

# INFORMATION SESSION

## FY27 “How to Apply” Webinar GFO Intent to Apply

*\*Intended for New Organizations,  
who did not receive GFO FY26 funding*

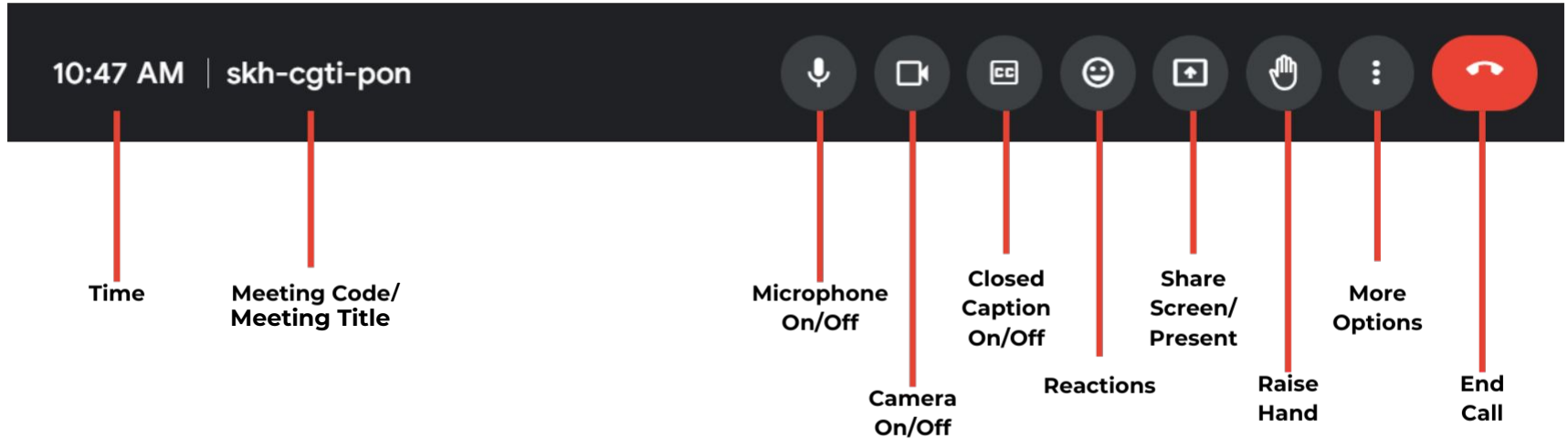
**Thursday, August 14, 2025**

**Presented by:**

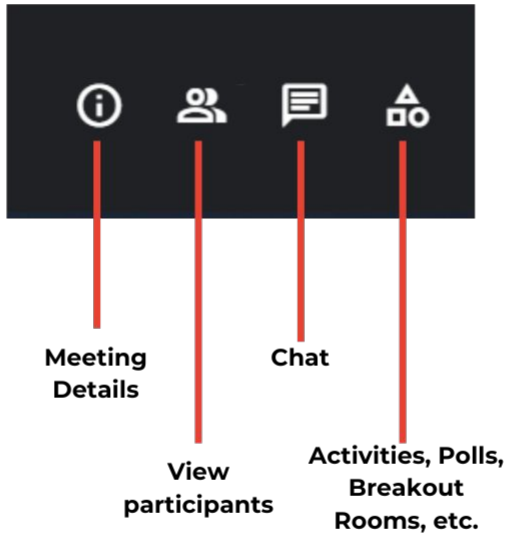
Emily Sollenberger & Laura Weiss  
Program Directors, Arts Services



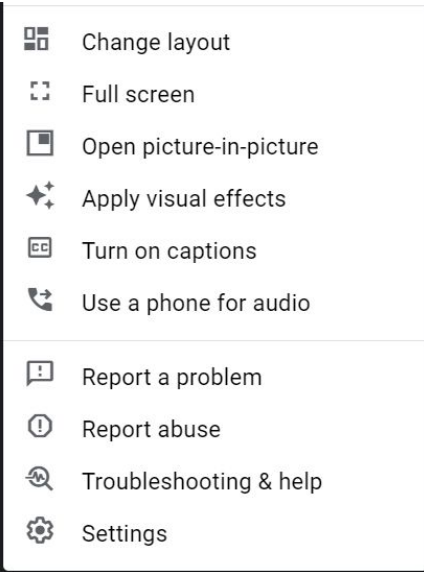
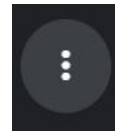
# Reference Shot of Features (1 of 2)



# Reference Shot of Features (2 of 2)



In “More Options”



# Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge the lands and waters now known as Maryland are the home of its first peoples: the Accohannock Indian Tribe, Assateague People's Tribe, Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, Choptico Band of Indians, Lenape Tribe, Nanticoke Tribe, Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Piscataway Conoy Tribe, Piscataway Indian Nation, Pocomoke Indian Nation, Susquehannock Indians, Youghiogheny River Band of Shawnee, and tribes in the Chesapeake watershed who have seemingly vanished since the coming of colonialism. We acknowledge that this land is now home to other tribal peoples living here in diaspora. We acknowledge the forced removal of many from the lands and waterways that nurtured them as kin. We acknowledge the degradation that continues to be wrought on the land and waters in pursuit of resources. We acknowledge the right of the land and waterways to heal so that they can continue to provide food and medicine for all. We acknowledge that it is our collective obligation to pursue policies and practices that respect the land and waters so that our reciprocal relationship with them can be fully restored.

# Equity and Justice Statement

The arts celebrate our state's diversity, connect our shared humanity, and transform individuals and communities. The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our organization 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.

## Vision

MSAC plays an essential role ensuring every person has access to the transformative power of the arts.

## Mission

MSAC advances 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 Strategic Plan - Pillars and Goals**

### **Access**

Bolster access to arts experiences and resources

### **Awareness**

Amplify the stories of Maryland's arts sector and the value of public support

### **Connection**

Foster networks within and beyond the arts sector

### **Equity**

Cultivate a thriving arts ecosystem centered in equity

### **Leadership**

Commit to a culture of care and innovation

# Creative Meeting Actions

**Celebrate** being in the space with other creative people.

**Engage** with everyone's presence as a gift.

**Acknowledge** that together we know a lot.

**Enter** the conversation with curiosity and inquiry.

**Share** your idea and trust that it will be heard.

**Use** "I" statements.

**Focus** your language on the task at hand.

**Hold** one another accountable with care.

**Honor** all perspectives and build on shared ideas.

**Balance** speaking with listening.



# Professional Development

- Info sessions
- Topic-specific sessions
- Coffee with the Council
- Office hours
- Maryland Arts Summit (visit [mdarts.org](https://mdarts.org))

*Share your ideas:*

<https://msac.org/contact>

*See upcoming sessions on Eventbrite:*

<https://tinyurl.com/pkw7pcrk>



# Ways to Get Involved

MSAC relies on a diverse array of constituents from across the state to give input in a variety of ways.

- Panelists review and score applications
- Editors give input on program policies
- Schedule of public calls and details at [msac.org/about/ways-get-involved](https://msac.org/about/ways-get-involved)
- Apply in SmartSimple
- Training and support
- Compensation provided for service



The screenshot shows the MSAC website with a red header. The main navigation bar includes links for ABOUT, PROGRAMS, OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES, and a button for EXPLORE THE ARTS IN MD. A featured image of yarn and fabric arts is displayed with a text overlay: "Yarn and fabric arts created by master artist Gwen Handler (Carroll County) and apprentice artist Winnie Dreier (Baltimore County) during a 2021-22 Folklife Apprenticeship on wool work." Below the header, the page title "Ways to Get Involved" is shown with a breadcrumb trail: Home > About > Ways to Get Involved. The content area lists "Public Calls: Paid Opportunities" with expandable sections for "Panelists" and "Editors", each with a plus icon. Below this, "Employment Opportunities" is listed with a "Current Openings" section, also featuring a plus icon. The footer contains social media icons, a "Maryland" logo, and links for Privacy, Terms of Use, Accessibility, Careers, and Translate, along with the copyright notice "© 2023 Maryland State Arts Council".

# Today's Agenda

- Review of the Grants for Organizations (GFO) Program
- Eligibility guidelines
- ***Revision Process!***
- Intent to Apply Application
- GFO Timeline/Next Steps
- Funding formula
- Smart Simple
- Q&A



# Grants for Organizations (GFO) Overview

# Grants for Organizations Overview

## Note:

- This presentation is an overview for the Intent to Apply ONLY today.
- Information Sessions for the full FY27 GFO application will be held later on in the fall.

# Grants for Organizations Overview

## Purpose of program:

- Provides operating support that strengthens and sustains Maryland's arts infrastructure
- In FY26, MSAC awarded over \$18 million in GFO funding to **305** organizations across the state.

# Grants for Organizations Overview

## **FY27 Deadlines:**

FY27 GFO Intent to Apply must be submitted by **Monday, September 15, 2025** at 11:59pm EST

FY27 GFO Application: **Saturday, November 15, 2025** at 11:59pm  
*(you will be notified after your Intent to Apply submission if accepted)*

\*technical assistance will not be available after normal business hours of Monday - Friday, 8am - 4pm.

# Grants for Organizations Overview

1. **Returning applicant** (received FY26 GFO award): you have already been accepted into the GFO program and do not need to complete an Intent to Apply → you'll move straight to the application due **November 15**.
2. **New applicant** (did not receive a FY26 GFO award): you are required to submit an Intent to Apply application due **September 15**, and accepted into the program to then apply for the full application **November 15**.
  - If you are a new organization that does not submit an Intent to Apply (or it wasn't approved), you will not be able to submit a Full Application for FY27 funding.



# GFO Eligibility & Use of Funds

# GFO - Who Can Apply?

## **Arts Organizations - General Operating Grant (GOG)**

- Nonprofit organizations whose purpose is producing or presenting the arts through public programs or services. Applicants must be arts organizations, organizations whose mission/purpose is producing or presenting the arts through public programs or services, such as art museums, orchestras, galleries, theaters, arts centers, etc.

# GFO - Who Can Apply?

## Art Programs (PRG)

- Organizations whose primary purpose is other than producing or presenting the arts, but who provide ongoing public arts activities through public programs. The mission of these organizations is not specifically dedicated to the arts but they do have ongoing arts programming. These are considered non-arts organizations for MSAC purposes. Examples include: community centers, places of worship, non-art museums, libraries, universities, etc.

# GFO - Who Can Apply?

- Arts Organizations/Programs
  - Must be 501(c)3 nonprofit, unit of government, school
    - Can be fiscally sponsored under Model A agreement
  - Be incorporated in Maryland as a nonprofit or have significant physical presence in Maryland.
  - Have operated as an arts organization or arts program for one full fiscal year and be able to submit a financial statement for their most recently completed fiscal year at the time of application
  - **NEW!** Have allowable income over \$10,000 (previously \$50K)
    - we'll talk about how this aligns with the Creativity program shortly!

# GFO - What can it support?

- General Operations!
  - This is not a project-specific grant program
  - Support of ongoing programming and operations of your organization
- Programming materials/supplies
- Marketing and Promotional activities
- Personnel and associated expenses
- Operations, such as rent, utilities, internet, etc.
- Professional development activities

# Grants for Organizations- What can't it support?

- Re-granting, scholarships
- Capital improvements
- Activities that aren't open to the public
- Activities that are primarily therapeutic
- Travel outside of MD
- As with any MSAC grant, the funds cannot be used for political contributions
- Not sure? Ask!

# Revision Process & What's Next in FY27

## GFO before FY25 Revision Process

The GFO program has been the “flagship” funding program of MSAC for many years. It last underwent a significant editing process for the full program in 2018, along with a revision to the funding formula in 2021.

For many years, the GFO program included multiple steps, within a 3-year cycle:

- Intent to Apply (new orgs)
- Two 2 different applications with different deadlines (On year / Off year)
- On Year = Review by public panelists (every 3 years)
  - Included review of written application, Artistic Site Visit, In-Depth Conversation, Panel meeting, resulting in a panel % score
- Staff reviewed applications and financial statements
- Final report



## Creativity Grant before FY25 Revision Process

You might have applied/received funds from the **Creativity Grant program**, which allowed for organizations to apply for general operating funds from FY19 - FY26 if not receiving general operating from another program (*GFO, County Arts Agencies, Arts & Entertainment Districts, Folklife Network*)

- Creativity has a different application process throughout the year.
  - Apply within the fiscal year on a rolling basis, generally July - March.
  - Applications reviewed and awarded monthly for up to \$4,000 (\$5,000 in FY25)
    - Reviewed by public panelists
  - Application included 3 questions
  - Required financial statement from last completed fiscal year.
  - Final report required

## GFO Editing Process

Arts Services Program Directors Emily Sollenberger and Laura Weiss have overseen the GFO program (and Creativity Grant) since 2019. Based on experience and feedback, Emily and Laura recommended a public editing process throughout FY25 to address overarching and persistent issues:

- Inherent nature of panelist subjectivity
- Variances in scoring (year to year, panel to panel, etc.)
- What is essential in the process to provide support to grantees?
- Substantial growth in the program/growing demand and needs for:
  - general operating support as other funding sources diminish
  - technical support for applying organizations
  - support and management of panelists

## GFO Editing Process

The Editing Process included:

- Public Call for Editors (late summer 2024)
  - 10 individuals, with varied levels of experience, from GFO-funded organizations and previous GFO panelists selected to review materials and develop policy recommendations
- Survey of GFO grantees (late summer 2024)
  - 51 responses provided feedback to shape policy development
- Research (Fall 2024)
  - Staff and National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) compiled research about national trends and best practices

## GFO Editing Process

- 3 Editor meetings (October and November 2024)
  - Editors participated in staff-guided discussions about issues and possible policies to address them
  - Editors completed “homework” in between meeting
  - The group came to a consensus of ideas and recommendations to work towards
- Two Public Listening Sessions (February 2025)
  - Over 110 people attended
  - Editor recommendations were shared
  - Overall, we heard positive feedback and general agreement on the proposed changes
- Policy Development (December 2024 - April 2025)
  - Emily and Laura developed recommendations, consulting with staff and keeping councilors apprised of work
- Presentation to Committee and Council (May - June 2025)
  - Council voted to approve all changes

## Topics we asked Editors to consider

1. What is *essential* in the GFO process to provide funding to arts organizations?
2. Should there be a role for the public (as a panelist or other reviewer role) in the process?
3. Building off of the last two discussions, is there a new GFO structure entirely to consider?

These questions drove our overall revision of the GFO program, resulting in the new process we'll share with you today.

# What we heard from the Editors

## Regarding the Application:

- General information (mission, vision, etc.) is important to know about an organization
- Significant application changes are needed for the On Year/Full Application
- Suggested Addition of including goals/benchmarks set by the organization within the Application
- Financials + Organizational attachments in the Application remain the same

## Regarding the Public Role:

- Yes, there is a role for the public
- Concerns with consistency of the panelists and their reviews from year to year
- There is value in the public visits with organizations; and there's a connection to public dollars

## Regarding Other Elements of the Process:

- Consider a Compliance model + Artistic Visits
- Remove panel meetings and scoring elements from the process
- Consider a new cycle structure to account for the number of organizations / visits

# **GFO Intent to Apply Application**

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- The Intent to Apply application is primarily focused on eligibility and compliance of the applying organization/program
- If your Intent to Apply is “approved,” this does not guarantee funding. This simply means you are invited to complete the full application to then be considered for funding (more on this later)



# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- The New Intent to Apply Process has a more in-depth application than the previous Process
  - The Full Application, if invited to submit, is significantly shortened from the previous version
  - Our goal is to get details concerning your organization's eligibility and compliance upfront through the Intent to Apply process, and then move to a streamlined full application process, annually.

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

- **Organizational Information**

- **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** – required upon submission of the application, and takes place of former DUNS.
  - Series of letters and numbers
- 501c3 determination date; and IRS Letter of Determination attachment
- If fiscally sponsored, include that information, and proof of Model A relationship

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- The artistic category that most accurately characterizes the work of your organization (dropdown selection)
- Has your organization operated for one full fiscal year? (Yes/No)
- Does your organization have a mission, vision, and stated goals/values? (Yes/No)
  - If Yes: Please state your organization's mission, vision, and goals/values

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- **Does your organization have ongoing programs to produce or present the arts to the public? (Yes/No)**
  - If Yes: Upload a list (no more than 2 pages) of all public programming that occurred in the last completed year. In your response, include a brief description of each type of program/event (ie - Main Stage Season, Exhibition Series, Educational Programming) and who the program/event served. If an activity is tuition/fee-based (such as Summer Camp, classes, etc.), describe how the activity is serving the community beyond those that are paying to participate

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- **Are you applying for an arts organization (organization's mission and programming is entirely arts-based) or for an arts program (arts programming is within a non-arts based organization, such as a program of a college or university, or larger entity)?**
  - If Arts Program: Briefly describe your ongoing, public, arts-based programming and the structure/relationship with your parent organization.
- **Is your organization incorporated in Maryland or have a significant physical presence in Maryland?**
  - If Yes: Describe your organization's Geographic Area of Service. Include specific details regarding community(ies), county(ies), city(ies), statewide areas you serve.

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- **Within your Geographic Area of Service, identify the percentage of programming serving the community** (other than tuition-paying constituents.) This would include free activities, along with activities that are open to the public to attend that may be free and/or paid opportunities.
  - *(Tuition-paying includes programming with a fee for service model, such as classes, camps, workshops, etc. that may be intended for a specific/closed group of people, and not open to the public)*
  - Dropdown of % options.

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- **Does your organization have a Board of Directors or another type of governing body?**
  - If Yes: Describe the role of the Board within your organization. Within your response, describe how the makeup of the Board is reflective of the organization's Geographic Area of Service
- **Tell us about your organizational structure - click on all the groups that apply to your organization**
  - A board of directors with officers or another type of governing body
  - Paid staff members (full time, PT, and/or contractual)
  - Volunteers (as staff, committees, etc.)
- **Upload a graphic/chart of the organization's staffing structure (include board, staff, artists, volunteers, etc within the chart).**

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## General Information + Eligibility Questions

- **Does your organization have a long term or strategic plan? (Yes/No)**
  - If Yes: Describe the priorities of the long term or strategic plan. Within your response, include specific goals and benchmarks of the plan.
  - If No: Describe the organization's long-range plans or future vision for the organization. Describe how these goals were established. (If your organization does not have long-range plan, future vision/goals, please indicate as such)



# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## Financial Questions and Information

- **Is your organization's total allowable income from FY2025 or CY2024 at least \$10,000? (Yes/No)**
- **Will your organization have an authorized financial statement for its most recently completed fiscal year (Fiscal Year 2025 or Calendar Year 2024) at the time of the application?** (Note - If the organization has allowable income of over \$750,000, an audited financial statement will be required as part of the full application.)
  - If Yes: upload your organization's financial statement, showing both income and expenses (such as a Profit & Loss statement) for most recently completed fiscal year (FY25 or CY24).

# GFO Intent to Apply - Application

## Financial Questions and Information

- **Please list the dates of your most recently completed fiscal year** (for example: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025; Jan 1, 2024 - Dec 31, 2024)
- **Does the organization have established procedures for financial oversight, which would include monitoring/approving of the organization's finances and annual budgeting process?**
  - If Yes: Describe procedures for monitoring and approving the organization's finances, and the process for developing and approving the annual budget.

**Electronic Signature of Authorizing Official required to complete.**

# GFO Next Steps

# GFO Intent to Apply - What's Next?

- Intent to Apply applications are due in Smart Simple by end of day (11:59pm) on **Monday, September 15, 2025**.
- After September 15, MSAC Program Directors will review all applications to determine final eligibility
  - If we have any questions or need additional information, we will reach out to you during this review period
- You will be notified by early October if you are accepted to move forward and submit a full application due **November 15**
- If not approved to move forward, MSAC will suggest the best program fit for your organization at this time

# Grants for Organizations - New Full Application

Starting with the FY27 application cycle, all GFO applicants will complete the SAME application every year (previously there were “On” and “Off Year” applications that varied from year to year).

All GFO applications will be due on November 15th of each year.

# Grants for Organizations - New Full Application

In addition to the eligibility/compliance requirements, the application will now focus on updates about the organization from the past fiscal year. Updates should include any significant changes to mission/vision/goals, staffing, leadership, operations, programming or other artistic activities, finances, etc.

Organizations will also be asked to share up to 5 goals/priorities of the organization for the next five years. These can be short or long terms goals. Goals/priorities may include goals associated with capacity building, finances, board/staff development, programmatic development, audiences/community engagement, new initiatives, etc.

- Application goals will later connect to the Final Report and future staff conversations with the organization

# Grants for Organizations - New Panelist Role

In the past, Panelists were asked to review and score all written applications. Panelists also conducted “Extension Assignments,” which included Artistic Activity Visits and In-Depth Conversations with applicants. Their work culminated in a Panel Meeting, where the final score of each applicant was discussed and determined.

Panelists will still be involved in the review process, but in a new way:

- Panelists will review (not score) written applications and complete Artistic Activity Visits
- MSAC Staff will review (not score) written applications and complete In-Depth Staff Conversations

# Grants for Organizations - New Review Cycle

The Artistic Activity Visit and Staff Conversation elements of the review process will occur once every four years on a rotating schedule. An example of the review schedule would include:

- **Year 1: Application + Artistic Activity Visit**
- **Year 2: Application Only**
- **Year 3: Application + Staff Conversation**
- **Year 4: Application Only**

*Your organization will be assigned to a certain year in the cycle depending on your Artistic Discipline*

**All NEW organizations** (completing the GFO application following the Intent to Apply application) will also complete BOTH the Artistic Activity Visit AND Staff Conversation in their first review cycle. Following that, if approved, they will fall into schedule per Artistic Discipline



# Grants for Organizations - Timeline

**August/September (you are here!):** Intent to Apply application is open in Smart Simple

**September 15 at 11:59pm:** Intent to Apply is due in Smart Simple

**Early October:** Intent to Apply notifications are sent

**October/November:** GFO Application open within Smart Simple

**November 15 at 11:59pm:** GFO Application due

**Winter:** Panelists are assigned to your application for review; MSAC staff reviews your application and financials

**January - April:** Panelists and Staff complete - Site Visits and In-Depth Conversations

# Grants for Organizations - Timeline

**May/June:** Recommendations for funding are made to the Council by staff; grant amounts are determined based on MSAC's budget

**After July 1st:** Notifications of all GFO grants are sent via Smart Simple

**Ongoing:** MSAC staff are available to answer questions, provide support, meet with staff/board, attend programs and events, etc.

## Reports:

Final Report due August 15

# GFO Funding Formula & FAQs

# GFO - Previous Funding Formula

**Total Allowable Income x Panel % x Cap Allocation % = Grant Award**

- Total Allowable Income: provided by organization within the annual application, based on updated statements
- Panel Score %: determined through the On Year application review process every 3 years
- Cap Allocation %: determined by MSAC GFO budget and organization Tier each year

Example:

$\$500,000 \times 90\% \times 7\% = \$31,500$

# GFO - Revised Funding Formula

**Total Allowable Income x ~~Panel %~~ x Cap Allocation % = Grant Award**

- Total Allowable Income: provided by organization within the annual application, based on updated statements
- Cap Allocation %: determined by MSAC GFO budget and organization Tier each year

**Removing the Panel % will leave two variables to determine awards each year**

# GFO - Equitable Funding Formula

Grant = Allowable Income x Panel % x **Cap Allocation %**

**Cap Allocation %s** are based on budget size, with organizations divided into five budget Tiers.

Tier 1: (\$50K - \$500K)

Tier 2: (\$500K - \$1.5M)

Tier 3: (\$1.5M - \$5M)

Tier 4: (\$5M - \$10M)

Tier 5: (\$10M+)

***\*moving into year 4 of 5 year transition that started in FY24***

# GFO - Equitable Funding Formula

Grant = Allowable Income x ~~Panel %~~ x **Cap Allocation %**

Grant Amount Cap:

Year 1: \$1.4M; Year 2: \$1.3M; Year 3: \$1.2M; **Year 4: \$1.1M**; Year 5: \$1M

Transition Priorities (over 5 year transition in alignment with program allocation):

- Tier 1 increases at a faster rate during the 5 year transition.
- Tier 2 increases steadily over the 5 year transition.
- Tier 3 remains stable during the transition.
- Tiers 4 & 5 do not decrease at a rate greater than 1.5% annually.

# GFO Scoring % Phase Out Schedule

In an effort to support the budget and funding stability of GFO organizations over 3 years.

Fiscal Year	FY26 Scores of 90%+	FY26 Scores of 80% to 89%	FY26 Scores of 70% to 79%
FY27	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)	Rounded up to 90% in funding formula	Rounded up to 80% in funding formula
FY28	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)	Rounded up to 90% in funding formula
FY29	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	<i>Score removed from formula</i>	Rounded up to 100% (score removed from formula)



Larger organizations (Tiers 4 and 5 - \$5 million+) who join the GFO program as **New Organizations** in FY27 - FY29 would also have a “phased in” process to the funding formula to ensure budget stability within the program.

Fiscal Year	Grant Amount
FY27	Would be eligible for 70% of total grant amount
FY28	Would be eligible for 80% of total grant amount
FY29	Would be eligible for 90% of total grant amount
FY30	New orgs could be eligible for 100% of total grant amount (end “phase in” process)

# Match Requirements

Previously, all GFO grants had a required 3:1 match in cash (excludes funds or services from the State and in-kind contributions). This match is checked by Program Directors in the Final Report.

**NEW** - the Match Requirement will be based on the organization's Tier in the GFO program

- Tier 1 and Tier 2 organizations (less than \$1.5 million in total allowable income) must match GFO funds at least **1:1 in cash**
- Tier 3, 4, & 5 organizations (allowable income \$1.5 million+) must match GFO funds at least **3:1 in cash**
- Funds or services from the State of Maryland, In-kind contributions, or donated services may not be used as part of the match

# Transition from Creativity to GFO

# Creativity Grant for General Operating Support

Over the past few years, smaller organizations transitioned out of the GFO program to a new, simplified grant option called the Creativity Grant

The intention of the Creativity Grant was to provide a shorter, easier application for smaller organizations to access MSAC funds.

An unintentional consequence of this change was that the Creativity Grant became extremely popular and, therefore, competitive. In some cases, this actually made it unintentionally harder for smaller organizations to receive MSAC funding.

# Creativity Grant for General Operating Support

With the revision of the GFO program, the Creativity Grant for General Operating Support will be closing permanently on **December 31, 2025**.

→ All General Operating Support for Arts Organizations/Programs will be housed under the GFO program moving forward.

→ The Creativity Grant for Project-Based Support will continue! If you do not receive General Operating Support or are not eligible for the GFO program, you can still choose this as an option for Project Support.

# Timeline for Transition

*During this period of transition, your organization will be applying for FY26 support through Creativity and FY27 support through GFO **at the same time***

**July 1, 2025:** FY26 Creativity Grant for Gen Op Support opens; applications accepted on a rolling basis with monthly review process

**Early August:** FY27 GFO Intent to Apply opens

**September 15, 2025:** FY27 GFO Intent to Apply deadline

**Early October:** FY27 GFO Intent to Apply notifications are sent

**November 15, 2025:** FY27 GFO Application due

**December 31, 2025:** FY26 Creativity Grant for Gen Op Support closes (permanently)

**Winter 2026:** FY27 GFO Review Process (with Artistic Activity Visits and Staff Conversations)

**After July 1, 2026:** FY27 GFO Notifications are sent; following this, your organization, if approved, would be considered “in” the GFO program. Unless otherwise notified, you would continue to submit the GFO application annually on November 15th.

# FAQs

## **GFO - FAQs**

**I've received GFO funding for the current year (FY26), do I need to complete an Intent to Apply?**

No - you are already considered in the program. Only new organizations or organizations who did not receive GFO funding for FY26 are required to complete the Intent to Apply

**I just have a one-time activity that needs support, should I apply to GFO?**

Probably not – GFO funding is to support the ongoing general operations of our arts organizations and programs. There is likely another program that will fit the one-time request for support.



## GFO - FAQs

### **Do I need to submit an audit with my application?**

Possibly - all organizations have to submit a financial statement(s) from the last completed fiscal year. Those with income under \$750K can submit a signed statement such as a Profit & Loss; those with income over \$750K are required to submit a board-approved audit with their application.

**My organization's planned budget for the upcoming year is over \$10K, can I apply for GFO funding?** Maybe - but keep in mind that the GFO program looks back to your most recently completed fiscal year financials (actuals). When determining funding, we only review completed financials. If the total allowable income for the last fiscal year is under \$10K, you would not be eligible for consideration at this time.

# Smart Simple & Questions

# Smart Simple

All applications must be submitted through Smart Simple  
([marylandarts.smartsimple.com](http://marylandarts.smartsimple.com))

As an applicant, you will need to register with Smart Simple to apply.

## Login

✉ Email

✉ Password

Login

[Forgot Password?](#)

New to the System?

Register

## Welcome to Maryland State Arts Council Portal

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.

Google Chrome is the recommended browser for completing applications in SmartSimple.

Go to [marylandarts.smartsimple.com](http://marylandarts.smartsimple.com) to register and/or log-in

## My Applications

**2**

Opportunities

**0**

In Progress

**1**

Submitted

**12**

Approved/Declined/Closed

Click on “Opportunities” on your Smart Simple dashboard

Arts and Entertainment District Annual Report	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Arts in Education Grant	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Arts in Education Teaching Artist Roster Application	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Creativity Grant	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Grants for Organizations	<a href="#">Apply Now</a> - Intent to Apply
Touring Grant	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Touring Roster	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>
Professional Development Opportunity Grant	<a href="#">Apply Now</a>

Click the **“Apply Now”** button to open the application



1. Click "Save Draft" at the bottom of this screen to begin the application. Please note, you will not be able to begin work on the application until you click "Save Draft."
2. Click "Save Draft" after completing each tab in order to save your work.
3. To navigate between tabs, click on the desired tab or use your browser's back button.
4. Click on the MSAC logo in the top left corner to go back to your profile. Be sure to click "Save Draft" at the bottom of the application prior to returning to your profile page.

*Please note: To return to a saved draft application, click "In Progress" from the Grantee Home dashboard. From there, select the draft application to be edited and/or submitted. Do not return to the Funding Opportunities area to search for the grant application again, as this will result in creating multiple applications.*



Starting September 1, 2022, the Unique Entity ID (UEI) field will be a REQUIRED field for all organizations (including nonprofit organizations, government entities, and schools/universities) applying for funding from MSAC. This will take the place of a DUNS number, which will no longer appear on organizational profiles. After 9/1, an organization without a UEI may be considered ineligible for funding. Independent Artists do not need to obtain a UEI.

Webinar Video (~57 min): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLCuPo2cQ4U>

Quick Start Guide: <https://msac.org/media/570/download?inline>

CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM DETAILS

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ATTACHMENTS

ELECT

SIGNATURES

Grant Contact Name:

NEXT >

Save Draft

✓ Submit

You have to click **"Save Draft"** to begin any application!

# Upcoming Sessions

**Sessions will be recorded and posted on website**

## **Upcoming sessions on Eventbrite:**

- Tuesday, 8/26 @ 4:00pm (Intent to Apply)
- Tuesday, 9/9 @11:00am (Full Application)



# Questions

**We are here to help!**

**Emily:** [emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov](mailto:emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov)

**Laura:** [laura.weiss@maryland.gov](mailto:laura.weiss@maryland.gov)

# Thank You!



GRANTS FOR  
ORGANIZATIONS

To learn about similar topics, news & to keep in touch, please join our mailing list at [tinyurl.com/MSACsMailingList](https://tinyurl.com/MSACsMailingList)