



Special Request FY 2024 Guidelines

DEADLINE: Nov. 30, 2023

SUPPORT PERIOD: January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024

**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT** for the **ARTS**

arts.gov



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 the MSAC website: 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 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
Kevin Anderson, Secretary
Signe Pringle, Deputy 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 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 must be 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.

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.

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.

MSAC will work with you to provide assistance as appropriate.

Accessibility Web Page

MSAC has a dedicated accessibility page on 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.

Language Access

MSAC makes language accessibility services available. Services include making translations of grant materials, remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, subtitles, braille translation, translation into languages other than English, and more. Please contact msac.commerce@maryland.gov for more information.

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.

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 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 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 IX, Section 1681 et seq. of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 6101-6107, 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 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.

Constituent Opportunities

Maryland Arts Directory

All MSAC constituents are invited to create a profile on the Maryland Arts Directory, an online resource for promoting, selling, and raising the profile of the work of Maryland artists and arts organizations. Joining the directory is free and available to all Maryland residents and organizations with a connection to the arts. Browse the directory at msac.org and log in or create a profile [here](#).

Professional Development

MSAC maintains a regular schedule of virtual and in-person professional development offerings, including webinars, networking events, regional meetings, and a statewide symposium. Follow MSAC's [Eventbrite page](#) to learn more about upcoming professional development opportunities.

Overview

Purpose

The purpose of the Special Request grant is to provide support for arts activities that fall outside organizations' regular budgets and represent a departure from regular activities but align with MSAC's goals to provide support and build capacity for Maryland's arts sector. A primary aim of the program is to bolster stability, innovation, and visionary thinking among organizations supporting the arts.

The Special Request program supports three types of arts activities:

- Pilot or one-time projects
- Innovative projects addressing stated constituent needs
- Capacity-building efforts

Pilot or one-time projects are efforts in which an organization attempts to reach a new goal that is relevant to its mission but not yet part of its regular activities. Such projects should be accessible by the public but otherwise may be undertaken in a spirit of creativity and experimentation. Based on the outcome of such projects, applicants may choose to incorporate them into ongoing, regular activities. Applicants are eligible to apply for Special Request funds supporting as many as three consecutive years for the same pilot or one-time project, although an initial award does not guarantee funding in subsequent years.

Innovative projects are locally-led, mission-specific efforts in which an organization provides arts experiences or resources that address the stated needs of a particular group. The innovative aspects of such projects should represent a departure from the applicant organization's regular activities. A framework for imagining such innovation is MSAC's Grantmaking Approach, which is available for review by [clicking here](#).

Capacity-building efforts are organized initiatives that support an organization's long-term stability, visibility, or effectiveness but are not part of regularly occurring activities. Such efforts are geared toward internal improvement and may or may not be immediately accessible by the public (e.g., consultancies, needs assessments, staff searches, etc.). The outcome of capacity-building efforts is improvement in the applicant's ability to deliver on its mission.

The eclectic nature of Special Request support is due to MSAC's practice of regularly engaging constituents to identify common needs in the arts sector. The Special Request program is an attempt to address such needs in a comprehensive, transparent way.

Grant Cycle

Funding

Grants are between \$2,000 and \$25,000.

If all available funds are not expended in the current round of grants, or if additional funds become available later in the fiscal year (FY), an additional round of applications might be accepted.

Grantees also receiving funds through MSAC's Grants for Organizations (GFO) program may not claim Special Request funds as allowable income that would increase the amount of their GFO funding.

Support Period

MSAC's FY 2024 dates are July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024.

The support period for FY 2024 Special Request grants is January 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024.

If awarded funds, the grantee agrees to spend or obligate all funds by June 30, 2024. This means that the funds are expended, encumbered, or otherwise legally committed to be used, such that returning the unspent funds would cause the grantee legal harm.

Timeline

- Application publication: November 1, 2023
- Application deadline: November 30, 2023

Eligibility

Eligible Special Request applicants must be Arts Organizations or organizations with dedicated Arts Programs, as defined by MSAC. Full definitions are below.

Arts Organizations or Arts Programs

- Must be one of the following:
 - 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (an organization with an IRS-designated 501(c)3 status).
 - Model A Fiscal Sponsorship (comprehensive sponsorship, in which the assets, liabilities, and exempt activities collectively referred to as the project are housed within the fiscal sponsor).
 - For fiscal sponsorships supporting an individual, the artist(s) must meet the residency requirements for Independent Artists.
 - Unit of government (a unit of government [town, city, county, state] with the capacity to undertake an arts program)
 - College or university (an established higher education institution in Maryland)
 - School (a public or private school serving students in grades pre-Kindergarten through 12)

Independent Artists

- Independent artists are not eligible for the Special Request grant, though the intention of the program is to support activities that strengthen and increase opportunities in the arts ecosystem in which Maryland artists work and live.

All proposed projects must meet at least one of the following criteria, as defined above:

- Pilot or one-time projects
- Innovative projects benefiting specific constituent groups
- Capacity-building efforts

All applicants:

- Must have completed and documented one fiscal year of ongoing arts activities as of the date of Special Request application submission
- May only receive one Special Request grant per fiscal year
- May apply more than once for the same project in a single fiscal year, assuming the initial application was unsuccessful, the applicant has requested and received feedback, and additional rounds of applications are being offered
- Are encouraged to establish community support through financial contributions and/or partnership agreements specific to the proposed activity

Applicants seeking funding for multi-year projects that align with Special Request eligibility are encouraged to connect with relevant MSAC staff, listed below, to discuss possibilities.

Contact Information

MSAC staff offer the following technical assistance throughout the application process:

- Professional development related to grant writing and program requirements
- One-on-one conversations and feedback
 - Chad Buterbaugh, Deputy Director
 - chad.buterbaugh@maryland.gov
 - 443.469.8239

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.

- Applicants are required to complete and submit their applications by electronic means, including the use of an electronic signature.
 - Applicants must click the “Submit” button and SmartSimple must accept the application by 11:59 p.m. to meet the deadline. Upon successful submission, applicants will receive an onscreen confirmation message and an email from SmartSimple with a copy of the application within one hour. Please check spam or junk folders if the messages do not appear in email inboxes within this timeframe.
- 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.

Use of Funds

Special Request funds may be used for:

- Expenses directly associated with the proposed arts activities and in compliance with the funding prohibition list below

Special Request funds may not be used for:

- Non-arts expenses
- Activities not open to the public
- Activities for the exclusive benefit of an organization’s members
- Capital expenses
- School curriculum expenses
- Debt servicing
- Allocations to cash reserves
- Contributions to endowments

- 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
- Expenses for which the applicant has been awarded MSAC grant funds from a program other than Special Request. (An applicant may apply for project support for the same project from any MSAC program for which the project or applicant is eligible but may only be awarded MSAC funds once for any individual project expense. Contact MSAC program staff with questions.)

Review Criteria

Special Request grant application review is based on answers to the questions below. Rubric criteria for “Excellent to outstanding” responses are included to provide details on what a successful answer should include.

What category best describes the activities for which funding is being sought? *[Dropdown menu]*

- Innovative projects addressing stated constituent needs
- Pilot or one-time projects
- Capacity-building efforts

Unscored question

What activities will be supported with this funding? Be detailed.

Clear, specific, and thorough explanation of proposed innovative project addressing stated constituent needs, pilot or one-time project, or capacity-building effort.

State the organization’s mission and regular activities. Describe the constituencies served by the organization’s regular activities.

Specific, detailed description of the organization’s mission, including information on the constituencies it serves through its regular activities.

Describe how the proposed activities represent a departure from the organization’s regular activities.

Clear, thorough description of how the proposed activities depart from regular activities.

How will the proposed project provide a direct or indirect benefit to one or more groups in the organization’s geographic area of service?

Clear, thorough description outlining engaged group or groups and the nature of the benefit provided, either through shorter-term impact via project activities or longer-term impact via capacity building activities.

What factors make this an appropriate time to undertake the proposed project?

Clear, specific overview of organizational capacity, expertise, capacity-building needs, and any other factors relevant to the proposed activities

What is the timeline for the activities?

Clear, specific and realistic timeline demonstrating when activities will take place and how funds will be expended

What are the success indicators for the project (e.g., numerical thresholds, anecdotal or testimonial feedback, particular attendance levels, coverage in specific publications, improved organizational efficiency, etc.)?

Specific, descriptive indicators of success for the proposed activities, either in regard to project goals or capacity-building outcomes

How will data for project success indicators be collected and evaluated?

Clear plan outlining how success will be measured, as well as how the applicant will evaluate the data captured in the success measurement process

Organization's Annual Operating Budget [fill-in field; unscored]

Total Estimated Expense for Proposed Activity [fill-in field; unscored]

Grant Amount Requested [fill-in field; unscored]

The button below activates a chart soliciting information on the applicant's estimated use of Special Request funds for the upcoming funding period. Complete the chart with as much accuracy as is possible at the time of application. [applicants will be able to click a "Special Request Expenditures Chart" button in SmartSimple]

Budget information is clearly tied to the proposed arts activities and indicates realistic expenses

Financial Requirements

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.

Grantee must be in Good Standing as a business with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation at the time of application submission and if approved, throughout the term of the grant agreement; status can be found by searching the [Maryland Business Express site](#).

Review

MSAC convenes a group of panelists to evaluate Special Request applications electronically.

Panelist Selection

Panelists are selected via public application process. Applicants who are arts administrators, cultural workers, or specialists in capacity building possess the necessary expertise to evaluate applications, though all potential panelists are given consideration.

Panelist Review

Each application is evaluated using the review criteria above. Panelists will enter scores and comments based on review criteria that mirror each of the prompts in the application form. The review criteria provide guidance on rating an applicant's response to a question as Excellent to Outstanding, Good to Very Good, Satisfactory, Marginal to Fair, or No Evidence, where the latter rating means the applicant has responded to a prompt poorly or not at all.

Funding Amounts

The funding amount is determined based on applicant requests. Projects will be funded at the total requested amount or not at all. Partial fulfillment of applicant requests will not be considered. Grants may fund the entirety or a portion of an applicant's proposed activity.

Notification and Payment

The individual listed as the primary contact in the application will receive all notifications. Notifications from SmartSimple will be sent from noreply@smartsimple.com. After the 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, paid at 100 percent of the award amount.

The grantee will receive payment within approximately 6 to 8 weeks from the date of receipt of a fully executed Grant Agreement Form. More info on the payment processing timeline can be found [here](#).

Those who are prior grant recipients can elect to receive grant payments via direct deposit by following the instructions and completing the required GADX-10 form from the [Comptroller of Maryland](#).

If the grantee owes any Maryland state taxes or other state liabilities, the General Accounting Division (GAD) of the State Comptroller's office may intercept grant payments and hold them until the liability is resolved. Should this be the case, GAD will send written notice of this directly to the grantee via mail. MSAC is not provided further information as it is confidential; grantees will be able to find more info and discuss options with the Central Collections Unit (CCU) at 410-767-1642.

Reporting

Final Report

An annual final report describes how funds were spent over the most recently completed granting period. The final report collects narrative, fiscal, and demographic information in keeping with MSAC and National Endowment for the Arts requirements. Successful completion of a final report is required. Final reports are completed in SmartSimple, the same online grants management system used for applications. Final Reports forms and instructions are available upon grant award.

Failure to submit reports may jeopardize current and/or future MSAC grants and may result in the required return of grant funds to the State of Maryland.