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## Special Request Grant Guidelines

**DEADLINE: None\***

**SUPPORT PERIOD: Rolling**



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

\*Note: For awarded grants, payment may take up to 90 days.

# Maryland State Arts Council

## Overview

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) encourages and invests in the advancement of the arts for all Marylanders. Its grants and programs support artists and arts organizations in their pursuit of artistic excellence, ensure the accessibility of the arts to all citizens, and promote statewide awareness of arts resources and opportunities. Programs are aimed at all Maryland residents regardless of political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, age, national origin, sex or sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or geographic location within the State.

The Council comprises an appointed body of 17 citizens from across the state, 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 not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations for ongoing arts programming and projects. The MSAC also awards grants to individual artists, and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. The Council reserves the right to prioritize grants awards.

MSAC receives its funds in an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland and from grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Council may also receive 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.

Larry Hogan, Governor | Boyd K. Rutherford, Lieutenant Governor

Kelly M. Schulz, Secretary

Thomas B. Riford | Assistant Secretary, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts

## Mission Statement and Goals

The mission of MSAC is to encourage and invest in the advancement of the arts for the people of our state. The goals of the Council are to support artists and arts organizations in their pursuit of artistic excellence, to ensure the accessibility of the arts to all citizens and to promote statewide awareness of arts resources and opportunities.

The MSAC's programs are aimed at benefiting all Maryland residents regardless of political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, age, national origin, sex or sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or geographic location within the State.

## Professional Grants Review Panels

To assist the Council in its decision-making, professionals in the arts are appointed to a variety of grants review panels. The function of panels is to evaluate applications from organizations and individuals and to offer policy recommendations to the Council. Each year, MSAC publishes an open call, and more than 100 individuals serve as grants review panelists for the Council's programs, including Grants for Organizations, Arts in Education, Folk and Traditional Arts, Independent Artist Awards, and Community

Arts Development. Anyone wishing to serve should visit [msac.org](http://msac.org) for detailed information and nomination forms.

## Staff

MSAC maintains a professional staff to administer its grants programs and Council-initiated programs. Staff members are available to provide technical assistance to the arts community.

## Meetings

All Council and Grants Review Panel 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 Grants Review Panel meetings may be obtained from the MSAC website at [www.msac.org](http://www.msac.org) or by contacting MSAC offices at (410) 767-6555.

## Requirements For Grant Recipients

- 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.
- Must comply with Title IV, Section 1681, of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex or age.
- Must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which states that no otherwise qualified person shall, solely by reason of his or her handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to, the arts.
- Must maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant.
- Must have filed a satisfactory reporting with MSAC for the most recently completed fiscal year.
- Must file a final report in alignment with the program requirements. Necessary reporting methods will be provided by MSAC in ample time to meet the deadline. Failure to report may jeopardize any future grant being received by the organization and may result in the organization being required to repay grant funds.
- Must give credit to MSAC in accordance with the Recognition Guidelines whenever and wherever credit is being given.
- Must notify the appropriate MSAC staff person in writing if a significant change is made in any MSAC-funded program or project.

*Notice: Certain personal information requested by 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 of these benefits or services. 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 is routinely shared with state, federal, or local government agencies.*

## Appeals Process

MSAC takes great care during the grant review process to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial of an award or with the amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, a grant request 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 and/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 letter requesting a reconsideration of the Council's decision and stating the grounds for the request.
- The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 90 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

# Special Request Grant Overview

The purpose of the Special Request Grant is to support needs of arts organizations and programs that may fall outside of the eligibility of MSAC's established grant programs. The Special Request Grant will increase access to and streamline the process of requesting special funds from the Maryland State Arts Council. Applicants may only receive funding for one application per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).

The Special Request Grant supports eligible activities of **Arts Organizations or Programs** only.

Deadlines for the Special Request Grant are rolling. The grant period for FY21 is July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021. Applications will be reviewed upon submission on the 5th of each month, and Special Request Grants will be awarded throughout the fiscal year until allocated funding is depleted.

- **Arts Organizations or Arts Programs**
  - Arts organizations or Programs may apply for Special Request Grants to support: Needs that may fall outside of the eligibility of MSAC's established grant programs.
  - Eligibility
    - An arts organization/program may only receive funding for one application per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).
      - Applicants may only apply once for each request.
    - The organization/program has one completed and documented fiscal year as of the date of the grant submission with ongoing arts activities.
    - The organization fits one of the following criteria:
      - Has a 501(c)3 tax exempt status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and is incorporated in Maryland
      - Has a 501(c)3 tax exempt status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, and has a significant physical presence in Maryland
      - Is a unit of Government/College/University

## Review Criteria

The review of all Special Request Grant applications is based on successful evidence of the answers to the following application questions:

1. What activities and Geographic Area will be supported with this funding?  
*(Recommended Response: Clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the proposed arts activities with detailed evidence of significant impact to Maryland's arts community(ies).)*
2. What is the timeline for the activities?  
*(Recommended Response: Clear, specific and realistic timeline demonstrating expenditure of funds, arts activity planning, and final implementation.)*
3. How will the success of the proposed activities be determined?  
*(Recommended Response: Clear, specific and realistic indicators of success for the proposed arts activity are communicated as well as a clear process for evaluation of these indicators.)*
4. What is the budget for the activities?

*(Recommended Response: Financial information is clearly tied to the proposed arts activity and indicates realistic expenses for its implementation.)*

## Application Process

### Smart Simple

MSAC utilizes the cloud-based grant system SmartSimple to accept grant applications. Only successfully submitted online applications will be accepted. Hard copy applications will NOT be accepted.

- Applicants are required to complete and submit their applications by electronic means, including the use of an electronic signature.
- Technical support for SmartSimple is available during regular office hours, 9:00 AM through 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.
- Lost, misdirected or late applications are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

## Grant Review and Evaluation Process

Applications for Special Request Grants are reviewed by the MSAC staff (requests under \$2,000), MSAC Executive Committee (requests \$2,000 - \$5,000) or the full Council (requests over \$5,000).

### Notification

Special Request Grant applications will be reviewed by MSAC within one month of submission and prepared for review by the Executive Committee of the Council or the full Council, as applicable, within two months following submission. After the review, applicants will be notified of the application status, and, if approved, receive a formal grant agreement form to process the grant payment (100% of award amount).

Grants above \$5,000 will be reviewed at the next scheduled Maryland State Arts Council meeting which may impact the timing of review and notification. The Council meets on a bimonthly basis but may occasionally meet on a quarterly schedule.

### Reporting Requirements

If awarded a Special Request Grant, the grantee must file a final report online no more than two weeks after the end of the Fiscal Year in which the funded activity occurred (July 15). The report contains a brief summary request as well as some demographic requirements of the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) and Commerce Economic Impact Department. Failure to submit reports may jeopardize the grantee's current and/or future MSAC grants and may result in repayment of grant funds. Before any funds are distributed, grantees must submit any outstanding reports/requirements for any other MSAC grants they have received.

**Grant Funds May Not Be Used For:** Re-granting; capital improvements or purchases of permanent equipment; acquisition of capital assets; activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members; activities that are principally recreational, therapeutic, or rehabilitative; 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. Grant funds may not be used to make

contributions to any persons who hold, or are candidates for elected office; to any political party, organization, or action committee; or in connection with any political campaign or referendum. Grant funds may not be used for any lobbying activities.

**Grant Funds May Be Used For:** Expenses directly associated with the proposed eligible request.