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## Arts & Entertainment Districts Designation Application Guidelines 2026

### DEADLINES:

Phase	First Deadline	Second Deadline
Intent to Apply	February 1, 2026	August 1, 2026
Full Application	April 1, 2026	October 1, 2026

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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 Arts and Entertainment District program is to support the designation of Arts and Entertainment (A&E) Districts in Maryland by overseeing the designation, reporting, and redesignation processes.

The program also provides management entities of active A&E Districts across the state ongoing with technical support, resources, and access to an annual operating grant. These guidelines specifically outline the process for designating a Maryland A&E District, detailing eligibility requirements, the selection and approval process, and the associated benefits.

## The Impact of Arts and Entertainment Districts

Cultural districts, like Maryland's A&E Districts, are defined by Americans for the Arts as "well-recognized, labeled areas of a city in which a high concentration of arts and cultural facilities and programs serve as the main anchor of attraction." Nationally they can be found in cities and towns of all sizes – each one uniquely reflecting a local mission, history, and cultural development. Some districts succeed with thoughtful landscaping, public art projects, and signage, while others are involved in arts programming or event production and still others work toward the renovation of existing buildings and attracting businesses that complement arts activity. Many are found in downtown areas, but they can thrive in suburban, rural, and neighborhood locations as well. In Maryland, these areas are called Arts and Entertainment Districts.

## Arts and Entertainment Districts in Maryland

Maryland was one of the first states in the country to develop a statewide designation program for these types of districts by establishing Maryland's A&E Districts program. Since the creation of the A&E Districts program through legislation enacted in 2001, 29 districts have been established, spurring arts-based economic development in communities throughout the state.

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
- 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.

## A&E Designation Benefits

The benefits currently offered to designated districts include:

## Tax Incentives

The A&E District designation makes available incentives to promote arts activity and investment within specified geographic areas. Incentives are activated after designation and include:

- Locally determined property tax credits for new construction or renovation of certain buildings that create live-work space for artists and/or space for arts and entertainment enterprises
- An income tax subtraction modification for income derived from artistic work executed and sold within the districts by “qualifying residing artists”
- An exemption from the Admissions and Amusement tax levied by an “arts and entertainment enterprise” or “qualifying residing artist” in a district

## Access to Funding

- Access to MSAC’s A&E District Operating Support Grant program. More information about this funding can be found on MSAC’s [website](#).

## Who Can Apply for Designation?

Applications for A&E District designation must be submitted by an eligible management entity, either a Maryland county or a municipal corporation.

### County Applicants:

A county may apply for A&E District designation for an area within its corporate or political boundaries.<sup>1</sup> If any part of the proposed district lies within a municipal corporation, the governing body of that municipality must provide consent. The application must include:

- A statement confirming that, if designated, the county will offer a property tax credit and an exemption from the admissions and amusement tax.
- Written consent from the municipal corporation, obtained prior to submission, and included as part of the application

**Municipal Applicants:** A municipal corporation<sup>2</sup> may apply for designation of an area if it first obtains:

1. Acknowledgment from the county: This must be in the form of a letter or resolution stating that the income tax subtraction modification offered in the district may impact county income. The acknowledgment must be included in the application.
2. County statement: The county must indicate whether it will offer a property tax credit and an exemption from the admissions and amusement tax if the district is designated.

The municipal corporation’s application must include:

- A statement outlining the property tax credits it will offer if the district is designated.
- An acknowledgment of the admissions and amusement tax exemption and the income tax subtraction modification.
- Written consent in the form required by local law or by the governing body of the municipal corporation, such as a resolution.

## Joint Applications

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of A&E District designation, a county refers to a primary local government unit in Maryland that serves as an administrative division of the state.

<sup>2</sup> In the context of A&E District designation, a municipal corporation refers to a city or town within Maryland that has been incorporated by law and operates as a self-governing entity.

- Two or more political subdivisions may apply jointly if the proposed district spans their shared boundaries.

## A&E District Eligibility

To be eligible for designation as an A&E District, applicants must demonstrate a threshold level of existing arts and cultural assets within the defined geographic area, supported by clear documentation. Additionally, applicants must present a plan for leveraging these assets to create a thriving, sustainable A&E District, along with the operational capacity for strong fiscal and management oversight. The following elements will be considered when evaluating designation eligibility:

### Arts and Cultural Assets

- A high concentration of artistic, cultural, or entertainment enterprises.
- Well-established anchor attraction(s) that draw visitors or support local arts activities.
- A number of signature events or festivals, including seasonal events that enhance cultural engagement.

### Integration with Revitalization Efforts

- Boundary overlap and coordination with other revitalization designations (e.g., Maryland Main Street, Heritage Area, etc.).
- The area's current and/or proposed revitalization strategies incorporate arts and culture assets and goals.

### Infrastructure and Accessibility

- Potential for affordable housing, including rental or purchase options, as well as studio, exhibition, or performance spaces.
- Transportation and accessibility plans to support residents and visitors within the proposed district.

### Local Resources and Support

- Availability of local government and private redevelopment resources to support district growth.
- Incentives aimed at increasing the number of residents and businesses.

### Clear and Measurable Goals

- Measurable goals and objectives specific to arts and entertainment.
- Viable strategies for achieving these goals.

### Financial and Operational Viability

- The applying entity demonstrates strong leadership with a well-articulated management plan.
- A defined management budget with realistic income and expense projections and clearly identified income sources.
- Professional, paid personnel dedicated entirely or in part to A&E District operations and programming.

# Application Process and Timeline

## Pre-Application Phase

To facilitate compliance with eligibility requirements and provide feedback to potential applicants MSAC seeks pre-application information pursuant to [COMAR 24.05.26.05 A.10](#). The pre-application phase is as follows:

### 1. Meet with MSAC Program Staff:

Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to meet with MSAC program staff prior to beginning work on an Intent to Apply.

Staff are able to provide technical assistance in all phases of application preparation and can make connections with existing districts and provide resources to help strengthen applications.

### 2. Submit an Intent to Apply Application

#### Instructions

Prospective applicants must submit an Intent to Apply via Smart Simple.

- Create a Smart Simple account as a government entity or organization. Log in or create a free account by clicking [here](#).
- Contact Program Director via email. Refer to the staff contact information section of these guidelines.
- Program Director will generate an Intent to Apply Form for you to complete
- Login and from the Grantee Home page, click "In Progress"
- Next to Arts & Entertainment - Designation, click "Open"
- Complete the form, click "Submit LOI" and notify the Program Director via email that your Intent to Apply has been submitted
- MSAC staff will be in touch within ten business days with further instructions.

#### The information collected in the online Intent to Apply includes\*:

- Name of county or municipality applying
- Type of Applicant (county or municipality)
- Proposed district name
- Contact Name, Title, Email, and Phone Number
- A brief description of the applicant's goals for the proposed A&E district
- Lists of Proposed District Assets, including:
  - Anchor Attraction(s) in the proposed district
  - Other arts, cultural, and entertainment enterprises within the proposed district
  - Signature events or festivals held within the proposed district
  - Other designations that overlap the proposed district's boundaries
- A statement about the potential that exists in the proposed district for affordable housing and/or studio, performance, or exhibition space
- A description of the agency, office, or entity that will manage the district once designated and who (or what position) will be tasked with overseeing district activities
- A map of the proposed district's boundaries and its approximate acreage

\*Program staff understand that the information submitted at this stage is preliminary and subject to change during the review and application process.

### 3. Intent to Apply Timeline

- Applicants may submit an Intent to Apply at any time, it is recommended that forms are submitted a minimum of 90 days before the deadline for full applications to ensure staff has sufficient time to provide feedback.
  - For the April 1, 2026 application deadline, Intent to Apply forms should be submitted by January 1, 2026
  - For the December 1, 2026 application deadline, Intent to Apply forms should be submitted by September 2, 2026

### 4. Intent to Apply Review Process

- Once this Intent to Apply is received, program staff will review the submission to ensure the proposal meets minimum requirements. Complete applications that meet minimum criteria are then submitted to the internal A&E Districts Advisory Committee consisting of staff members from the Department of Commerce, Department of Housing and Community Development, Rural Maryland Council, Department of Transportation, and Department of Planning as well as current A&E District manager. The committee will review the submission and make a recommendation for next steps.

### 5. Proposed District Tour

- If the Letter of Intent meets program eligibility criteria and is recommended by the committee for a tour, the Program Director will work with the prospective applicant to arrange a tour of the proposed A&E District and a meeting with key personnel.
- The tour and meeting allow program staff and A&E District Advisory Committee members to provide appropriate guidance and assistance prior to the application deadline.

Upon completion of the pre-application phase and prior to the application deadline, applicants will be advised by the Program Director to proceed with the full application process if general criteria are met and the program staff and A&E District Advisory Committee have no concerns. If there are concerns, the applicant will receive feedback from program staff.

## Application Phase

### 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. See contact information section.
- 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.

The application must be complete, meet all stated requirements, and include a letter of support signed by the chief elected official (or officials in the case of a joint application) or by the governing body of each of the political subdivisions if no elected official or officials exist. An application with the chief elected official's endorsement must include a written expression of sentiment of the local elected governing body or bodies regarding the filing

of an application for designation. This may be in the form of a letter or a resolution at the discretion of the local jurisdiction as verified by the jurisdiction's attorney. (See application Section 3 below.)

## Application Form

### 1. District Information

- County or Municipality Applying
- Proposed District Name
- Endorsement by Chief Elected Official – Upload a letter endorsing the application for designation signed by the Chief Elected Official (or officials, in the case of a joint application) or by the governing body of each of the political subdivisions if no elected official or officials exist.
- List of Artists - List the artists currently working and selling in the district. (5,000 words max)
- Arts and Entertainment Enterprises - List all organizations located in the district that are dedicated to visual or performing arts. Give a brief description of each. (5,000 words max)
- Events and Festivals - List events and festivals that occur within the district. (5,000 words max)
- Public Art - List public art pieces located within the district. (5,000 words max)
- Businesses - List businesses located in the district. Include restaurants, lodging, and significant housing or artist housing projects. (5,000 words max)

### 2. Map Information

- Size - Enter the approximate area of the district (in acres).
  - Size Justification - If the size of the district exceeds one hundred (100) acres, provide a written justification of the size.
  - Maps - Upload PDF maps\*\* of the proposed district that indicate:
    - the borders of the proposed district;
    - overlap with Priority Funding Area and relationship to any existing designations;
    - existing real property improvements and, if known, their historic significance (details about historical significance may be included in the narrative);
    - existing transportation facilities;
    - existing arts, entertainment, and tourist facilities;
    - any proposed State or local capital improvements projects that affect the proposed district; and
    - existing and proposed handicap accessibility features.
- \*\*All maps must be legible, color PDF files sized to 8.5 x 11. Map legends must be included on all maps.
- Tax Map or Block Plat – Upload a tax map or block plat that identifies:
    - properties in the proposed district and their property valuations by class;
    - whether properties are publicly or privately held;
    - current building use or uses including their zoning;
    - zoning designations of the area;
    - the availability of affordable housing, studio, exhibition, and performance space (further details about affordable real estate may be included in the narrative); and
    - any other pertinent information.
  - Non-aligning Borders - If any borders of the district do not align with parcel boundaries, give a detailed narrative description of the non-aligning border(s). (1,000 words max)
  - Building Inventory – Upload a list of all buildings in the proposed district, including:
    - the building's address
    - whether the building is publicly or privately owned;
    - the assessed value of the property;
    - whether the building is occupied or vacant;
    - current zoning of the property;
    - any known plans for modification of the building; and
    - the building's current use for arts and/or entertainment purposes, or immediate plans for said use, if applicable.



- Digital Mapping Files - Upload a digital version of the proposed district map layers in Esri shapefile format.
  - o Esri shapefiles must include FGDC-compliant metadata ([www.fgdc.gov/metadata](http://www.fgdc.gov/metadata)), preferably using the ISO 19115:2014 Geographic information – Metadata standards. Map legends must be included on all maps.

Note: Maryland county governments should have the ability to create Esri Shapefiles. Contact the A&E program staff for additional information.

### 3. Evidence of Incentives

- Evidence of Incentives - Upload evidence that the county, municipal corporation, or both (in the case of a joint application) will offer the incentives listed below to arts and entertainment enterprises and qualifying residing artists if the request for designation is approved. Please be as specific as possible with the incentives offered. If local law requires a resolution, the resolution must be passed prior to submission of the application. The resolution may include a statement that it is rescinded if the proposed district does not receive the A&E District designation.
  - o a property tax credit, including the percentage and applicable years;
  - o exemption from the Admission and Amusement Tax;
  - o acknowledgement of the potential effect of the income tax subtraction modification;
  - o any additional incentives and initiatives the political subdivision may provide or establish to encourage arts and entertainment enterprises and qualifying residing artists to locate within the proposed district
- Local Standards and Benefits – Discuss any standards that will be imposed by the local jurisdiction on A&E enterprises or qualifying residing artists, whether initially or continuously, as a precondition to receiving any additional local benefits from the A&E District (such as special signage, publicity, local grants, etc.) not described above. Examples could be local annual reporting requirements of artists or enterprises to the district administrator or a review process that might be required for permits by a historic commission or planning and zoning department, etc. (1,000 words max)
- Evidence of Hearing – Upload evidence and certification that the political subdivision, before submission of the application, held a public hearing about the application with adequate notice and publicity. Please include a copy of the public notice, an attendance list, and minutes from the hearing.
- Attorney's Letter - Upload a letter from the attorney representing the jurisdiction(s) certifying that the resolutions, ordinances, public hearings, etc. submitted as part of the application meet local requirements.
- Priority Funding Certification – Upload a certification from the county or municipality applying that the entire proposed district is a priority funding area as defined under State Finance and Procurement Article 5-7B-03, Annotated Code of Maryland.

### 4. Narrative

- The Proposed District
  - o What governmental units (i.e. town, county, etc.) will be affected by the proposed district? What is their commitment to this application and to ensuring the success of the district? (Include a brief overview of the property tax incentives approved by each governmental unit.) (1,000 words max)
  - o What is the historical significance of the area and, if applicable, the buildings within the proposed district? (500 words max)
  - o What is the current state of arts, residential, and business activity within the district? (500 words max)
  - o What is the potential for affordable housing (rental or purchase), studio, performance, and exhibition space in the district? (500 words max)
  - o How do people move through the district currently and are there any plans for transportation or walkability enhancements? (Include information about existing or

- planned signage, parking, mass transportation, shuttle buses, walking maps, etc.) (500 words max)
- o What are the ADA accessibility features of the district? (This response may include notable features of individual enterprises as well as accessible transportation and common area features.) (500 words max)
- Reasoning and Coordination
  - o Why is the applicant seeking A&E District designation for this particular geographic area, and why is it seeking designation at this time? (1,000 words max)
  - o How would an A&E designation complement or build upon any ongoing or currently planned county or municipal economic development efforts? (1,000 words max)
  - o How will the proposed district coordinate with other economic development activities and or plans in the area? (Refer to existing plans or ones in development and how this designation fits into an economic development strategy for the area.) (500 words max)
  - o How will the proposed district leverage other state designations (e.g. Main Street, Heritage Areas, Enterprise Zone, etc.) to meet its goals? (500 words max)
  - o What additional incentives are or will be offered by the applicant county or municipality to encourage investment and arts activity in the proposed district? (500 words max)
  - o How will the proposed district's economic development efforts advance the Department of Planning's Reinvest Maryland strategies? (500 words max)
- Anticipated Benefits
  - o How will the arts and entertainment designation benefit the proposed district and, if applicable, the surrounding area? What are the potential impacts on tourism, livability, and the economy. (1,000 words max)

## 5. Five-Year Plan

- Five-Year Plan
  - o What are the district's goals and objectives over the next five years? (500 words max)
  - o Describe the process for developing the district's application and five-year plan. Who was involved in its creation, and how was community input solicited and incorporated? (500 words max)
  - o What strategies will the management entity employ to meet the goals and objectives above? Complete the chart provided, 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?
  - o How will the success of the proposed activities be determined? What are the indicators and how will they be evaluated? (500 words max)
  - o What entity(ies) (i.e. county/municipality office, nonprofit, and/or community development corporation, etc.) will be responsible for the district's management? What is the entity's experience in managing the types of activities described in the five-year plan? (500 words max)
  - o What management structure will support the activities outlined in the five-year plan? Include information about paid employees, volunteers, collaborators, board, partners, etc. (500 words max)
- Marketing Plan
  - o 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? (500 words max)

## 6. Budget

- Complete the budget form, entering the anticipated income and expenses for all A&E District activities in the first fiscal year. Include only real income and expenses (in-kind income and expenses are collected in a separate question). If the district's activities are a program in a larger

organization or department, include only A&E District budget items (i.e. do not include all organizational income and expenses if the organization's activities are not entirely A&E District-related).

#### 7. Additional Information

- Images – (optional) Upload images to support the application.
- Additional Reports - Upload any reports, feasibility studies, visioning results, news articles, etc. that may have been generated regarding the proposed A&E District or support the application materials.

## Review and Approval Process

### Internal Review

Staff will review applications to ensure they are complete and compliant with all regulations. Only complete and compliant applications will be forwarded to the A&E Districts Advisory Committee for further evaluation. MSAC staff will then submit the committee's recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce.

### Secretary Review and Approval

After reviewing the applications, the Secretary may designate one or more A&E Districts, with the designation period lasting up to ten years.

The Secretary will notify all applicants of their application status in writing within sixty (60) days of submission. In accordance with the statute, no more than one designation may be approved per county per calendar year, and the total number of designations granted each year is limited to six.

All decisions made by the Secretary of Commerce are final.

### Review Timeline

Applications received by April 1, 2026 at 11:59pm:

- Applications reviewed April - May 2026
- Notifications sent to applicants June 1, 2026

Applications received by October 1, 2026 at 11:59pm:

- Applications reviewed October - November 2026
- Notifications sent to applicants December 1, 2026

## Tax Incentive Effectiveness Timeline:

The Secretary will notify the Comptroller of Maryland about the designation of an A&E District on or before July 1, which will be the official effective date of the district's establishment. The income tax subtraction modification will apply to taxable years beginning on January 1 after the July 1 effective date.

### Tax Incentives Timeline

Deadline	1st Deadline (April 2026)	2nd Deadline (October 2026)
Notification of Decision	June 1, 2026	December 1, 2026
Property and A&E Incentive Effective Date*	July 1, 2026	July 1, 2026
Income Tax Incentive Effective Date	January 1, 2027	January 1, 2027

*\* per local consent*

## 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 A&E District Designation application process, contact:

- David D. Mitchell, Program Director, County Arts Development and Arts & Entertainment Districts
  - [david.mitchell1@maryland.gov](mailto:david.mitchell1@maryland.gov)
  - (443) 303-9506
- 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 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](#) available 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 Elaine McNeil, Director of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Fair Practices for the Department of Commerce, at [elaine.mcneil2@maryland.gov](mailto:elaine.mcneil2@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, 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.