



## Creativity Grant FY2023 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)

# Maryland State Arts Council

## Overview

The Maryland State Arts Council (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.

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. MSAC also awards grants to individual artists and provides technical and advisory assistance to individuals and groups. MSAC reserves the right to prioritize grant 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. MSAC 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  
R. Michael Gill, Secretary  
Signe Pringle, Deputy Secretary  
Thomas B. Riford, Assistant Secretary  
Steven Skerritt-Davis, Executive Director, MSAC

## 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 most recent strategic plan outlines five goals:

1. **Increase Participation:** Broaden MSAC's constituency, providing avenues designed to increase pathways to engagement.
2. **Provide Intentional Support:** Embrace thoughtful and targeted approaches to serving known and yet to be known MSAC constituents.
3. **Build Capacity:** Work strategically to further build organizational and governance capacity to ensure that MSAC is capable of vigorously delivering on its mission.
4. **Leverage Connections:** Further enhance current relationships and involve additional collaborators, and constituents who will benefit from and advance the work of MSAC.
5. **Bolster Maryland Arts:** Showcase the high caliber, diverse and relevant work of Maryland's artists and arts organizations; their contributions to community vitality and MSAC's role as a catalyst.

Visit the About Us page at [msac.org](http://msac.org) to read the full strategic plan and 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. The Maryland State Arts Council (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, class, language, and/or ability.

The driving goals of MSAC's granting 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 Policy

The Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) is committed to making sure all Marylanders can access our programs and services. Everyone is welcome, and all events and activities sponsored by or operated within MSAC are fully accessible both physically and programmatically. MSAC complies with all applicable disability-related statutes and regulations and seeks to ensure meaningful participation by all Marylanders regardless of need or ability.

### Feedback Procedures

If guests would like to provide general feedback to MSAC about accessibility for MSAC's programs or programs funded by MSAC, contact MSAC at [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov).

### Grievance Procedures

#### **For programs or services provided by MSAC**

If a program or service operated by MSAC, facilities operated by MSAC, or public meetings conducted by MSAC are inaccessible to persons with a disability or is illegally discriminatory and you want to file a grievance:

- If you have any questions or would like to discuss the situation before filing a grievance, contact the Accessibility Coordinator.
- To file a formal grievance, contact Dan Leonard, Director of EEO & Fair Practices and ADA Coordinator: [daniel.leonard@maryland.gov](mailto:daniel.leonard@maryland.gov)

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

- Communicate the grievance to the sponsoring organization.
- If you think your grievance was not handled appropriately by the sponsoring organization, or if you have not received a response from the organization within thirty (30) days, contact MSAC to file a formal grievance at 410-767-6555 or [msac.commerce@maryland.gov](mailto:msac.commerce@maryland.gov).
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MSAC will work with you to provide assistance as appropriate.

## Accessibility Web Page

MSAC has a dedicated accessibility page on [msac.org](http://msac.org) that includes contact information for the accessibility coordinator, federal and state regulations, the organization's Equity and Justice statement, grievance procedures, an emergency preparedness plan, accommodation policies, and other accessibility resources for artists and arts organizations, and PECS images.

## 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, Independent Artist Awards, Public Art Across Maryland, Creativity Grants, Maryland Touring Grants, Maryland Touring Artist Roster, Maryland Traditions grants, and County Arts Development. Anyone wishing to serve should visit [msac.org](http://msac.org) for detailed information and application forms for any open calls.

## 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 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.

## Accessibility Requirements for Grant Recipients

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:

1. Comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, as amended.
2. Prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, material status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin; of (b) gender expression, sex, or age, except when age or sex constitute a bona fide occupational qualification; or (c) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.
3. Designate an Accessibility Point of Contact to ensure compliance, receive accommodation requests, and document grievances, and publish direct contact information for the Point of Contact to the public.
4. Create and publicly share a grievance procedure to allow stakeholders to address any events or programs that are inaccessible.
5. Upon request, submit documentation of operations and compliance with the above.

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.

# Overview

## Purpose

The purpose of the Creativity Grant Program is to strengthen the vitality and sustainability of artists and small organizations to maintain a strong and stable arts infrastructure in the State of Maryland. The Creativity Grant also provides opportunities to serve the growing needs of relevant arts projects and collaborations within Maryland communities.

## Grant Cycle

### Funding

The Creativity Grant Program supports eligible activities of **Independent Artists** and **Arts Organizations**, with grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

### Support Period

Deadlines for the Creativity Grant Program are rolling. Applications will be reviewed monthly, and Creativity Grants will be awarded throughout the fiscal year until allocated funding is depleted. Applicants may only be funded once per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).

The grant period for FY23 is July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023. For awarded activities, payment may take up to 90 days.

## Eligibility

- **Independent Artists**
  - Artists working without an affiliation to an organization may apply for Creativity Grants to support:
    - Individual or collaborative projects.
  - Independent Artist eligibility for Creativity Grants:
    - Must be a Maryland resident (owning or renting residential real property in Maryland at the time of application submission and throughout the funded project or program) and must be 18 years of age or older.
    - The artist must produce or present projects or programs that are relevant to their community and are available to the public.
    - The applicant must be the lead artist whose original work is included in the project or program.
    - The proposed project/artistic work must take place in Maryland.
    - An artist may be named (as lead artist or collaborator) in one application per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30).
    - Only one application per project or program will be considered for funding.



- Emily Sollenberger, Program Director, Arts Services (Visual/Media Arts, Multi-Discipline, Folk/Traditional Arts, Service): [emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov](mailto:emily.sollenberger@maryland.gov), 443-326-5637
- Laura Weiss, Program Director, Arts Services (Theatre, Music, Dance, Literary Arts): [laura.weiss@maryland.gov](mailto:laura.weiss@maryland.gov), 443-326-5564
- Program-specific technical assistance
  - Tammy Oppel, Grants Associate: [tammy.oppel@maryland.gov](mailto:tammy.oppel@maryland.gov), 443-326-5555

## Application Process, Review, and Reporting

### Process

#### SmartSimple

All applications are submitted via the secure online grants management system SmartSimple. Log in or create a free account at [marylandarts.smartsimple.com](http://marylandarts.smartsimple.com).

- 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.
- Lost, misdirected or late applications are the sole responsibility of the applicant.
- Applicants must meet all revision deadlines after submission, as specified in writing, or the application will be withdrawn.

#### Matching

There are no matching requirements for the Creativity Grant

#### Use of Funds

Creativity Grant funds may be used for:

- Expenses directly associated with the proposed eligible arts activities, including but not limited to artist payment/stipends; consultant fees; honoraria; contractual services; administrative expenses; transport; artistic materials and supplies; space/venue/equipment rental.

Creativity 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; travel outside Maryland to present or produce arts; 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.



## Application Types

The Creativity Grant application has two options for funding - one is for General Operating Support (for Organizations only) and one is for Project-Based Support (for Independent Artists or Organizations).

## Review Criteria

### General Operating Support (Organizations Only):

The review of General Operating Support Creativity Grant applications is based on successful evidence of the answers to the following application questions:

1. During this fiscal year, what arts activities/programming and geographic area will be supported by this funding? Address the community impact of the organization's arts activities/programming. *(Includes clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the organization's planned activities/programming, which includes clear and thorough evidence of community impact; including engagement, intention, timeliness and/or inspiration in relation to the defined community's needs.)*
2. Describe the timeline of your organization's entire season or fiscal year. *(Includes clear, specific and realistic timeline for the entirety of the season/fiscal year, including specific timing as it relates to expenditure of funds, planning, promotional efforts, implementation of events/activities, and evaluation).*
3. What is the organization's overall budget for this fiscal year? Include a clear list of all projected income and expenses. *(Includes detailed financial information tied to the proposal and indicates realistic expenses for implementation of the proposed events/activities, and any anticipated or committed income).*

### Project-Based Support (Organizations or Independent Artists):

The review of Project-Based Creativity Grant applications is based on successful evidence of the answers to the following application questions:

1. What arts activity/event/project and geographic area will be supported by this funding? Address the community impact of the arts activity/event/project. *(Includes clear, specific, and thorough explanation of the artist or organization's proposed arts activity/event/project, which includes clear and thorough evidence of community impact; including engagement, intention, timeliness, and/or inspiration in relation to the defined community's needs).*

2. What is the timeline for the proposed arts activity? *(Includes clear, specific, and realistic timeline demonstrating a realistic schedule, including specific timing as it relates to expenditure of funds, planning, promotional efforts, implementation of events/activities, and evaluation).*
3. What is the overall budget for the arts activities, and how will the MSAC funding be used? Include a list of all projected expenses and sources of income beyond the MSAC request. *(Detailed financial information tied to the proposal is provided and indicates realistic expenses for implementation of the proposed events/activities, and any anticipated or committed income).*

Please review the Creativity Grant Application Scoring Rubric under Resources [here](#)

## Financial Requirements

**Independent Artists** are not required to submit financial statements with the application.

**Organizations** must submit a financial statement from the last completed fiscal year demonstrating an allowable income figure, expenses, and having operated for at least one full fiscal year. (Example: Profit & Loss Financial Statement)

**Allowable Income Figures** include ticket sales, tuition, donations, foundation support, corporate support, public support, gift shop sales, fundraisers, etc.

**Non-allowable Income Figures** are loans, carryover, debt forgiveness, transfer of funds earned in prior years, revenue raised for capital or endowment funds or funds intended for the purpose of re-granting, and unrealized gains/losses. These items may be included in your financial statement or budgets but will not be used to determine your grant amount.

All applicants are required to submit a current signed [W-9 Form](#) upon application submission. The address on the W-9 Form must match the address of the applicant information entered in SmartSimple.

## Review

### Panelist Selection and Review

MSAC utilizes a multi-disciplinary, statewide grant panel to electronically review (approve or deny) applications on a monthly basis for grant requests over \$2,000. Applications for grant requests of \$2,000 or less are reviewed by MSAC program staff only.

Creativity Grant applications submitted by the fifth day of the month will be reviewed by the panel within the same month. Applications received after the fifth day of the month will be reviewed by the panel in the following month.

If multiple applications receive the same score but budget restrictions prevent all applications with that score from being funded, final selections will be based on which applications most

closely align with the published strategic goals of the Maryland State Arts Council, in the determination of the MSAC staff: Increase Participation, Provide Intentional Support, Build Capacity, Leverage Connections, Bolster Maryland Arts.

### Funding Amounts

Creativity Grants are available for \$1,000 - \$4,000. 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).

### Notification and Payment

After the monthly panel review, applicants will be notified of the grant status as soon as possible, and, if approved, receive a formal grant agreement form to process the grant payment (100% of award amount).

*For example: Applications received between June 6 - July 5 will be reviewed in July with notification by July 31.*

The grantee will receive payment 6 to 8 weeks from the date of receipt of a fully executed Grant Agreement Form.

To receive grant payments via direct deposit, please follow the instructions and complete the required forms from the [Comptroller of Maryland](#).

If an application is denied funding three times within a fiscal year and/or for the same project, the Executive Director will determine eligibility for future submissions of the same proposal. It may be determined that the application is not eligible for submission again.

## Reporting

### Final Report

If awarded a Creativity Grant, the recipient must file a final report online in Smart Simple by August 15, 2023. The report contains a brief summary request as well as some demographic requirements of the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts). Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current and/or future MSAC grants and may result in repayment of grant funds back to the State of Maryland. Before any funds are distributed, Creativity grantees are also required to submit any outstanding reports/requirements for any other MSAC grants they have received.