



COUNTY ARTS DEVELOPMENT GRANT FY 2028 Guidelines

for County Arts Agencies of Maryland Network Partners

DEADLINE:

December 31, 2026 for Off-Year Applicants

January 31, 2027 for On-Year Applicants

SUPPORT PERIOD: July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2028



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



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

This publication is available as a PDF on our website: www.msac.org.

Table of Contents

Program Overview.....	3
Purpose.....	3
Grant Cycle.....	4
Funding.....	4
Support Period.....	4
Use of Funds.....	5
Timeline.....	5
Eligibility.....	6
Application, Review, and Award.....	6
Application and Review.....	6
SmartSimple.....	6
Panelist service.....	6
Application form.....	6
Review Process.....	9
Award.....	10
Notification.....	10
Disbursement.....	10
Disbursement Status.....	10
Changes in Funded Activities.....	11
Reporting.....	11
Ineligible and Declined Applications.....	11
Application Feedback.....	12
Contact Information.....	12
MSAC Overview.....	13
Description.....	13
Authority.....	13
Staff.....	13
Meetings.....	13
Mission and Goals.....	13
Equity and Justice Statement.....	14
Accessibility.....	14
Accessibility Web Page.....	14
Language Access.....	14
Feedback.....	15
Complaints.....	15
Grantmaking.....	16
Appeals.....	16
Grantee requirements.....	16
Disclosure of personal information.....	17

Program Overview

Purpose

County Arts Development (CAD) grants support for County Arts Agencies of Maryland in each of the 24 jurisdictions to extend the service of the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) with the goals of providing:

- a vital connection with artists, arts organizations, and audiences throughout the State;
- encouragement of local arts activity of all disciplines in all of Maryland's diverse communities; and
- equitable funding for the arts on the local level through transparent processes that are accessible to all county constituents.

Each county arts agency is responsible for:

- Adhering to all grantmaking and reporting requirements, as communicated by MSAC.
- Making grants to local organizations for arts activities through open, transparent, accessible, and publicized grant programs.
- Supporting local independent artists through grants, programs, and/or technical assistance.
- Supporting local Arts in Education programming outside of school curricula through direct programming or regranting. CAD agencies should support arts education programming that enhances school curricula and expands or deepens schools' commitment to the arts. Programming should build on, not replace, arts instruction that schools and school systems are expected to fund as part of the regular school curriculum. CAD agencies can utilize CAD grant funds to support these efforts or other funding sources as available.
- Maintaining programs that are responsive and equitably benefit all county constituents.
- Maintaining a website that publicizes the county arts agency's grants and programs with current eligibility and grant deadlines and links to MSAC's site and relevant opportunities.
- Maintaining and utilizing a distribution list of local constituents for sharing funding and other opportunities.
- Sending regular communications (email, social media, and/or print, etc.) promoting county arts agency and MSAC opportunities.
- Maintaining a current profile page on MSAC's website.
- Providing MSAC with ongoing updates of local needs and concerns through scheduled reports, mid-year site visits, and additional communications.
- Establishing a process for communicating grantee noncompliance or other concerns, particularly for grantees receiving direct MSAC funding in addition to funding from the County Arts Agency. This ensures MSAC staff can offer timely and appropriate technical assistance.
- Arranging regular site visits for MSAC to meet with county arts agency leadership, board, and/or constituents to assess needs and share ideas and opportunities.

MSAC:

- Provides funding, guidance, resources, and support to aid in the creation and implementation of county arts agencies' three-year plans.
- Provides tools and resources to aid the county arts agency's infusion of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in all aspects of its work.
- Maintains MSAC grantmaking and reporting schedules, facilitating county arts agencies' access to MSAC application and reporting materials, and providing technical support as needed.
- Solicits professional development needs and provides professional development opportunities for

the 24 county arts agencies as well as technical assistance to individual county arts agencies and their constituents as needed or requested.

- Hosts digital resources for county arts agencies to publicize grant opportunities, programs, and events
- Shares the impact of county arts agencies' work.
- Responds to local needs and concerns communicated by county arts agencies through scheduled reports and other communications.
- Makes regular site visits to each county arts agency to meet with leadership, board, and/or constituents to assess needs and share ideas and opportunities.

Grant Cycle

MSAC uses a staggered, three-year application cycle to conduct reviews of CAD applications. County arts agencies must submit an "On-Year" application every three years, and "Off-Year" applications the two years in between. Applications are submitted annually by all county arts agencies, but the "Off-Year" is a simplified application.

On-Year Application (every 3 years)

- County arts agencies submit a three-year plan that details how the county arts agency will meet constituent needs as well as MSAC CAD goals through their grant making and programs.
- Applications are reviewed by MSAC staff and a review panel.

Off-Year Application (intervening 2 years)

- County arts agencies submit an application that details any changes to its three-year plan, required financial reporting, and any requests for professional development.
- Applications are reviewed by MSAC staff.

MSAC staff, panelists or councilors can recommend a county arts agency be required to submit a full application in any subsequent fiscal year for reasons including but not limited to: submission of a three-year plan that requires revision or further review, grant noncompliance and/or, or significant changes in budget, programming, operations, or leadership.

Funding

County Arts Development Grants are based on a funding formula. The funding formula includes two components:

- A block grant that divides 90% of the allocated budget among the counties equally.
- And a population grant that divides the remaining 10% of the allocated budget among the counties based on the percentage of the state's population.

County Arts Development Grants are available annually.

Support Period

County Arts Development program funds support activities taking place during the fiscal year (FY28) in which funds are awarded. MSAC's FY 2028 is July 1, 2027 to June 30, 2028.

Grantees agree to spend or obligate all funds by June 30, 2028. Obligation means that awarded funds are expended, encumbered, or otherwise legally committed to be used, such that returning the unspent funds would cause the grantee legal harm.

Use of Funds

Allowable use of CAD grant funds include the following types of expenses:

- Re-granting to local organizations, artists, and schools to support arts programming or projects that benefit county residents
- Arts programming that serves county residents
- Services to artists and arts organizations working within the county
- Administrative and operating expenses of the county arts council, **not to exceed** 60% of the annual grant award.

NOTE

County Arts Agencies that use more than 60% of their grant award for administrative and operating expenses may be required to repay the amount that exceeds the 60% limit.

Grant Funds (including re-granted funds) may not be used for:

- Activities not open to the general public with the exception of Arts in Education programming which may be restricted to enrolled students.
- Operating grants to organizations outside of the county
- Programming or projects outside of the county
- Non-arts programming or projects
- Projects, performances, expenses, and activities that are part of school curricula (i.e., school art teacher's salary or classroom art supplies)
- Capital expenses, improvements, or purchases of permanent equipment
- Activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization's members
- Accessions
- Allocations to cash reserve
- Acquisition of capital assets
- Depreciation
- Deficits
- Loan principal payments
- Contributions to endowments
- Scholarships awarded by the applicant for its own activities
- Contributions to any persons who hold, or are candidates for, elected office
- Contributions to any political party, organization, or action committee
- Activities in connection with any political campaign or referendum
- Lobbying activities
- Lobbying activities

Timeline

The grant timelines below are estimates and may change according to application volume, funding changes, constituent needs, staff capacity, or other factors. Subscribe to MSAC communications to be notified of any public information sessions and other program updates by completing [the signup form on our webpage](#).

- Application Deadline
 - December 31, 2026 for Off-Year Applicants
 - January 31, 2027 for On-Year Applicants
- Application review
 - Panelist review period (On-Year):
 - Written Application Review: February - April 2027
 - Extension Assignments (In-depth conversation): March - April 2027

- Panel meeting (virtual): late April 2027
 - Staff review period (On-Year and Off-Year): January - April 2027
- Program Director finalize formula for Grant Recommendations: May 2027
- Council and Commerce Review and Approval: June 2027
- Notification: late July 2027
- Final Report Deadline: August 15, 2028

Eligibility

To be eligible for CAD funding, the county arts agency must be designated by the jurisdiction's government as the official arts agency or council of the jurisdiction. If the county arts agency is not a branch of the county or city government, it must be registered as a not-for-profit corporation in Maryland exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Organizations receiving funding through the Grants for Organizations program are not eligible for additional funding through the CAD program in the same fiscal year.

The eligibility guidelines listed above provide an overview only. In some cases, MSAC staff might make eligibility determinations addressing situations not described here but in support of the mission of the agency and the Department of Commerce.

Application, Review, and Award

Application and Review

SmartSimple

Applications are submitted via the secure, online grants management system, SmartSimple. Log in or create a free account on the [SmartSimple registration page](#).

- Applicants are required to complete, submit, and sign applications digitally. To make an accessibility request for an alternative submission method, please contact the program director listed in the Contact Information section
- Technical support for SmartSimple is available. See contact information section
- After submission, applicants must meet any revision deadlines as specified in writing. Failure to meet such deadlines will result in the application being considered withdrawn
- By submitting an application to MSAC the applicant agrees to allow MSAC to retain records per state and federal document retention laws and policies. The applicant is also agreeing to the Terms and Privacy Policy of SmartSimple as applicable to MSAC

Panelist service

MSAC convenes panelists, representing a range of arts expertise statewide, to evaluate applications electronically. Panelists are selected via public application process and based on relevant experience and expertise. Opportunities to serve as panelists for various grant programs are posted throughout the year; individuals interested in panel service are encouraged to learn more and apply on MSAC's [Ways to Get Involved](#) webpage.

Application form

The grant application is a digital form available in SmartSimple and consisting of prompts requiring dropdown menu selections, fill-in answers, and external file uploads.

Application prompts are provided below, for reference.

On-Year Application

- I. State the mission, vision, goals and values of the county arts agency.
- II. Plan Context
 - A. Describe the county. Include general descriptions of the county's demographics and data points to support the description.
 - B. What are the current needs of your constituents when it comes to arts funding, programming, and services?
 - C. How did the county arts agency determine these needs?
 - D. How does the mission of the county arts agency connect to the identified constituent needs?
 - E. Has the county arts agency identified any trends that could impact its service to the county over the three-year period, and in what ways does the agency plan to address these changes?
- III. Describe the process for developing the county arts agency's three-year plan. Who was involved in the plan's creation, and how was community input solicited and incorporated?
- IV. Plan:
 - A. List up to five priorities of the county arts agency for the next three years.
 - B. Complete the chart below for each activity, project, or program of the county arts agency.

Activity, Project or Program (<i>identify as established, new, or planned</i>)	How will the activity, project or program address the county arts agency's priorities identified above?	How will the activity, project, or program address identified constituent need(s)?	How will the activity, project or program address the CAD program's goal(s)?

- C. Provide details about the county arts agency's grantmaking process. In your response, include:
 1. How the county arts agency will ensure all constituents have access to grant programs;
 2. How the county arts agency's grant application, adjudication, and award processes will reflect a commitment to equity; and
 3. How will transparency be reflected in the grantmaking process?
- D. Describe how the county arts agency's programs and grantmaking will serve all arts disciplines, diverse communities, and the entire county over the next three years.
- E. Describe the county arts agency's Arts in Education goals for the three-year period and how it will achieve them in schools and/or community settings. (Note - MSAC funds may not support activities that are part of a school's curriculum such as school art teacher's salary or classroom art supplies.) In your response, include:
 - Whether the goals will be accomplished through direct programming, regranting, or both.
 - The total amount of funding allocated to support Arts in Education programming and/or grantmaking for each fiscal year.

- Whether Arts in Education programming is supported by MSAC (CAD) general operating support, other funding sources, or both.

F. Estimate the use of MSAC CAD FY2028 funding based on the county arts agency's FY2027 grant amount.

Administrative and Operating Expenses (not to exceed 60% of total grant award)	
Arts-in-Education Programming or Grantmaking (if applicable)	
Programs and Projects	
Other (specify)	
TOTAL	

V. Support Documents

- Completed Budget Worksheet
- Financial Statement or Audit (most recently completed FY)
- Grant Guidelines (including eligibility requirements, review criteria, and reporting requirements), Application(s), and Contract(s)
- Arts Education Funding Guidelines, Application(s), and Contract(s)
- Bylaws
- Current list of board members with contact information
- Biography paragraphs for key staff and current board members
- Enabling legislation or document naming the agency as the county arts agency or council for the jurisdiction
- IRS Letter of Determination (if applicable)
- W9

Off-Year Application

I. Narrative

- Describe any significant changes that have occurred or changes that are anticipated for the county arts agency.
- Summarize the county arts agency's proposed activities for the upcoming fiscal year.
- What professional development needs has the county arts agency identified in the organization or county over the past year? How can MSAC be of assistance?

II. Estimate the use of MSAC CAD FY2028 funding in each category based on the county arts agency's FY2027 grant amount.

Administrative and Operating Expenses (not to exceed 60% of total grant award)	\$
Grantmaking	\$

Programming	\$
Services	\$
Other (please describe)	\$
TOTAL	\$

III. Support Documents

- A. Completed Budget Worksheet
- A. Financial Statement or Audit (most recently completed FY)
- B. Bylaws
- C. Current list of board members with contact information
- D. Biography paragraphs for key staff and current board members
- E. IRS Letter of Determination (if applicable)
- F. W9

In addition to responding to the prompts above, 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 entered in SmartSimple, both on the application form and under the SmartSimple account profile. If awarded, grant funds will be made payable to the person or entity indicated on the W-9 and sent to the address listed in the form.

Financial Requirements

Financial information is an essential part of your application. All applicants must submit a signed financial statement or independent external audited financial statements* for your last completed and finalized fiscal year at the time of application submission.

NOTE

County Arts Agencies with an allowable income of \$750,000 or more are required to submit an independent external audit at the time of the application deadline.

Review Process

Staff Review

After both the “On-Year” applications and “Off-Year” applications are received electronically, they are reviewed by staff for completeness and adherence to CAD guidelines. Applicants will be notified if their application is incomplete and if additional information or corrections are necessary; applicants will be given a specific deadline in writing to provide any revisions and/or other necessary information. Applicants must meet all of these specified deadlines for completing/providing revisions and information or the application will be considered withdrawn. “Off-Year” applications are reviewed by staff only and do not receive a panel review.

Panelist Review

The CAD Panel is engaged to review and evaluate On-Year applications only. The panel will meet formally as a group and will participate in discussions regarding the application and offer recommendations. MSAC staff take panelist feedback into consideration for final funding recommendations.

After the staff and panel reviews (if applicable) are completed, recommendations are presented to the Council’s Grants Committee, a committee composed of Councilors appointed by the Council Chairperson. Following this review, the Grants Committee presents the funding recommendations for each category to the full Maryland

State Arts Council. The Council meets in June to review the recommendations and reach funding decisions. The Council's decisions are forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce (or their designee) for final approval.

Award

Notification

After application review, applicants are notified of their status as soon as possible. If the application is approved, the applicant will receive instructions to access a Grant Agreement Form (GAF) to review and sign electronically via SmartSimple.

The individual listed as the primary contact in the application receives all notifications; for organizations, notifications are sent to the primary contact and any other contacts on the organization's account. Automated notifications from SmartSimple are sent from noreply@smartsimple.com. Please adjust email notification and security settings to ensure receipt of these notifications. Check your spam folder if an application submission confirmation notification does not arrive in your inbox.

Disbursement

The grant funds are provided in a disbursement, which is a distribution from a dedicated fund for the specific purposes outlined in your application. The disbursement process begins when the GAF is fully executed, meaning that both the grantee and MSAC staff have signed the agreement. The grantee receives notification when the agreement is fully executed from SmartSimple. This notification includes instructions on how to access a copy of the fully executed GAF in the grantee's SmartSimple profile.

The grantee receives the grant disbursement approximately six to eight weeks from the full execution of the GAF. More information on MSAC's disbursement processing timeline can be found on the [Payment Process](#) webpage.

Grantees are encouraged to sign up to receive disbursement electronically via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Those with existing state vendor profiles can sign up for EFT disbursements by completing the relevant forms on the [Comptroller's EFT for Vendors site](#). Typically, those who have previously received MSAC grants have an existing state vendor profile. Under "Agency You Are Doing Business With", grantees should select "Department of Commerce".

New grant recipients will receive grant funds via check made payable to the name and address indicated on the grantee's W-9. They will be able to sign up for EFT for any subsequent disbursements.

Disbursement Status

Grantees are encouraged to deposit grant checks immediately. If the grantee does not receive grant funds within eight weeks of notification of a fully executed GAF, the grantee must contact MSAC staff to inquire about disbursement status. If the disbursement was lost in transit, the State of Maryland is able to re-issue disbursement. However, the grantee must contact MSAC staff within the fiscal year in which the grant was awarded. MSAC cannot guarantee that funds will be available for re-issue after the end of the fiscal year in which a grant was awarded.

If a grantee owes any Maryland state taxes or other state liabilities, GAD may intercept grant disbursements and hold them until the liability is resolved. GAD will send written notice directly to the grantee via mail. MSAC is not provided further information, as it is confidential. Grantees can find more information and discuss options

with the Central Collections Unit at (410) 767-1642. Additionally, information on held disbursements can be found by creating an account on [GAD's Online Service Center](#) site.

Changes in Funded Activities

If there are significant changes to activities for which a grant has been awarded, the grantee is responsible for contacting relevant staff. Proposed changes must be shared and approved in writing before proceeding. Staff will help ensure that any proposed changes remain in alignment with the program guidelines, however there is no guarantee that proposed changes will be approved. SmartSimple will be updated to reflect approved extensions to reporting deadlines.

Reporting

All grantees must file a final report in SmartSimple. The report will be added to the grantee's SmartSimple profile as soon as the GAF is fully executed.

The final report deadline for the CAD program is August 15, 2028.

The final report form collects information about the grantee and grant activities, including optional demographic information, data for the National Endowment for the Arts, summary of activities and use of grant funds, and other program-specific information and documents, as relevant.

Grant funds may not be used to offset grantees' state liabilities. Grantees whose funds were intercepted by GAD are not exempt from submitting required reports. Grantees must either return the funds to MSAC or follow through with their proposed grant activities and submit reports accordingly.

Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current or future MSAC grants and may result in the required return of grant funds. Before any funds are distributed, grantees are also required to submit any outstanding reports or address requirements for any other MSAC grants received.

Use of Funds Documentation Review

Prior to the Final Report deadline, a randomly selected list representing 5% of the total number of CAD-funded organizations will be asked to provide documentation to the Program Director showing allowable expenses that make up the total of their grant amount (how the grant was spent) from the most recently completed year.

Documentation may include receipts, invoices, payroll documentation, or other similar documents. Further instructions will be provided directly to the randomly selected organizations who are required to complete this step by June 15, 2028.

Ineligible and Declined Applications

Applications that do not receive funding generally fall into one of two categories: ineligible or declined.

An application is marked ineligible if it is not complete or does not comply with the eligibility requirements of a particular grant program. An application can be marked ineligible at any time during the review process.

After an application is considered eligible, it may be declined for several reasons. An application may be declined due to funding allocation limitations at the time, or for the following reasons:

- Required information is incomplete or insufficient to make an award determination
- There are material inconsistencies between the application and the organization's actual operations

- There are significant operational, financial, or other circumstances that reasonably suggest the applicant is, or may become, unable to use the grant funds in alignment with the grant guidelines and agreement.

Application Feedback

Applicants may request feedback on their applications by contacting the County Arts Development Program Director.

Contact Information

MSAC staff offer technical assistance throughout the application process. This includes professional development related to grant writing and program requirements; one-on-one conversations; and tailored feedback.

For more information on the County Arts Development Program application process, contact:

- Program and application strategy assistance
 - David D. Mitchell, Program Director
 - David.Mitchell1@maryland.gov
 - (410) 303-9506
- Grants logistics and technological assistance
 - Catherine Teixeira, Grants Director
 - catherine.teixeira@maryland.gov
 - (443) 799-7256
 - Tammy Oppel, Grants Management Associate
 - tammy.oppel@maryland.gov
 - (410) 326-5555
 - Kirk Amaral Snow, Grants Management Associate
 - kirk.amaralsnow@maryland.gov
 - (410) 767-8865

MSAC Overview

Description

MSAC is an appointed body of 17 Maryland citizens, 13 of whom are named by the Governor to three-year terms that may be renewed once. Two private citizens and two legislators are appointed by the President of the Senate and by the Speaker of the House. All councilors serve without salary.

To carry out its mission, MSAC awards grants to nonprofit arts organizations, arts programs, and individual artists, and provides application assistance, professional development, and other resources to individuals and groups. MSAC reserves the right to prioritize grant awards.

MSAC receives its funds from an annual appropriation from the State of Maryland; grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency; and, on occasion, contributions from private, non-governmental sources.

Authority

MSAC is an agency of the State of Maryland under the authority of the Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts.

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lieutenant Governor
Harry Coker, Jr., Secretary of Commerce
Steven Skerritt-Davis, Executive Director, MSAC

Staff

MSAC maintains professional staff to administer its programs. For staff listing, visit the [MSAC staff page](#).

Meetings

Council and panelist meetings are open to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act set forth in Title 3 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The dates, times, and locations of Council and panelist meetings may be obtained on the [Meeting Notices page](#), or by contacting MSAC at msac.commerce@maryland.gov or (410) 767-6555.

Mission and Goals

MSAC's mission is to advance the arts in our state by providing leadership that champions creative expression, diverse programming, equitable access, lifelong learning, and the arts as a celebrated contributor to the quality of life for all the people of Maryland.

MSAC's strategic plan outlines five pillars and goals:

1. Access: Bolster access to arts experiences and resources
2. Awareness: Amplify the stories of Maryland's arts sector and the value of public support
3. Connection: Foster networks within and beyond the arts sector
4. Equity: Cultivate a thriving arts ecosystem centered in equity
5. Leadership: Commit to a culture of care and innovation

Read [MSAC's full strategic plan](#) to learn more about implementation actions.

Equity and Justice Statement

The arts celebrate our state's diversity, connect our shared humanity, and transform individuals and communities. MSAC and its supporting collaborators are committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our organizations and across communities of our state.

MSAC and its grantees are committed to embracing equity and non-discrimination regardless of race, religious creed, color, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, class, language, and/or ability.

The driving goals of MSAC's grant processes are:

- To yield a greater variety of funded projects
- To eliminate biases that may be found in any part of the granting process (e.g., applications, panelist procedures, adjudication systems)
- To acknowledge positions of privilege while questioning practices, shifting paradigms of status quo arts activities, and taking more risks
- To expand deliberations to include criteria beyond current conventions or Western traditions

Accessibility

MSAC is committed to ensuring access to its programs and services. Everyone is welcome, and all events and activities sponsored by or operated within MSAC are accessible both physically and programmatically. MSAC is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensuring equal opportunity, accessibility, and non-discrimination for individuals with disabilities. See the "Grantee Requirements" section below for more information on the accessibility-related expectations of all grantees.

Accessibility Web Page

MSAC has a dedicated [accessibility page](#) available on our website. It includes contact information for the accessibility coordinator, federal and state regulations, the organization's equity and justice statement, access resources, accommodations requests, and complaint procedures.

Language Access

MSAC offers language accessibility services. Services include making translations of grant materials, remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, subtitles, braille translation, translation into languages other than English, and more.

En Español/Spanish: MSAC pone a disposición servicios de traducción y accesibilidad de idiomas. Contacte msac.commerce@maryland.gov para más información.

中文普通话/Mandarin Chinese: 马里兰州艺术委员会(MSAC)提供翻译和语言无障碍服务。请联系 msac.commerce@maryland.gov 了解更多信息。

한국어/Korean: MSAC 는 한국어 지원을 돕고 있습니다. 자세한 문의사항은 msac.commerce@maryland.gov 로 연락 주시기 바랍니다.

For all other languages, please contact MSAC at msac.commerce@maryland.gov for more information.

Feedback

If constituents would like to provide general feedback about the accessibility of programs funded or produced by MSAC, contact MSAC at msac.commerce@maryland.gov or (410) 767-6555.

Complaints

For programs or services provided by MSAC:

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

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

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

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

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

Complaints may be submitted to the following external agencies:

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

Participation in a complaint process is protected from retaliation under all circumstances, and MSAC complies with all applicable federal and State laws prohibiting retaliation against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit.

Grantmaking

Review Panels

To assist MSAC in its decision-making, Maryland residents with expertise in the arts are selected to serve on a variety of grant application review panels. The function of panels is to evaluate applications from organizations and individuals. Each year, MSAC publishes several open calls, and approximately 150 individuals serve as panelists for MSAC grant programs, including Grants for Organizations, Arts in Education, Independent Artist Awards, Public Art Across Maryland, Creativity Grants, Presenting and Touring, Professional Development Opportunity, Folklife Network, Folklife Apprenticeships, Heritage Awards, Capacity Building, Arts Capital, and County Arts Development. In addition, MSAC occasionally releases calls for residents to serve as program editors evaluating grantmaking policies and procedures, and jurors or judges for various arts activities supported by MSAC. Anyone wishing to serve is encouraged to visit MSAC's [Ways to Get Involved](#) webpage for detailed information and links to application forms for any open calls.

Constituents may also get involved with MSAC by creating a profile on the [Arts Directory](#), an online resource for raising the profile of Maryland artists and arts organizations; or by attending regularly scheduled virtual and in-person professional development sessions posted on [MSAC's Eventbrite page](#).

Appeals

MSAC strives to ensure fair and equitable distribution of grant monies based on stated criteria. Therefore, dissatisfaction with the denial or amount of an award is not sufficient reason for an appeal. However, an application may be reconsidered if a procedural impropriety or error has affected its review.

Grounds for such reconsideration are:

- A decision based on review criteria other than those stated in these guidelines
- A decision based on material provided to panelists or Councilors that was substantially incorrect, inaccurate, or incomplete, despite the applicant having provided the staff with correct, accurate, and complete application information

Based on the above, if an applicant believes there is legitimate reason for an appeal, the following steps must be taken:

- The applicant must discuss the problem with the program director who handled the application
- To pursue an appeal, the applicant must write a letter to the MSAC Executive Director within 60 days following receipt of the grant award or denial notification; the letter should (1) request a reconsideration of the decision, (2) state the grounds for the request, and (3) certify that the applicant first discussed the problem with the program director and provide the date and time the discussion occurred.

The applicant will receive written notification on the determination of the appeal within 90 days of the receipt of the written request for reconsideration.

Grantee requirements

All MSAC grantees must:

- Comply with Title VI, Section 601, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that no persons, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination related to, the arts
- Comply with Title IX, Section 1681 et seq. of the Education Amendments of 1972
- Comply with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101-6107

- Comply with relevant State and federal laws
- Maintain complete and accurate records of all activities connected with the grant
- Give credit to MSAC in accordance with published [recognition guidelines](#), whenever and wherever credit is being given
- Notify the appropriate MSAC staff person in writing if a significant change is made in any MSAC-funded program or project

In addition to the requirements above, all MSAC grantees must ensure that any programming remains accessible to all and, if needed, conduct programs in accessible venues other than their own organization in order to meet accessibility requirements. Grantees are required to:

- Comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991, as amended
- Prohibit discrimination on the basis of: (a) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or national origin; 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
- Designate an Accessibility Point of Contact to ensure compliance, receive accommodation requests, and document grievances, as well as publish direct contact information for the Point of Contact to the public
- Create and publicly share a grievance procedure to allow stakeholders to address any events or programs that are inaccessible
- Upon request, submit documentation of operations and compliance with the above

Disclosure of personal information

Certain personal information requested by MSAC's parent agency, the Department of Commerce, is necessary in determining eligibility for grants. Failure to disclose this information may result in the denial of one or all benefits or services, including funding, provided by MSAC. Availability of this information for public inspection is governed by the provisions of the Maryland Public Information Act, Title 4 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. This information will be disclosed to appropriate staff of the Department, or to public officials, for purposes directly connected with administration of the program for which its use is intended. Such information may be shared with state, federal, and local governments if legally required.