



The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector:

STRATEGIES FOR STABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY (ARTS LEADERSHIP)

Xiaomara Rivera of Puerto Rican cultural arts group Cultura Plenera
Photo by Edwin Remsberg Photographs

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The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Strategies for Stability and Sustainability for Arts Leadership

Introduction

The arts sector experienced unprecedented loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The estimated total economic impact to date is \$5.5 billion, nationally, and \$14.6 million in Maryland. 95% of all scheduled events were cancelled resulting in 1.3 million Marylanders, and 57.3 million Americans, not attending arts events.

As an immediate response to the pandemic, the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC), Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance, and Maryland Citizens for the Arts collaborated to offer four public LISTENING SESSIONS. The initial sessions were attended by 250 stakeholders who shared recommendations and prioritized actions to mobilize support. Through the public sessions, consistent communication guided independent artists to think of themselves as entrepreneurs and arts organizations to think of themselves as small businesses, and, for both individuals and organizations, to encourage the pursuit of applicable state and federal loan and grant programs. In addition to the LISTENING SESSIONS, three recurring virtual communities were established to deal with immediate concerns in real time, provide updates, hold the space for peer-to-peer sharing, and offer relevant professional development. A common thread evident in all public sessions was re-envisioning of the arts in Maryland. Total constituents in the combined virtual sessions numbered greater than 1,000 attendees, and the information collected formed the basis for ***The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Strategies for Stability and Sustainability*** series of guiding documents.

Within days of the declared state of emergency, the MSAC staff began drafting Emergency Grant guidelines and applications for arts organizations and independent artists to distribute \$1M of MSAC and CARES Act funding (through the National Endowment of the Arts). 165 applications were reviewed and evaluated and funding was approved for 125 applications: 64 arts organizations (\$871,318) and 61 independent artists (\$128,682).

In other MSAC grant programs, the Council approved suspension of matching requirements to allow programming to continue without the need for private contributions, extension of funding timelines by request, and removal of restrictive language on allowable expenses. All outstanding Arts in Education grant agreements for the remainder of the current academic year were submitted for payment in full with no additional activity expected of teaching artists.

The culmination of the above-listed activity resulted in the formation of the Maryland Arts Recovery Task Force, composed of representatives from the Maryland arts sector, private philanthropy, and members of state government to provide guidance for the reopening and recovery of the arts in our State. The Task Force produced four documents:

- ***The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Strategies for Stability and Sustainability (Arts Leadership)***

- Published for use by all Maryland arts stakeholders specifically inviting statewide arts leadership (Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, and the County Arts Agencies of Maryland) to utilize the findings as guideposts for short and long term planning.
 - *Encourage Collaboration*: How can artists and organizations work more collaboratively to strengthen their sustainability in the 21st Century?
 - *Sustain Current and Create New Funding Opportunities*: What is the future of arts funding and how can expanded and equitable funding practices be ensured?
 - *Design a Shared Marketing Campaign*: What is the unified message announcing a new vision for statewide arts engagement?
- ***The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Strategies for Stability and Sustainability (Arts Advocacy)***
 - Published for use by Arts Education in Maryland Schools and Maryland Citizens for the Arts to utilize the findings to guide advocacy planning.
 - *Strengthen the Arts Advocacy Message*: How is the importance of the arts as an economic driver, and as a necessity for the highest possible quality of life, brought to the attention of all lawmakers?
- ***The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Best Practices for Digital Arts Engagement***
 - Recommendations for artists and arts organizations developing digital content.
- ***The Future of Maryland's Arts Sector: Best Practices for In Person Arts Engagement***
 - Recommendations for MARYLAND STRONG: Roadmap to Recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as the inspiration for a reimagining of the work of artists and arts organizations across our State. The objective of the work of the Maryland Arts Recovery Task Force is to motivate an immediate and urgent response to artists, arts organizations, and arts audiences who have an integral and cost effective impact on Maryland's economy. By proactively investing in the social transformation provided by the creative sector, Marylanders will experience increased health and well-being as the result of an emboldened public spirit.

Strategy 1: Encourage Collaboration

Objective 1: Create an Arts Network

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Identify, support, and expand the network of organizations and collaborators to increase access both equitably and systemically to resources through connecting, sharing, and disseminating information in all communities throughout the state.

Actions:

- Capitalize on existing “organizations” and create new connectivity among them.
- Identify and address information gaps in specific geographic areas.
- Identify and address digital equity.
 - Market grants from the Governor's Office of Rural Broadband to provide financial assistance through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to expand internet access in the state.
- Leverage funding opportunities to learn more about constituencies and develop resources that meet their needs.
 - Collect basic information on supports needed beyond funding.
 - Invest in partnerships that can help in developing these resources.
 - Include opt-in questions that enable the reviewer to connect applicants to other good-match funding opportunities to expand their access to capital.
 - Highlight individual artists and their needs (funding, other needs)/interests through an ongoing Creative Conversations series.
- Engage the County Arts Agencies of Maryland to engage and strengthen local and regional partners.
- Utilize calendars that already exist or build statewide calendaring/resources guides (Example: CultureFly, CultureSpotMC).
- Create a regional portfolio (Example: Baker Artist Portfolio (with or without awards)) to create online communities for artists and to foster collaboration, partnership, and communication.
- Disseminate information including a digest of national service organizations recommendations and resources:
 - Communicating access to resources;
 - Communicating Best Practices;
 - Increasing efforts to ensure equity and inclusion;
 - Supporting communications strategies;
 - Supporting online commerce;
 - Supporting sector-wide announcements and messaging.

Objective 2: Create a Centralized List or Listserv

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Develop and manage a centralized list/listserv, populated by regional organizations and sortable by discipline and organizational budget size to build trust for collaborative relationships.

Actions:

- Create communication procedures with an awareness of regional inequities that affect timeline and cost.
- Ask County Arts Agencies to provide lists of artists, arts organizations and other stakeholders to create an inclusive listserv.
- Place special emphasis on the need to ensure equity among marginalized communities and isolated artists:
 - Share best practices of how communicating, connecting and sharing occurs within these communities.

Objective 3: Support Collaborative Efforts

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Provide access to consultants and officials that have experience in developing partnerships, mergers and memoranda of understanding.

Actions:

- Create and share a tool kit for governance evaluation.
- Create and share an organizational assessment tool to determine merger readiness.
 - Include access to case studies so that organizations can assess their situation prior to taking action.
- Coordinate forums and professional development to encourage the investigation of combining efforts among organizations.
- Facilitate collaborative meetings between possible partners including private, candid meetings between boards and administrators.

Strategy 2: Sustain Current and Create New Funding Opportunities

Objective 1: Expand Access to Funding and Philanthropic Practices

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Establish regular convenings for the Maryland arts sector with local and national arts organizations to explore funding models and philanthropic opportunities.

Actions:

- Invite national partners (Examples: Theatre Communications Group (TCG), American Alliance of Museums (AAM), Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), Working Artists and the Greater Economy (WAGE), Americans for the Arts (AFTA), National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)) to present information at the Maryland Arts Summit focusing on the current state of funding in the national arts sector.
- Develop a financial workshop series for organizations and independent artists that addresses critical best practices in developing financial plans and encouraging support on how to do so.
 - Develop one-pager resources on best practices.
 - Provide professional development learning opportunities about rainy day funds/reserves/financial planning and models
- Develop and fund Professional Development series to engage in honest conversations about rapid response to the ways in which arts organizations suspend their established programming (Emergency Preparedness Training), and how to find new ways to engage the community as participants and supporters.
- Increase the visibility of grant writing assistance through a consistent marketing campaign.
 - Host additional and geographic diverse grant writing workshops in preparation for grant deadlines.
- Create a unified ("common") application for County Arts Agencies (apply once to multiple counties with one application process).
 - Keep applications short and simple.
 - Keep scorecards simple and transparent.
- Create simple and clear rounds for review with reflection and adaptation points.
 - Create space for reviewers to process questions together before making final decisions.

Objective 2: Examine and Revise Programs

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools

Equitably engage with the target constituency to design programs that impact educational, social, environmental and economic goals.

Actions:

- Engage the constituency in all aspects of programmatic development.
 - Listen and evolve based on recommendations.
 - Offer compensation to all participants.
 - Treat programmatic development as a learning moment (as funder to learn constituent perspective, as a constituent to learn funder perspective).
- Integrate creative community leaders into state agency and departmental teams to support creative problem-solving focused on complex social issues, especially around social determinants of health.
- Fund a statewide Maryland Arts Corps of creative leaders at emerging, mid, and executive levels available to serve embedded in public-facing, grassroots arts and non-arts organizations to apply creative perspectives, tools and methods.
- Create a Teaching Arts Corps as a distinct aspect of the overall program that includes partnerships in schools (Example: Turnaround Arts).
- Adjust for disparity or imbalance of applicant resources to apply (Example: Organizations with advancement teams will have different capacity to complete applications than one without and the application might look different; and applicants without reliable internet).
 - Prioritize funding to and for marginalized communities with limited access.
 - Create a new funding opportunity to support digital access and reduce digital disparity.
- Set specific, quantifiable goals around racial equity.
 - Prioritize communities disproportionately impacted.
 - Be transparent about the prioritization and why.
- Examine funding formulas for FY21 (and possibly future) grants, taking into account the loss of income associated with COVID-19 in FY20.
- Create new project grants to assist community-based arts organizations/artists who are in the trenches directly assisting with the healing of the community members post COVID-19
- Add a capacity building grant (particularly in connection to positions needed or lost due to COVID-19).
- Invest in at least one new A&E district in each county and county equivalent as an economic engine to rejuvenate that region.
- Make a large, strategic state investment in Maryland's most competitive commercial creative industries in order to attract and direct flows of social impact investments to back a pilot portfolio and seed the enterprise ecology with smaller, targeted investments.

Strategy 3: Design a Shared Marketing Campaign

Objective 1: Enhance Storytelling

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Highlight and distribute stories focused upon the vision for the future of Maryland's arts sector to current and yet to be engaged audiences to elevate the awareness of the impact of the arts.

Actions:

- Amplify the stories of people-of-color owned and operated arts orgs in an effort to underscore their importance to the region and their resilience.
- Ensure that constituents with limited or no Internet access may engage with new marketing materials.
- Create three marketing toolkits that enhance constituents' ability to engage.
 - Invite and pay independent artists to design some graphic elements used in marketing toolkits.
 - Develop marketing toolkit for artists informed by public safety best practices and focusing on artists' roles as creators and ambassadors
 - Develop marketing toolkit for arts organizations that are informed by public safety best practices and focusing on arts organizations' roles in facilitating milestone events and highlighting cultural workers as local ambassadors
 - Develop audience marketing toolkit informed by public safety best practices and focusing on story-sharing mechanisms for engaging with the arts in public or at home
- Develop online "dashboard" giving constituents access to artist, arts organizations, and audience marketing toolkits
 - Develop print version of "dashboard" for distribution in areas with limited or no Internet access
- Create an "Arts Ambassadors" initiative using well known public figures to highlight the return of the arts sector.
 - Create a scalable version of "Arts Ambassadors" initiative to be deployed at regional and county levels.
- Repurpose "Coffee With Ken" series to collect stories from artists, arts organizations, and individuals for potential use in future marketing materials.
- Identify three milestone events to be celebrated at arts organizations in conjunction with the progress of the Roadmap to Recovery plan.

Objective 2: Publicize the ROADMAP TO RECOVERY

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Develop a flexible reopening timeline with associated actions based on the most current Roadmap to Recovery information.

Actions:

- Include ROADMAP TO RECOVERY information as featured collateral with each of the three marketing toolkits.
 - Create webinars for the three marketing toolkits to explain the unique purpose of each one
- Develop a marketing plan that amplifies the recommendations of other Task Force Work Groups.
 - Advocate for funds to support costs associated with the reopening marketing plan.
 - Create a webinar series highlighting the recommendations of each Task Force Work Group.
 - Via social media, frame the story of public art as an opportunity for arts engagement that is possible in the early stages of the reopening.
- Frame all reopening marketing efforts as best practices informed by the data-driven work of cultural consultants.

Objective 3: Create a Collaborative Marketing Plan

Lead Organizations: Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, County Arts Agencies of Maryland

Align marketing efforts across the Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, the Office of Tourism and the Department of Commerce.

Actions:

- Establish a collaborative marketing team with lead representatives from Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland State Department of Education's Fine Arts Office, Arts Education in Maryland Schools, Maryland Citizens for the Arts.
- Make regular efforts to re-engage with constituents to ensure that marketing efforts are of service.
 - Develop unified messaging for use in artist, arts organizations, and audience toolkits, as well as across reopening marketing efforts.
 - Leverage existing media resources to highlight stories from Arts in Education grantees.
 - Amplify constituent stories in all marketing efforts.
 - Develop graphic resources, including logos, decals, stencils, and social media profile picture frames, for inclusion in marketing toolkits.

- Identify strategic media channels most suited to each of the three marketing toolkits.
 - Leverage the video storytelling resources of the Wide Angle Youth Media (WAYM) portfolio to highlight region-specific arts activities.
- Invite Arts & Entertainment Districts to champion marketing toolkits for artists, arts organizations, and audiences in their own regions.
- Invite county arts agencies to champion marketing toolkits for artists, arts organizations, and audiences in their own regions.
- Align marketing efforts with local and regional needs regarding the severity of the public health emergency in different areas.
- Leverage existing media resources to highlight stories from Presenting & Touring grantees.
- Leverage the visual storytelling resources of the Remsberg, Inc., photographic folklife portfolio to highlight region-specific traditional arts activities.

Appendix I: Task Force Participants

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Delegate Brooke Lierman, Maryland House of Delegates
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