



Folklife Network FY 2027 Guidelines

DEADLINE: February 27, 2026

SUPPORT PERIOD: July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027



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TTY: Maryland Relay 1-800-735-2258 or 711

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Table of Contents

Program Overview.....	3
Purpose.....	3
Grant Cycle.....	4
Funding.....	4
Support Period.....	4
Use of Funds.....	4
Timeline.....	5
Eligibility.....	5
Application, Review, and Award.....	6
Application and Review.....	6
SmartSimple.....	6
Panelist service.....	6
Application form and review criteria.....	7
Award.....	12
Notification.....	12
Disbursement.....	12
Disbursement Status.....	12
Changes in Funded Activities.....	13
Reporting.....	13
Ineligible and Declined Applications.....	13
Application Feedback.....	14
Contact Information.....	14
MSAC Overview.....	15
Description.....	15
Authority.....	15
Staff.....	15
Meetings.....	15
Mission and Goals.....	15
Equity and Justice Statement.....	16
Accessibility.....	16
Accessibility Web Page.....	16
Language Access.....	16
Feedback.....	17
Grievances.....	17
Grantmaking.....	17
Appeals.....	17
Grantee requirements.....	18
Disclosure of personal information.....	19

Program Overview

Purpose

The purpose of the Folklife Network program is to fund organizations serving as regional folklife centers in Maryland. Regional folklife centers are defined as continuing programmatic or educational efforts made by an organization to support traditional arts.¹ MSAC defines traditional arts as community-based living cultural traditions handed down by example or word of mouth. Grants are administered through the Maryland Traditions program and support activities that identify, document, support, or present the living cultural traditions of Maryland's diverse communities.

The Folklife Network provides support for Maryland's eight regional folklife centers through funding and technical assistance intended to help centers to meet Folklife Network program goals, as described below.

Regional folklife centers' activities should:

- Serve the mission of the grantee organization
- Complement the mission of Maryland Traditions to identify, document, support, and present living cultural traditions
- Complement the mission of MSAC to provide 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
- Support equity, diversity, and inclusion by promoting equitable access to the arts, fostering awareness of communities and traditions of color, and striving to amplify the voices of historically under-resourced cultures, both programmatically and administratively

Regional folklife centers fulfill the purpose of the Folklife Network by:

- Providing equitable and accessible support to traditional artists living or working in their region
- Engaging with MSAC in ways that strengthen and enhance an inclusive, collegial network of regional folklife centers across Maryland
- Encouraging and supporting traditional arts activity while championing creative expression, diverse programming, and lifelong learning throughout their jurisdictions
- Providing leadership that allows community artists to connect with broader networks of artists and cultural workers

Folklife Network grants represent unique collaborations between MSAC and local organizations supporting the traditional arts. Grants are reserved for organizations that demonstrate a strong awareness of traditional arts communities' needs and expectations in their areas of service, as well the ability to broadly align with the MSAC goal to ensure that every Marylander has access to the transformative power of the arts.

In each Folklife Network collaboration, MSAC is responsible for:

- Providing funding, guidance, resources, and support to aid in the creation and implementation of regional folklife centers' three-year plans
- Providing tools and resources to aid in regional folklife centers' infusion of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in all aspects of their work

¹ 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.

- Maintaining grantmaking and reporting schedules, facilitating regional folklife centers' access to MSAC application and reporting materials, and providing technical support as needed
- Making site visits to regional folklife centers as needed in order to discuss successes and challenges, log grantees' logistical needs for use in future MSAC policy and procedure revisions, and make public addresses at events on behalf of the State of Maryland
- Facilitating and encouraging creative exchanges among regional folklife centers in an effort to increase inter-region collaboration
- Providing branding materials that identify grantees as regional folklife centers

In each Folklife Network collaboration, the regional folklife center is responsible for:

- Adhering to all grantmaking and reporting requirements, as communicated by MSAC
- Identifying, documenting, supporting, and presenting traditional arts in a way that addresses the needs of the communities served by the regional folklife center
- Providing MSAC with ongoing updates of local needs and concerns through scheduled reports and additional communications
- Delivering traditional arts materials to Maryland Traditions for later archival deposit
- Facilitating either one Folklife Apprenticeship grant application or one Heritage Award nomination per grant cycle
 - Facilitation may take many forms, including but not limited to: artist interviews to gather and organize answers to application or nomination questions, advising on application or nomination strategy, or helping artists create and submit materials in SmartSimple; contact MSAC staff with questions
- Using MSAC-provided branding materials to identify activities supported by grant funds

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) reserves the right to revise these guidelines, including making policy/procedure updates and adjusting the timeline, as appropriate, to include updated, new, or clarifying information.

Grant Cycle

Funding

Folklife Network grants are \$85,000, subject to the availability of funds.

Folklife Network grants are available annually.

Support Period

Folklife Network funds support activities taking place during the fiscal year (FY) in which funds are awarded. MSAC's FY 2027 is July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Grantees agree to spend or obligate all funds by June 30, 2027. 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 any aspect of traditional arts work benefitting and open to the public. Typical types of traditional arts activities include but are not limited to:

- Exhibitions, performances, festivals, workshops, lectures, field schools, oral histories, ethnographies, archiving, and local partnerships

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Programming not in support of traditional arts
- Activities not benefitting the public
- Activities not open to the public
- 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
- 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 website](#).

- Applications
 - Publication: January 20, 2026
 - Deadline: February 27, 2026
- Application review
 - March through April, 2026
 - Panel meeting: May 12, 2026
- Notification
 - Mid- to late July, 2026
- Reports
 - Deadline: August 15, 2027

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)
- Nonprofit, Maryland-based fiscal sponsor organization applying on behalf of a Maryland-based group, project, or artist 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)

Organizations may receive one Folklife Network grant per year.

Independent artists are not eligible to receive Folklife Network grants, though the intention of the program is for each regional folklife center to serve as a resource center for traditional artists.

Grantees serve as a designated regional folklife center following a successful initial application. Grantees may continue to serve as designated regional folklife centers based on continued strong performance, as illustrated through favorable panelist review of subsequent applications and fulfillment of grant requirements. In regions without regional folklife centers, and pending availability of funds, MSAC will advertise the opportunity and accept applications to establish a new Folklife Network grantee within the region. Organizations interested in serving as a regional folklife center in the future should contact relevant MSAC staff to discuss their ideas.

In FY 2027, MSAC will accept applications to support continuing activities at eight existing regional folklife centers:

- Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (Talbot County)
- Common Ground on the Hill (Carroll County)
- Creative Alliance at the Patterson (Baltimore City)
- Frostburg State University (Allegany County)
- Sandy Spring Museum (Montgomery County)
- St. Mary's College of Maryland (St. Mary's County)
- University of Maryland, Baltimore County (Baltimore County)
- Ward Foundation (Wicomico County)

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. 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

Panelist service

MSAC convenes panelists, representing a range of arts expertise statewide, to evaluate applications electronically. Panelists are selected via public application process and based on relevant experience and 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 Types

There are two types of Folklife Network applications: on-year and off-year.

On-year applications require a complete three-year plan for projected regional folklife center operations, including narrative, budget, and administrative information, with the option to submit supplemental materials. Additionally, applicants will be asked to engage with panelists in an In-Depth Conversation as a required part of the application review process. Panelists will speak with an organizational representative of the applicant's choosing, such as staff leadership, board members, etc, to discuss organizational and programmatic development and goals, and to answer panelist's questions regarding the application. The meeting may occur by phone, virtually, or in-person. Panelists will contact applicants to schedule this meeting. Meetings will occur during the review period. Panelists will convene in a panel meeting to share additional information learned in these in-depth conversations, and all panelists will have the opportunity to share their recommendations to approve the proposed three year plan as-is or to not approve and request revisions. MSAC staff will be in communication with applicants whose applications are recommended for revision to determine next steps.

Off-year applications require similar information in a substantially abbreviated format. On-year applications are required every three years. Off-year applications are required in the intervening years.

MSAC staff, panelists, or councilors can recommend a regional folklife center be required to submit an on-year application in any subsequent fiscal year for reasons including but not limited to: submission of a weak three-year plan, grant noncompliance, or significant changes in budget, programming, operations, or leadership. Organizations may elect at any time to submit an on-year application.

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.

All on-year and off-year applications are evaluated according to the following processes.

On-year

- Regional folklife centers submit a three-year plan that details planned efforts to meet constituent needs and MSAC's Folklife Network goals and expectations, and required financial reporting
- The plan is reviewed by MSAC staff and a review panel, which recommend that the application either be accepted or revised
- Any necessary revisions are made based on initial MSAC review

Off-year

- Regional folklife centers submit a draft plan, including: any changes to the previously-submitted three-year plan, and required financial reporting
- The draft plan is reviewed by MSAC staff, after which feedback and technical assistance are provided as needed
- Any necessary revisions are made based on initial MSAC review, and any major changes are reported to the Council

Folklife Network on-year application review is based on answers to the questions provided below, for reference. Rubric criteria for strong responses are included to provide details on what a successful answer should include.

On-year applications include three review criteria: constituent service, three-year plan, and traditional arts, with financial and supplemental information following later.

Application prompt	Review criteria
<i>Constituent service</i>	
State the vision, mission, goals and/or values of the regional folklife center.	<p>Excellent to Outstanding</p> <p>The vision, mission, goals, and/or values are clear, specific, and appropriate to the work of a regional folklife center, defined as continuing programmatic or educational efforts made by an organization to support traditional arts, or community-based living cultural traditions or community based living cultural traditions handed down by example or word of mouth.</p>
Describe the regional folklife center's area of service. Include general descriptions of the area's demographics and data points to support the description.	<p>Excellent to Outstanding</p> <p>The area of service is clearly, specifically, and thoroughly described, and includes demographics and data illustrating the regional folklife center's efforts to maintain an awareness of its constituency.</p>
What are the current needs of the regional folklife center's constituents in relation to traditional arts funding, programming, and services?	<p>Excellent to Outstanding</p> <p>The needs described are clear, specific, and thorough, and are clearly tied to the regional folklife center's work in supporting traditional arts in the area of service.</p>
How did the regional folklife center determine these needs?	<p>Excellent to Outstanding</p> <p>The methods described for identifying traditional arts needs in the area of service are clear, specific, and thorough.</p>
<p>For which program or programs does the regional folklife center intend to provide assistance during the grant cycle under consideration here [applicants will be able to select one or both of the options below]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folklife Apprenticeship • Heritage Award 	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
Briefly describe the type of assistance the regional folklife center intends to provide.	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
<i>Three-year plan</i>	
Describe the process for developing the regional folklife center's three-year plan. Who was involved in	Excellent to Outstanding

the plan's creation, and how was community input solicited and incorporated?	The process description includes clear, specific details on how the plan involved community input, as well as who was involved.
List as many as five priorities for the regional folklife center over the next three years.	Excellent to Outstanding The priorities are described clearly, specifically, and thoroughly.
The button below activates a chart soliciting information on the regional folklife center's planned activities for the upcoming funding period. Complete the chart with as much detail as is available at the time of application [applicants will be able to click an "Activities Chart" button in SmartSimple; the chart includes fields for brief descriptions of activities, as well as responses to how activities will address regional folklife center priorities, constituent needs, and the Folklife Network's purpose and goals].	Excellent to Outstanding The planned activities, projects or programs clearly align with regional folklife center's, mission, vision, values, or goals.
<i>Traditional arts</i>	
Describe how the planned activities identify, document, support, or present the traditional arts, defined as community-based living cultural traditions handed down by example or word of mouth.	Excellent to Outstanding The description clearly, specifically, and thoroughly demonstrates the activities' connection to traditional arts, as well as their cultural, historical, and expressive roots.
Describe how the traditional arts featured in the planned activities provide a direct benefit to the cultures from which those traditions originated.	Excellent to Outstanding The description clearly, specifically, and thoroughly demonstrates the activities' connection to traditional arts, as well as their cultural, historical, and expressive roots.
<i>Financial information</i>	
The button below activates a chart soliciting information on the regional folklife center's estimated total traditional arts expenditures in the upcoming funding period. Complete the chart with as much accuracy as is possible at the time of application [applicants will be able to click an "Future traditional arts expenditures chart" button in SmartSimple; the chart includes fields for traditional arts estimated expenditures for recurring and one-time or short-term activities].	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
For regional folklife centers with a traditional arts operating budget below \$750,000: Upload the organization's most recently completed fiscal or	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]

<p>calendar year Financial Statement, signed by a professional accountant or the organization's fiscal officer. The signed Financial Statement must be submitted by the application deadline. For regional folklife centers with a traditional arts operating budget at \$750,000 or above: Upload the organization's most recently completed fiscal or calendar year Independent External Audit, prepared by a CPA firm. The completed audit must be submitted by the application deadline.</p>	
<p><i>Attachments</i></p>	
<p>Applicants will be asked to provide the following materials as part of the Attachments of the application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploaded names and short biographies for key staff and board members • Optional written supplemental materials, including but not limited to catalogs, reviews, programs, brochures, or promotional materials compiled into a single PDF and not exceeding 20 pages • Optional audiovisual supplemental materials, including but not limited to video or audio recordings, images, or slideshows linked and compiled into a single PDF with total review time not exceeding 10 minutes; if materials exceed this length, applicants must identify which portions panelists should review • Uploaded W9 	<p>[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]</p>
<p><i>Additional Requirements</i></p>	
<p>Applicants will be asked to engage with panelists in an In-Depth Conversation as a required part of the application review process. Panelists will speak with an organizational representative of the applicant's choosing, such as staff leadership, board members, etc, to discuss organizational and programmatic development and goals, and to answer panelist's questions regarding the application. The meeting may occur by phone, virtually, or in-person. Panelists will contact applicants to schedule this meeting. Meetings will occur during the review period</p>	<p>[In-Depth Conversation information will be shared by the lead panelists during the panel meeting; panelists will take into account any additional information learned in this process to make final recommendations]</p>

Folklife Network off-year application review is based on answers to the questions below. Off-year applications include the same three review criteria as on-year applications: constituent service, three-year plan, and traditional arts, with financial and supplemental information following later.

Application prompt	Review criteria
<i>Constituent service</i>	
Describe any significant changes that have occurred in the past year, or changes that are anticipated in the coming year, to the way the regional folklife center serves its constituents.	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
<p>For which program or programs does the regional folklife center intend to provide assistance during the grant cycle under consideration here [applicants will be able to select one or both of the options below]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folklife Apprenticeship • Heritage Award 	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
Briefly describe the type of assistance the regional folklife center intends to provide.	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
<i>Three-year plan</i>	
Summarize the regional folklife center's proposed activities for the upcoming fiscal year. Describe how the proposed activities fit within the regional folklife center's three-year plan.	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
Describe any significant changes to how the traditional arts that are featured in the planned activities provide a direct benefit to the cultures from which those traditions originated.	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
<i>Financial information</i>	
[Identical to on-year application requirements; see above]	[Prompts evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]
<i>Attachments</i>	
<p>Applicants will be asked to provide the following materials as part of the Attachments of the application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uploaded names and short biographies for key staff and board members 	[Prompt evaluated for compliance by MSAC staff only]

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 their 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. 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](#) web page.

Grantees are encouraged to sign up to receive disbursement electronically via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Those with existing state vendor profiles can sign up for EFT disbursement by completing the relevant forms on the [Comptroller's EFT for Vendor'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 disbursement.

Disbursement Status

Grantees are encouraged to deposit grant disbursement 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 during 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) 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)

767-1642. 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 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 GAF and 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 Folklife Network grants is August 15, 2027.

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 state liabilities, as outlined in the Disbursement 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 MSAC grants, eligibility for 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 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.

In some cases, reviewers recommend that an application be revised and resubmitted to ensure compliance with the purpose and goals of the Folklife Network. In such cases, MSAC staff will work with applicants to determine a revision and resubmission timeline.

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 Folklife Network application process, contact:

- Program and application strategy assistance
 - Ryan Koons, State Folklorist
 - ryan.koons@maryland.gov
 - (410) 767-6568
- Grants logistics and technological assistance
 - Catherine Teixeira, Grants Director
 - catherine.teixeira@maryland.gov
 - (443) 799-7256
 - Tammy Oppel, Grants Management Associate
 - tammy.oppel@maryland.gov
 - (410) 326-5555
 - Kirk Amaral Snow, Grants Management Associate
 - 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, Acting 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 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 para más información.

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

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

For all other languages, please contact MSAC at 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 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 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

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 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.