



Professional Development Opportunity Grant FY 2027 Guidelines

Applications accepted
July 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026 and
January 4, 2027 - February 28, 2027



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



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

This publication is available as a PDF on the MSAC website: 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.¹

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

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 will have two application cycles in FY27. For each cycle, applications will be accepted during the following periods:

Cycle One: July 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026

Cycle Two: January 4, 2027 - February 28, 2027

Applications will not be accepted outside of those periods of time. Applications are panel reviewed in the month following each cycle's open period and grants are awarded following the review period until allocated funding is depleted. Applicants may only be funded once per fiscal year (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027).

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:

For applications submitted in Cycle One: July 15, 2027

For applications submitted in Cycle Two: December 31, 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

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

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.

- Honoraria or contractual services
- Administrative expenses
- Travel expenses directly associated with professional development activities
- 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
- 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 or market, etc.)
- Activities where you are the Professional Development leader or facilitator (i.e. a class that you are teaching)
- Classes that are a part of a degree program
- Learning opportunities focused specifically on growth as a classroom teacher (and not as an independent artist)
- Completion of a specific project
- Residency programs without clear learning or training opportunities associated (for example, specifically centered on the creation of work and/or specific project, and not focused on learning/refining a particular skill/technique/etc)
 - Please note: Such activities can be supported instead through the Creativity Grant for Planning/Development Support.

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 timelines provided below are estimates. Processing, notification, and payment timelines 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: July 1, 2026
 - Deadline: Applications accepted from July 1, 2026 - August 31, 2026 and January 4, 2027 - February 28, 2027.
- Application review and notifications
 - Reviewed according to the following schedule:

Applications received July 1 - August 31, 2026

Applications reviewed/scored September 1 - 30

Notifications sent to applicants mid October

Applications received January 4 - February 28, 2027

Applications reviewed/scored March 1 - 31

Notifications sent to applicants mid April

Final Report

- Deadline: July 15, 2027 OR December 31, 2027 (see Page 12 for details)

Program Updates

The following changes have been made to the Professional Development Opportunity Grant since the FY2026 cycle:

- Applications are now accepted during two distinct cycles as outlined in the timeline section. Previously, applications were accepted on a rolling basis with monthly review.
- Applicants may receive either a Professional Development Opportunity Grant or a Creativity Grant in the same fiscal year, but not both.
- Organizations/programs receiving MSAC general operating funding through Grants for Organizations, County Arts Development, A&E District, or Folklife Network with annual operating budgets over \$1.5M are ineligible to apply for Professional Development Opportunity Grant support.
- Residency programs without a clear learning or training opportunity associated with it (for example, specifically centered on the creation of work and/or specific project, and not focused on learning/refining a particular skill/technique/etc) are not eligible for support through the Professional Development Opportunity Grant. Please note: Such activities can be supported instead through the Creativity Grant for Planning/Development Support.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants must meet the requirements listed below.

Arts organizations or arts programs must be Maryland-based and one of the following:

- Nonprofit organization with an IRS 501(c)3 designation
- Nonprofit organization applying on behalf of a Maryland-based group, project, or artist with whom it has a signed Model A fiscal sponsorship agreement. Model A fiscal sponsorships are comprehensive with all sponsee assets, liabilities, and exempt activities housed within the fiscal sponsor.
- Unit of government (e.g., town, city, county, state, etc.) with the capacity to undertake an arts program
- Established higher education institutions such as a college or university
- Public or private schools 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
- Organizations/programs receiving MSAC general operating funding through Grants for Organizations, County Arts Development, A&E District, and Folklife Network with annual operating budgets over \$1.5M are ineligible to apply for Professional Development Opportunity Grant support

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 (50%) 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 who are 18 or older. A Maryland resident is defined as someone owning or renting residential property in Maryland six months prior to the application's submission and throughout the funded project or program. 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)

Additional Eligibility Requirements for All:

- 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 by MSAC in the past are not eligible.
- Applicants may receive either a Professional Development Opportunity Grant or a Creativity Grant in the same fiscal year, but not both

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.

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 some cases, applications may receive the same score, but budget restrictions prevent all applications with that score from being funded. Final selections will then be based on which applications most closely align with the published strategic goals of the Maryland State Arts Council as determined by MSAC staff.

Applicants are required to submit a current, complete, and 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 are disbursed 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 are 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 receives all notifications; for organizations, notifications are sent to the primary contact and any other contacts on the organization's account. Automated

notifications from SmartSimple are 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 does not arrive in 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, meaning that both the grantee and MSAC staff have signed the agreement. The grantee receives notification when the agreement is fully executed from SmartSimple. This notification includes instructions on how to access a copy of the fully executed GAF in the grantee's SmartSimple profile.

The grantee receives the grant disbursement approximately six to eight weeks from the full execution of the 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. No Social Security, state, or federal income taxes are withheld. Individuals receiving grant awards of more than \$600 will be mailed a 1099 form from the State of Maryland. This form will arrive after the end of the calendar year in which the grant was paid. To request or access your 1099 electronically, register and log in on the General Accounting Division (GAD) [Online Service Center site](#). 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 electronically via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Those with existing state vendor profiles can sign up for EFT disbursements by completing the relevant forms on the [Comptroller's EFT for Vendors 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 does not receive grant funds within eight weeks of notification of a fully executed GAF, the grantee must contact MSAC staff to inquire about disbursement status. If the disbursement was lost in transit, the State of Maryland is able to re-issue disbursement. However, the grantee must contact MSAC staff within the fiscal year in which the grant was awarded. MSAC cannot guarantee that funds will be available for re-issue after the end of the fiscal year in which a grant was awarded.

If a grantee owes any Maryland state taxes or other state liabilities, GAD may intercept grant disbursements and hold them until the liability is resolved. GAD will send written notice 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 activities for which a grant has been awarded, the grantee is responsible for contacting relevant staff. 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. SmartSimple will be updated to reflect approved extensions to reporting deadlines.

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 July 15, 2027 OR December 31, 2027:

- Applications submitted between July 2026 and August 2026 will have a Final Report deadline of July 15, 2027.
- Applications submitted between January 2027 and February 2027 will have a Final Report deadline of December 31, 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 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
 - (443) 326-5637
- Laura Weiss, Program Director, Arts Services (Theatre, Music, Dance, Literary Arts)
 - laura.weiss@maryland.gov
 - (443) 326-5564
- 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
 - (443) 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., 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 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 ensuring access to its programs and services. Everyone is welcome, and all events and activities sponsored by or operated within MSAC are accessible both physically and programmatically. MSAC is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensuring equal opportunity, accessibility, and non-discrimination for individuals with disabilities. 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, access resources, accommodations requests, and complaint procedures.

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.

Complaints

For programs or services provided by MSAC:

For inquiries related to MSAC operated programs or services, individuals may first reach out to the [Office of EEO and Fair Practices at the Department of Commerce](#) for an informal discussion. Other related inquiries may include failure of MSAC to accommodate individuals with disabilities, harassment, bullying, and failure to provide accommodations to individuals with Limited English Proficiency.

While the informal process is designed to facilitate a sincere and prompt resolution, it is not a substitution for a filed complaint of discrimination. Individuals opting to initiate a formal complaint may proceed directly to the formal process if preferred. Participants may also choose to transition from the informal process to the formal complaint process at any time.

- **For an Informal Discussion:** Contact Elaine McNeil, Director of EEO, ADA and Fair Practices at (410) 767-6470 or ofp.commerce@maryland.gov.
- **To File a Formal Complaint of Unfair and/or Unlawful Treatment with the Department of Commerce/MSAC:** See the information on [Commerce's EEO and Fair Practices Page](#) regarding the complaint procedures and submit your complaint to ofp.commerce@maryland.gov.

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

MSAC encourages individuals who believe they experience discrimination in programs and services provided by organizations funded by MSAC to reach out to the sponsoring organization first with their complaint. The individual may also reach out to MSAC's Accessibility Coordinator and Grants Director to inform MSAC of the complaint of discrimination. MSAC notifies organizations that receive funding through MSAC that they must comply with all applicable federal and State non-discrimination laws and regulations. Submitting a complaint with MSAC regarding an organization receiving funding from MSAC is not a replacement or a prerequisite to filing a complaint with the appropriate governmental agency or a court.

Complaints may be submitted to the following external agencies:

- Complaints against MSAC-funded organizations and programs, file with [Maryland Commission on Civil Rights](#) (MCCR)
- Complaints against arts organizations and cultural organizations receiving federal funding, filed with the [National Endowment for the Arts' Office of Civil Rights](#).
- Complaints against places of public accommodation, such as private cultural organizations, may be filed with the [Department of Justice](#).

Participation in a complaint process is protected from retaliation under all circumstances, and MSAC complies with all applicable federal and State laws prohibiting retaliation against a person because the

person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

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](#) webpage 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; or (b) gender expression, sex, or age, except when age or sex constitute a bona fide occupational qualification; or (c) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability
- 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.