artistic work) and how the selected opportunity will address identified goals or areas of growth for yourself as an artist.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the proposed professional development opportunity with detailed explanation of the applicant's artistic practice and evidence of artistic and/or creative growth

2. Provide a detailed timeline/schedule describing A. participation in the selected opportunity and, B. your plan to implement what was learned through the experience. In your response consider how the timeline and schedule connects to goals/benchmarks you have determined.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes clear, specific and realistic timeline demonstrating participation in and plan for use/dissemination of professional development opportunity with thorough descriptions of both phases.
3. Explain why you selected this experience and the process for selecting this specific professional development opportunity. In your response, address the history of success of the opportunity selected and its ability to strengthen your identified area(s) of growth.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes a selection of professional development source that directly connects to the identified professional development need(s) and has a history of success in the identified area(s) for growth.
4. Provide an overall budget for the Professional Development opportunity you are participating in. In your response, include details for all anticipated expenses for the opportunity, source(s) of funding beyond the MSAC request, and how MSAC funds will be used.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes detailed proposed PD-specific financial information that indicates realistic expenses for the professional development experience.

## Arts Organizations

Application prompt	Review criteria
1. Describe the selected Professional Development opportunity you or others from your organization will participate in (including location, date, length, format, who will participate, etc.). Provide details explaining your organization's mission and primary focus, how the selected opportunity will address identified goals or areas of growth for the organization, and how what is learned will enhance the organization's ability to better serve the public.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the proposed professional development opportunity with detailed evidence of artistic and/or creative growth and future community relevance.



2. Provide a detailed timeline/schedule describing A. participation in the selected opportunity and, B. when you plan to implement what was learned through the experience. In your response consider how the timeline and schedule connects to goals/benchmarks you have determined.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes clear, specific and realistic timeline demonstrating participation in and plan for use/dissemination of professional development opportunity with thorough descriptions of both phases.
3. Explain why you selected this experience and the process for selecting this specific professional development opportunity. In your response, address the history of success of the opportunity selected and its ability to strengthen your identified area(s) of growth.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes a selection of professional development source that directly connects to the identified professional development need(s) and has a history of success in the identified area(s) for growth.
4. Provide an overall budget for the Professional Development opportunity you are participating in. In your response, include details for all anticipated expenses for the opportunity, source(s) of funding beyond the MSAC request, and how MSAC funds will be used.	Excellent to Outstanding - 25 Points Excellent to Outstanding response includes detailed proposed PD-specific financial information that indicates realistic expenses for the professional development experience.

The complete scoring rubrics can be found on the program website [here](#).

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.

## Award

### Notification

After application review, applicants will be notified of the grant status as soon as possible. If the application is approved, the applicant will 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 notifications; for organizations, notifications will be sent to the primary contact and any other contacts on the organization's account. 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 an application submission confirmation notification has not arrived to your inbox.

## Disbursement

The grant funds are provided in a disbursement, which is a distribution from a dedicated fund for the specific purposes outlined in your application. The disbursement process begins when the GAF is 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 the grant disbursement approximately six to eight weeks from the date of notification of the fully executed GAF. More information on MSAC's disbursement processing timeline can be found on the [Payment Process](#) webpage.

MSAC grants are generally considered taxable income. Disbursements 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 over \$600 will receive via mail a 1099 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 login on the General Accounting Division (GAD) [Online Service Center site](#). 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 disbursement via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Those with existing State vendor profiles can sign up for EFT disbursements by completing the relevant forms found on the [Comptroller's EFT for Vendors Info 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 disbursements.

## Disbursement Status

Grantees are encouraged to deposit grant checks immediately. If the grantee has not received grant funds within eight weeks of notification of a fully executed GAF, the grantee should contact MSAC to inquire about disbursement status. The grantee is responsible for following up with MSAC staff if disbursement is not received within the fiscal year in which it was awarded. If the disbursement was lost in transit, the State of Maryland is able to re-issue disbursement. 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, the General Accounting Division (GAD) of the State Comptroller's office may intercept grant disbursements 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. Grantees can find more information and discuss options with the Central Collections Unit at (410)767-1642. Additionally, information on held disbursements can be found by creating an account on GAD's [Online Service Center](#) site

## 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 the relevant staff; any proposed changes must be shared and approved in writing before proceeding. Staff will help ensure that any proposed changes remain in alignment with the program guidelines; however there is no guarantee that proposed changes will be approved. Any approved changes that result in timeline extensions that affect the final report deadline will be reflected in SmartSimple.

## 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 Professional Development program grants is August 15, 2026 OR December 31, 2026:

- Applications submitted between September 2025 and December 2025 will have a Final Report deadline of August 15, 2026.
- Applications submitted between January 2026 and March 2026 will have a Final Report deadline of December 31, 2026.

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 disbursements were intercepted by GAD due to Maryland state taxes or other state liabilities (as outlined in the Disbursements section) are not exempt from submitting required report(s). Grantees must either return the funds to MSAC or follow through with their proposed grant activities and submit report(s) accordingly.

Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current MSAC grants, eligibility for future MSAC grants, and may result in the required return of grant funds to the State of Maryland. Before any funds are distributed, grantees are also required to submit any outstanding reports or satisfy obligations 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. An application can be marked ineligible at any time during the review process.

After an application is considered eligible, it may be declined for several reasons. An application may be declined due to funding allocation limitations at the time, or for the following reasons:

- Required information is incomplete or insufficient to make an award determination
- There are material inconsistencies between the application and the organization's actual operations
- There are significant operational, financial, or other circumstances that reasonably suggest the applicant is, or may become, unable to use the grant funds in alignment with the grant guidelines and agreement.

## Application Feedback

Applicants may request feedback on their applications—whether ineligible, declined, or approved for funding—by submitting a feedback request form. A link to this form will be provided in grant notification emails.

Applicants may re-apply in the same fiscal year if an application is not approved for funding. If an applicant is denied funding three times within a fiscal year, the Executive Director will determine eligibility for future submissions for the remainder of the fiscal year. It may be determined that the applicant is not eligible for submission again for the remainder of the fiscal year or that a proposal for the same project may not be eligible for submission again.

# Contact Information

MSAC staff offer technical assistance when feasible 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 Professional Development Opportunity Grant application process, contact:

- Emily Sollenberger, Program Director, Arts Services (Visual/Media Arts, Multi-Discipline, Folk/Traditional Arts, Service)
  - [emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov](mailto:emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov)
  - (443) 326-5637
- Laura Weiss, Program Director, Arts Services (Theatre, Music, Dance, Literary Arts)
  - [laura.weiss@maryland.gov](mailto:laura.weiss@maryland.gov)
  - (443) 326-5564
- 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)
    - (443) 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  
Harry Coker, Jr. 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 staff page](#).

## 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 on the [Meeting Notices page](#), 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 pillars and goals:

1. Access: Bolster access to arts experiences and resources
2. Awareness: Amplify the stories of Maryland's arts sector and the value of public support
3. Connection: Foster networks within and beyond the arts sector
4. Equity: Cultivate a thriving arts ecosystem centered in equity
5. Leadership: Commit to a culture of care and innovation

Read [MSAC's full strategic plan](#) to 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, disability, class, language, and/or ability

The driving goals of MSAC's grant 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](#) on our website. 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.

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.

For all other languages, please contact MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov) for more information.

## 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 Cathy Dombroski, Director of Human Resources for the Department of Commerce, at [catherine.dombroski1@maryland.gov](mailto:catherine.dombroski1@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, Professional Development Opportunity Grants, Presenting and Touring, Professional Development Opportunity, Folklife Network, Folklife Apprenticeships, Heritage Awards, Capacity Building, 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 visit MSAC's [Ways to Get Involved page](#) 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; or by attending regularly scheduled virtual and in-person professional development sessions posted on [MSAC's Eventbrite page](#).

### 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
- Comply with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101-6107
- Comply with relevant State and federal laws
- Maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant
- Give credit to MSAC in accordance with published [recognition guidelines](#), 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 MSAC's parent agency, 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 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.