Arts Incubator Workgroup
Final Report

Maryland State Arts Council

Department of Commerce

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Arts Incubator Workgroup Final Report

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Executive Summary

Established through Maryland State legislation (House Bill 1451, Senate Bill 764) during the 2024 legislative session, the Arts Incubator Workgroup, herein referred to as the Workgroup, was tasked with exploring how arts and cultural institutions can support local artists, and creating a report on its findings, including research, case studies, and examples of approaches used to support artists in other areas, to be issued to the Governor and the General Assembly. In an attempt to be as practical and useful as possible, this report includes sets of recommendations for the Maryland General Assembly (including model legislation) and the Maryland State Arts Council (including model programs) to consider in order to increase Maryland's support of its artists.

Organizational Context

The Arts Incubator Workgroup comprises 13 distinguished members representing a wide range of artistic and organizational perspectives. Appointed by Governor Wes Moore, the workgroup was convened by the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC), which facilitated several meetings between October and December 2024 to inform the development of a preliminary report. To focus its efforts, the workgroup formed two subcommittees—one centered on arts organizations and another on individual artists. Meeting notes and resources are maintained collectively for continued reference. In February 2025, the group reconvened in a series of meetings and subgroups to conduct additional research and translate its findings into recommendations for how the State of Maryland can expand support for the independent artists who call Maryland home. Building on the themes initially presented in the December 2024 *Arts Incubator Workgroup Preliminary Report*, this final report includes 13 recommendations, including four legislative recommendations and nine recommendations for MSAC.

Recommendations

The recommendations included in this report address a wide range of challenges facing Maryland's artists and cultural institutions. The overarching goal of these recommendations is to create and/or enhance a suite of policies and programs that allows cultural institutions to better support Maryland's artists, and for artists to therefore thrive here in Maryland. The workgroup was charged with finding the root causes of why regularly performing or showing work frequently does not lead to a thriving career; the recommendations included are meant to help these artists reach financial stability through their artistic career.

The challenges facing artists significantly overlap with the challenges faced by so-called gig workers since so many artists are in fact gig workers. According to a recent National Survey of Artists produced by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center, 34% of artists are fully self-employed and 50% are self-employed in their primary job. 57% of artists report being somewhat or very worried about financial vulnerability.

There is a growing consensus that the best way to support artists' careers is through direct unrestricted funding via a guaranteed income program such as efforts like MSAC's Grants for Artists program, which provides funding for artists to use as they see fit rather than for a specific project. Several cities, states, and now Ireland have either piloted guaranteed income programs for artists, or made such programs permanent, a recognition of their efficiency and positive impact on artists and institutions alike. In alignment with these trends, the report includes recommendations towards strengthening this type of support in Maryland.

While the list below includes 13 recommendations, it is not exhaustive. The workgroup discussed the challenge artists face in acquiring affordable healthcare, but chose not to include recommendations on this topic because of its systemic and complex nature. The workgroup also did not explore in great depth policies or programs to reduce the costs associated with building, owning, or maintaining venues, galleries, or other cultural institutions, which could potentially pass along these savings to the artists whose work populates these spaces. (Maryland's Hire Our Veterans tax credit could serve as an interesting model to address this issue, providing a tax credit for venues that hire Maryland artists.) Though they believe these issues warrant additional research and exploration, the workgroup intentionally focused on the areas included below and offers next steps and resources required at the end of each recommendation and in the report's closing.

Legislative Recommendations
1. Statewide Artist Pay Standards and Protections
2. Tax Incentives for Artists and Art-Supportive Businesses
3. Affordable Housing Tax Credits for Artists
4. Guaranteed Income for Artists

MSAC Recommendations
1. Develop Artist Pay Guide and Companion Professional Development Resources
2. Expand Unrestricted Artist Funding
3. Increase Listening Sessions Opportunities for Independent Artists
4. Develop Cross-Sector Programs Serving Independent Artists
5. Establish Anti-Retaliation Protocols and Guidance for Independent Artists and Grantees
6. Expand Housing Partnerships and Tax Benefits for Independent Artists
7. Evaluate and Address Multilingual Needs in Grant Programs and Materials
8. Expand Demographic Analysis and Reporting on MSAC Grantees and Recipients
9. Enhance Tracking and Reporting of Independent Artists Investments Across MSAC Programs

Background

The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA), developed through a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), reported that the arts and culture sector contributed $13,666,097,000 to Maryland's economy and cultural production accounted for 2.7% of the total gross product in 2023. ACPSA also reported that the sector contributed 86,234 Maryland jobs.

The workgroup recognizes that the strength of Maryland's arts sector is bolstered by a decades-long history of bipartisan and substantial investment by the State of Maryland through MSAC. In fiscal year 2025 (FY 2025), MSAC awarded over $31 million in grants, including:
- $29,078,718 to support general operations, arts projects, and capital projects of Maryland-based arts organizations and arts programs
- $1,559,681 in project support, awards, and grants to support artists who live and work in the state

The total economic impact of the 332 organizations awarded through MSAC's two largest general operating grant programs, Grants for Organizations and County Arts Development, exceeded $1 billion, with 9,521 jobs supported. Though existing data analyses are limited, the workgroup stands firm in the conviction that artists bring value as producers of culture and their contributions are a vital component of the economic fabric of our state.

Even with the State's substantial investment in the arts sector and MSAC's nationally recognized work to ensure equitable distribution of State funds, artists across the state face significant challenges living and working in Maryland. The workgroup's preliminary report highlighted some of the challenges and the follow-up work that went into preparing this final report explored solutions to help artists prosper. We are encouraged that the General Assembly recognizes the importance of this issue and the need to develop innovative approaches that will harness the full potential of artists' contributions to building a stronger and more vibrant Maryland. Workgroup members believe that artists are essential to the State's economy, social fabric, and tourism as well as the attraction and retention of businesses and the health and educational outcomes of its residents. The high demand for MSAC grants demonstrates an abundance of ideas and a strong need for financial support to bring arts projects to life. Of the 3,761 grant applications received in FY 2025, MSAC had the funding available to award grants to 1,119 projects and artists. The workgroup sees this gap between supply and demand as untapped potential that, with proper support, would enable Maryland artists to sustain and expand their creative practices, yielding significant benefits for the state.

Changed Context - Statewide Budget Constraints and National Arts Funding Threats

From the time the Arts Incubator Workgroup formed through the completion of this report, significant changes at the federal and state level occurred, significantly impacting funding availability and financial forecasting for the future. The State of Maryland expects to face budget

constraints for the next few fiscal years, and a challenging federal arts funding landscape has emerged under the current administration, with the dissolution of programs and teams at the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

The Arts Incubator Workgroup acknowledges that the funding landscape has changed since the report was initially commissioned. This report therefore prioritizes actionable recommendations, and includes recommendations that do not require any new funding. The report also includes recommendations on how the state can support artists whose careers are even more uncertain in this challenging funding landscape.

Phase 2 Work

Subcommittees Meetings and Independent Research

The committee took a holistic view of each of the 10 areas from the preliminary report. Acknowledging that each theme could be its own research area and report, the workgroup narrowed down the list to five top areas for in-depth research and inclusion in the final report. Subcommittees were formed for the five focus areas, and each workgroup member served on two subcommittees. Independent research and subsequent meetings to discuss research findings followed. The five themes explored include: 1. Economic and Financial Challenges, 2. Infrastructure and Resource Gaps, 3. Systemic Barriers for Underrepresented Communities, 4. Effective Support Models and Strategies, and 5. Cross-Sector Collaboration. These five themes are explored below.

1. Economic and Financial Challenges
Within this subgroup, there was general recognition of threats to the arts industry and a commitment to a positive and forward-thinking approach to addressing the unique economic challenges faced by artists. The group identified the following interests as areas for research: artists as entrepreneurs, sustainable income structures for artists, embedded artist programs, erosion of businesses, state-level cabinet positions for the arts, and unsustainable nonprofit models.

By framing research from a legislative perspective, the group focused on the following key ideas and themes:
- **Pay Rate Guidelines:** Statewide standards to ensure fair pay for artists and emphasize that artists should be compensated for their work.
- **Tax Incentives and Breaks:** For artists and companies supporting them, including addressing 1099 penalties and providing general tax breaks for independent artists.
- **Selling Artwork:** Legislation to connect artists with collectors/buyers safely and protect against fraud or theft.
- **Company Incentives:** Tax incentives for companies that hire or partner with artists and arts organizations.
- **Entrepreneurial Studies:** Arts tracks in state/county colleges/universities.
- **Communication and Transparency:** Addressing the need for artists' marketing ability to be protected.

2. Infrastructure and Resource Gaps
The subcommittee identified the following areas for improving infrastructure and resource gaps affecting artists: housing, transportation, digital infrastructure, connecting rural and urban resources, cross-sector collaboration (e.g., housing + artists), and co-op models.

Possible recommendations and areas of exploration derived from the research include:

- **Tax Incentives**: Exploring new tax incentives for developers in arts districts to provide living space for artists, and for artists moving into neighborhoods and starting businesses.
- **Expanding Tax Credits**: Expanding tax credits and incentives beyond artist districts, citing Rhode Island's no sales tax on art as an example. The idea of a "week of tax-free art" was also discussed.
- **Terminology**: Shifting the focus to "incentives" rather than "grants," "hand-outs," or "subsidies" to encourage a cultural shift away from the idea of artists receiving hand-outs.
- **Improving Digital Infrastructure**: The challenge of providing better internet access, suggesting community areas with improved internet.
- **Healthcare**: Investigating how independent artists can access subsidized health insurance, and what state-offered subsidized housing or health insurance tax credits for independent artists would look like.
- **Artist Classification**: Emphasizing the inclusion of artists as freelancers or members of the gig economy as Maryland examines these groups, advocating for strength in numbers by pooling these disparate groups.
- **Professional Development**: Identifying a gap in mentor/mentee relationships for professional development.

3. Systemic Barriers for Underrepresented Communities

This theme resonated with workgroup members, who acknowledged the need to connect directly with marginalized groups to find solutions. There may be opportunities for further research and specific collection of data. Some key ideas that arose from research included the need for transparency from funders and for quantitative and qualitative data to identify funding gaps; suggestions for professional development training, culturally responsive training, and collaborative partnerships to reach underrepresented communities and address barriers like transportation and technology access; and the importance of involving directly impacted individuals in decision-making processes and ensuring full access.

Possible recommendations included:
- **Streamline and Simplify Funding Processes:** Implement streamlined application processes specifically designed to support smaller, community-based, and BIPOC-led arts organizations.
- **Dedicated Equity Funding:** Establish a dedicated equity fund modeled after Creative Capital and Hewlett Foundation's strategies, explicitly targeting historically marginalized artists and organizations.
- **Formal Equity Oversight & Accountability:** Propose legislation mandating periodic equity audits and reporting for state-funded arts institutions to ensure accountability and measurable progress toward racial and economic equity.
- **Recognition and Protection of Marginalized Artist Employment:** Adopt legal frameworks (similar to New York) to provide employment protections and equitable pay standards for marginalized creative workers. The group acknowledged that Maryland Citizens for the Arts and Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts are currently working on this.

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4. Effective Support Models and Strategies
Key themes from research highlighted that guaranteed income programs for artists can provide economic stability, boost creative output, and strengthen local economies, citing successful models in Ireland, New York, Minnesota, and California.

Considerations from research included:
- **Economic Stability & Creative Output:** Artists frequently experience income volatility. Guaranteed income programs provide stability that allows artists to focus on their creative practice, thereby boosting cultural production and innovation.
- **Community and Economic Benefits:** Stabilized income streams for artists result in increased spending in local economies, strengthening Maryland's creative economy.
- **Precedent and Success Models:** Pilot programs and established initiatives in Ireland, New York, Minnesota, and California demonstrate the feasibility, measurable impacts, and positive outcomes of guaranteed income models.

5. Cross-Sector Collaboration
Discussions around cross-sector collaboration acknowledged that artists' needs are often overlooked, and power imbalances exist when independent artists work with organizations unfamiliar with the arts, as there are often disparities in organization size, budgets, and resources. Research interests included leveraging relationships with diverse partners to achieve goals, such as working within a county department or larger agencies or school systems.

Key discussion and research points included:
- **Housing models:** Exploring neighborhoods where all residents are artists.
- **Government support:** The need for state-wide resources to navigate city collaborations and government processes.
- **Funding:** Leveraging public-private partnerships, with an interest from the Mellon Foundation in co-ops. The possibility of the state developing an impact investing fund with private money, similar to an upcoming initiative in Pennsylvania.
- **Services for artists:** Exploring how other groups can offer services like legal or tax advice, and how professionals can provide these services pro bono.
- **Wealth building for artists:** Artists acting as investors in projects.
- **Experimentation:** The importance of models that allow for experimentation and failure.
- **Collaboration:** Incentives for public-private collaboration, and cross-state agency collaboration, noting existing cross-sector models in Georgia and New York.

Consolidating Recommendations

Building on the findings from these five focus areas, the workgroup's next step was to turn research into actionable recommendations. To do this, the committee organized itself into two distinct pathways: one group focused on developing policy recommendations for the General Assembly, and the other concentrated on recommendations specific to MSAC. Each subgroup pulled directly from the research, themes, and input identified during Phase 2.

Legislative Recommendations

From protecting freelance workers from client retaliation and nonpayment, to providing tax credits to incentivize the development of affordable housing for artists and experimenting with guaranteed income programs for artists, states play a major regulatory role in supporting their resident artists and their state's arts ecosystems. The recommendations below have been benchmarked against other states, and numerous models as well as direct links to legislation text are included. Several of these recommendations have counterparts in the MSAC Recommendations section, a recognition of the fact that creating a more supportive environment for Maryland's artists may require both new legislation and new MSAC programs, policies, and strategies.

1. Statewide Artist Pay Standards and Protections

Identified issue/opportunity

As non-salaried freelancers, independent artists in Maryland face inconsistent pay standards. Artists must contend with the absence of standardized rates, lack of pay transparency, and limited awareness of payment best practices among both artists and the organizations that hire them. Furthermore, independent artists have reported experiencing unethical treatment in employment situations. Mandating a standard of compensation and protection for artists involved in publicly funded projects would give organizations guidance for fair compensation and help make Maryland a more stable and reliable place for artists to work and live. **The workgroup recommends further study of this matter as well as the introduction of legislation to standardize pay structures and expectations. Legislation should also ensure that legal recourse and resources are available to artists statewide and that entities that employ artists are aware of legal requirements and supported to pay artists at standard pay rates.**

Models/case studies
- **Freelance Isn't Free Act, New York City**: This act protects freelance workers, including artists, by granting them the right to a written contract, timely and full payment, and protection from retaliation.
  - **Effective Date**: May 15, 2017
  - **Contract Threshold**: $800 over 120 days (aggregate)
  - **Required Contract Elements**: Parties, services, value, rate, method of payment, due date
  - **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
  - **Enforcement Mechanism**: NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection; civil action
  - **Remedies/Penalties**: Double damages, attorney's fees, statutory damages, injunctive relief
  - **Legislation**: Local Law 140
- **Freelance Isn't Free Act, New York State:** New York State followed New York City with similar protections for freelancers. The NY State Department of Labor also created a model

[Freelance Worker Agreement](#).
- ○ **Effective Date**: Aug 28, 2024
- ○ **Contract Threshold**: $800 over 120 days
- ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Written contract with required terms; record retention
- ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
- ○ **Enforcement**: NY Department of Labor; civil action
- ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Damages, civil penalties, attorney's fees
- ○ **Legislation**: [Article 44-A GBL](#)
- **[Freelance Worker Protection Act](#), California:** California's act provides baseline contract/payment requirements for freelance workers.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: Jan 1, 2025
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $250 per contract
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Written contract with scope, pay rate, pay schedule; retention for 4 yrs
  - ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
  - ○ **Enforcement**: Labor Commissioner; civil action
  - ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Damages, penalties, attorney's fees
  - ○ **Legislation**: [State Bill 988](#)
- **[Freelance Worker Protection Act](#), Illinois:** Illinois' act requires written contracts and timely payment, provides remedies, and includes model contracts.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: July 1, 2024
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $500 over 120 days
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Written contract required
  - ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
  - ○ **Enforcement**: IL Department of Labor; civil action
  - ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Double damages, attorney's fees
  - ○ **Legislation**: [820 ILCS 193](#)
- **[Independent Contractor Protections Ordinance](#), Seattle, WA:** Seattle's ordinance requires work disclosures, written terms, pay schedules and other protections, and includes a helpful [graphic poster](#) explaining the protections.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: Sept 1, 2022
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $600
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Pre-work disclosure of the terms and conditions of work, itemized payment info
  - ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date
  - ○ **Enforcement**: Seattle Office of Labor Standards
  - ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Damages, compliance orders
  - ○ **Legislation**: [Ordinance SMC 14.34](#)
- **[Freelance Worker Protections Ordinance](#), Minneapolis, MN:** Minneapolis' ordinance requires written agreements and protections against wage theft.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: January 1, 2021
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $600 per contract
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Required written agreement; rate, due date,

services must be included
- ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date
- ○ **Enforcement**: Department of Civil Rights - Labor Standards
- ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Penalties, wage theft actions
- ○ **Legislation**: Chapter 40, Article VI
- **Freelance Worker Protections Ordinance**, **Los Angeles, CA:** Los Angeles' ordinance requires written contracts, deadlines for payments, records retainment, and protection from retaliation.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: July 1, 2023
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $600 per year
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Required written agreement
  - ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
  - ○ **Enforcement**: Office of Wage Standards
  - ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Penalties, damages, attorney's fees
  - ○ **Legislation**: Rules and Regulations Implementing the Freelance Worker Protections Ordinance
- **Freelance Protection**, **Columbus, OH**: Columbus' ordinance requires written contracts and timely payment for freelance work.
  - ○ **Effective Date**: May 31, 2023
  - ○ **Contract Threshold**: $250 per contract
  - ○ **Required Contract Elements**: Required written agreement; scope, compensation, due date must be included
  - ○ **Payment Deadline**: By due date; if no specified due date, then within 30 days
  - ○ **Enforcement**: Wage Theft Prevention and Enforcement Commission
  - ○ **Remedies/Penalties**: Penalties, damages
  - ○ **Legislation**: Chapter 2337
- **The Center for Cultural Innovation** commissioned the Urban Institute to create a new report, *Arts Workers in California,* in January 2021. The report discusses the challenges facing many artists due to their frequent (mis)classification as freelance workers rather than employees, and makes the following recommendations:
  - ○ "Strengthen classification laws to combat misclassification of employees as independent contractors.
  - ○ Extend worker protections and social insurance programs to freelance arts workers and others working as independent contractors.
  - ○ Strengthen and scale collective efforts to rebalance power and support freelance arts workers."
- **Maryland's Department of Commerce's Hire Our Veterans Tax Credit** program within the Job Creation Tax Credit provides a State income tax credit to small businesses for hiring qualified veterans based on wages paid to those veteran employees. This program could serve as a model for a "Hire Maryland Artists" Tax Credit, which could provide an income tax credit for Maryland venues that hire Maryland-based artists and performers.
  - ○ Hire Our Veterans Tax Credit details: A Maryland employer may qualify for an income tax credit equal to 30% of up to the first $6,000 of wages paid to a qualified veteran employee during the first year of employment. The maximum tax credit is

$1,800 per qualified veteran employee.

Recommended next steps
- **Commission study**: This study should include: a census that collects data on current artist pay rates by artistic discipline and by region; an exploration of the pervasiveness of whistleblower issues and the need for additional protections; and a survey of what resources employers need in order to raise pay and ensure compliance.
- **Develop recommendations**: Based on stakeholder interviews, feedback on pay rate census and whistleblower protection exploration, and best practices in other cities/states, produce a set of recommendations to standardize artist pay, improve whistleblower protections in Maryland, and provide resources to employers.
- **Develop legislation**: Use recommendations to draft legislation to support artist pay standards, including whistleblower protections, as well as employers in Maryland. Refer back to MSAC to provide resources to artists and arts organizations about existing protections as appropriate.

Resources/inputs required
- Commissioned study
- Stakeholder (artists, artist employers, arts organizations) participation in interviews
- Departments of Commerce and Labor staff and legislative staff time and capacity

2. Tax Incentives for Artists and Art-Supportive Businesses

Identified Issue/Opportunity

The benefits of arts activity are often indirect and intangible, and with rapidly rising costs of production combined with consumers' inability to increase the money they spend on the arts at a commensurate level, the economic model for the arts includes a gap and therefore requires subsidy. **The workgroup recommends the study, creation, and/or expansion of tax deductions, exemptions, and incentives for artists and entities that hire artists in order to provide this subsidy.**

Current offering
- **Subtraction for Income Earned within Arts and Entertainment District(s), Maryland**
    - **Tax form**: Form 502AE
    - Qualifying residing artists can take a subtraction modification on their Maryland state income taxes for income derived from income earned from art produced and sold/performed within an Arts & Entertainment District. Work may also be sold online as long as it was produced in an Arts & Entertainment District.
    - Industry-related work is ineligible.
    - While some artists take advantage of this incentive, many are confused by the "industry-related" limitation, and many others are unaware of this incentive. There is currently no way to confirm whether or not an artists' work will be eligible before filing form 502AE.

Models/case studies

- **[Artistic Work Sales Tax Exemption](#), Rhode Island**
  - **Tax form**: [Application for Sales Tax Exemption for Artistic Works](#)
  - This statewide incentive offers an exemption from sales tax on the sale of original creative works, including both one of a kind and limited editions. The incentive does not cover consumables, and sales must be made within the state of Rhode Island.
  - This statewide incentive began as an incentive only offered within Rhode Island's Arts and Entertainment Districts, then expanded statewide.
  - According to [a report issued by the state](#), this incentive has resulted in a reduction in sales tax revenue for the state between approximately $913,000 and $1,490,000 over the past decade.
- **[Cultural Districts' Sales Tax Exemption](#), Louisiana**
  - **Tax form**: [Form R-1384](#)
  - Sales of qualifying original artwork are exempt from local sales tax when purchased within a Louisiana Cultural District.
  - This incentive was suspended in January 2025.

Recommended next steps

- **Commission study on income tax and sales tax exemptions**: Determine the potential fiscal impacts for the state for both exemptions. Consider expanding the income tax subtraction modification to include W2 artists and artists working outside Arts & Entertainment Districts. Explore the possibility of creating a sales tax exemption for either Arts & Entertainment Districts or for the full state. Interview state officials in Rhode Island and Louisiana.
- **Develop legislation**: Based on findings in study, and political appetite, draft legislation.

Resources/inputs required

- Commissioned study
- Legislative staff time and capacity

3. Affordable Housing for Artists

Identified issue/opportunity

Rising housing prices are a barrier to independent artists' ability to retain residency in Maryland. **The workgroup recommends further investigation into leveraging existing programs to address the issue of affordable housing for artists and pursuing new legislation if existing programs do not adequately address the issue.**

Models/case studies

- **Reserving affordable units in or near a cultural district for artists, California**
  - This law empowers local governments in California to reserve 10% of any locally-required affordable housing units within one half mile of a state-designated cultural

district or within a locally-designated cultural district for artists.
- California for the Arts webinar and toolkit on implementing AB 812
- **Legislation**: AB 812
- **Community Revitalization Tax Credit (CRTC), Colorado**
  - **Program scope**: CRTC provides up to $50 million in available tax credits (up to $10 million per year for 2025-2029). Eligible projects can apply for up to $3 million in tax credits and up to 25% of the total eligible expenses of a project.
  - **Eligibility**: projects must be in a creative district, historic district, neighborhood commercial center, or main street. Projects must involve construction or renovation of one or more buildings to support creative industries and creative industry workers. Eligible uses include affordable housing and live/work spaces for artists, performance and exhibition space, and creative spaces that benefit the general public. Tax credits are competitive and a panel determines which projects receive credits.
  - **Program guidelines**
  - **Legislation**: HB24-1295, Creative Industry Community Revitalization Incentives

Recommended next steps
- **Commission study**: Examine model programs as potential models, speak to staff at Commerce and DHCD, and develop ideas for new programs in Maryland. Explore creation of a tax credit for affordable artist housing.
- **Consider fiscal impacts**
- **Develop legislation**: Based on findings in study and fiscal impact, draft legislation.

Resources/inputs required
- Commissioned study
- Coordination between the Department of Commerce, Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Comptroller's Office
- Commerce/DHCD staff time and capacity
- Legislative staff time and capacity

4. Guaranteed Income for Artists

Identified issue/opportunity

Even with robust support for the arts in Maryland, artists struggle to make ends meet. Guaranteed income, a system in which certain groups of people (frequently artists) receive unrestricted monthly payments to supplement their income, is a model gaining popularity to address poverty, economic inequality, and financial insecurity. **The workgroup recommends further exploring a guaranteed basic income program for artists in Maryland. Since financial instability was identified as a major obstacle across all focus areas, a guaranteed income model directly supports artists promoting career stability, boosting workforce retention, and helping Maryland attract and keep a diverse and lively creative community.**

Guaranteed Income for Artists models/case studies:
- **Springboard for the Arts' [Guaranteed Income for Artists Pilot](#), Minnesota**
  - **Format**: Springboard provides $500 per month for five years to 100 artists in Minnesota (50 in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul and 50 in rural Otter Tail County). Springboard is also engaged in research on the impact of their guaranteed income program and provides financial and housing counseling to participating artists. The program launched in 2021 as an outgrowth of [St. Paul's People's Property Pilot](#).
  - **Funding**: Private funders, including McKnight, Bush, Surdna, and Ford foundations, provide the funding. No public funds are used.
  - **Lead Organization:** Springboard for the Arts, a nonprofit with offices in St. Paul and Fergus Falls, Minnesota.
  - [**Impact**](#)**:** Emergent themes include improved financial stability and increased focus on creative output for participants.
  - **Lessons Learned:** Springboard's program, like many, supports artists for 18 months. Springboard has advocated for longer term funding in order to support artists for a longer period of time.
- **[Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY)'s Guaranteed Income for Artists](#), New York**
  - **Format**: CRNY provided $1,000 per month for eighteen months to 2,400 artists in New York State. CRNY also included statewide advocacy, peer learning and meet ups for artists, research on other guaranteed income for artists programs, and more. The program launched as a way to get artists back to work after the COVID pandemic.
  - **Funding**: $125 million initiative ($46.6 million dispersed to artists); funding came from Mellon, Ford, and Stavros Niarchos foundations.
  - **Lead Organization**: Creatives Rebuild New York, a three-year initiative fiscally sponsored by the Tides Center. CRNY's [website](#) contains a wealth of information about Guaranteed Income for Artists programs around the country.
  - [**Impact**](#): Artists receiving guaranteed income:
    - spent 19% more hours on their art
    - 75% of caregiving artists spent more time with their families
    - experienced a 19% reduction in food insecurity
    - experienced a 29% reduction in anxiety and depression
  - **Lessons Learned**: Artists face unique challenges related to the sporadic nature of their work and income. Guaranteed income allows artists to spend more time focused on their art, avoid the financial instability that often comes with gig work, and better balance their work and personal commitments.
- **Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)'s Guaranteed Income Pilot for Artists (GIPA) and Creative Communities Coalition (CCC), San Francisco, California**
  - **Format**: The GIPA program provided $1,000 per month for 18 months to 130 artists; the CCC program provided the same to 60 artists.
  - **Funding**: GIPA: $2.34 million dispersed to artists; CCC: $1.08 million dispersed to artists. Programs were partially funded by the City.

- **Lead Organization**: The GIPA program was facilitated by YBCA in partnership with the City of San Francisco. The CCC program was supported by YBCA, but led by a coalition of six arts organizations across San Francisco.
  - **Impact**: YBCA has not completed an evaluation yet, but the program was popular with more than 2,500 applications for 130 slots, and some artists reported using the monthly stipend to cover basic needs, reduce financial stress, and spend more time on their creative work.
  - **Lessons Learned**: YBCA was initially criticized for their selection process, which was a random lottery, since this did not take issues of equity into consideration. YBCA adjusted and partnered with community-based arts organizations to target artists from marginalized groups and in zip codes hit hardest by COVID.
  - **Legislation**: Guaranteed Income Advisory Group Report; Resolution adopting the recommendations of the Advisory Group and establishing a City policy in support of guaranteed income.
- **Ireland's Basic Income for Artists**: This three-year pilot program, which featured $380 monthly payments to artists, was recently made permanent, with $1,500 monthly payments to be provided to 2,000 artists beginning in 2026. Analysis of the pilot showed that participants reported less anxiety, more productivity, and greater life satisfaction. The pilot cost the Irish Government $84 million but generated $93 million in economic benefits since participating artists earned nearly $600 more each month and needed about $100 less in social support each month.
- **City of Sacramento's Creative Growth Fellowship:** The City of Sacramento is providing $850 per month to 200 artists for one year from September 2025 through August 2026. The program used these guidelines to select artists. The city's motion to move forward with the program can be found here.

General Guaranteed Income models/case studies:
- **Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED)**, **Stockton, California**: SEED was the nation's first mayor-led guaranteed income demonstration program. 125 randomly selected Stockton residents received $500 per month for 24 months.
- **Excel,** **Durham, North Carolina**: Durham's guaranteed income pilot ran for one year from March 2022 through February 2023. The program focused primarily on formerly incarcerated individuals.
- **Growing Resilience in Tacoma (GRIT)**, **Tacoma, Washington**: GRIT provided 110 participants $500 per month for 13 months beginning in 2021.
- **Howard County, Maryland's Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot**: This program provides 20 families $1,000 per month for 12 months. The program also includes wraparound services and programming sessions from community partners.
- **Thrive Prince George's,** **Prince George's County, Maryland**: This program provided $800 per month for 24 months to 50 youth and 125 seniors.
- **St. Paul's People's Prosperity Pilot**, **St. Paul, Minnesota:** This program provided 150 families with $500 per month for 18 months from 2020-2022.
- **In Her Hands,** **Georgia**: This program provides $1,000 per month to 920 women in four communities in rural Georgia for 2-3 years.

Recommended next steps

- **Commission study on best practices for guaranteed income for artists**: While guaranteed income programs have proliferated across the country and world over the past five years, the format of these programs varies drastically in terms of payment amount, eligibility requirements, program length, funding sources, and partners involved. Recommendations and best practices exist, but a study that tailors recommendations to the specific needs of Maryland artists is needed to ensure the greatest impact.
- **Fundraising and consideration of fiscal impacts**: A program budget will need to be developed, and funding sources (potentially both public and private) will need to be identified.
- **Develop legislation**: Numerous models exist on which Maryland's program could be based.

Resources/inputs required:

- Commissioned study
- Legislative staff time and capacity
- Funding for program development and management, and for guaranteed income distributions

MSAC Recommendations

In addition to the previously discussed legislative recommendations, the workgroup developed the following nine recommendations for MSAC. While some new legislation may be needed to offer certain improvements, others can be accomplished by adjusting MSAC's funding programs, improving data collection protocols, and expanding resources.

1. Develop Artist Pay Guide and Companion Professional Development Resources

Current offering
MSAC partners with [Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts](#) to provide resources on artists' legal rights.

Identified issue/opportunity
As non-salaried freelancers, independent artists in Maryland face inconsistent pay standards. Artists must contend with the absence of standardized rates, lack of pay transparency, and limited awareness of payment best practices among both artists and the organizations that hire them. **The workgroup recommends MSAC expand its current resources for independent artists and organizations that employ artists by developing guidance and best practices for fair artist compensation in Maryland.**

The creation and dissemination of Artist Pay Guidelines and other resources tailored to the Maryland arts sector would support equitable compensation practices across the state. These guidelines and best practices could be created in parallel to the Statewide Artist Pay Standards recommended previously (Legislative Recommendation #1 above). By leveraging its existing networks and grantee base, MSAC can:
- Provide professional development and educational opportunities for artists on fair pay practices and contract negotiation.
- Offer non-monetary resources to organizations—particularly current grantees—on how to fairly compensate artists and execute fair contracts. These resources should encourage arts organizations and venues to:
  - publish clear information on pay rates, stipends, and fees for artists across all activities, including calls, auditions, commissions, residencies, educational work, and community engagement;
  - consider planning meetings, rehearsals, community activities, and post-event efforts like talkbacks, social media posts, and documentation as paid time;
  - align internal pay policies with established artist pay guidelines;
  - use written agreements whenever engaging independent artists, regardless of project length of type; and
  - when contracting, avoid broad IP rights language or non-compete clauses that limit artists from marketing their work.
- Increase transparency and raise sector-wide awareness of equitable pay standards.

- Work with grantee organizations (through listening sessions, surveys, data collection, etc.) to understand what they need to implement the guidelines and adjust MSAC's grant programs where possible based on these learnings (see MSAC Recommendation #3 below for additional recommendations related to listening sessions).

Models/case studies
- **Indianapolis Arts Council's [Artist Living Wage Resource Guide](#)**: The Indy Arts Council maintains a list of resources for artists seeking a livable wage. Resources are divided into the following categories:
  - [Organizations Advocating for Artist Fair Wages](#)
  - [Industry-Specific Advocacy Groups](#)
  - [Calculators and Rate Tables](#)
  - [Policy Research and Advocacy Efforts](#)
  - [Pay Data and Research Tools](#)
- **Springboard for the Arts' [Work With Artists Guide](#), Minnesota**: Springboard publishes sample contracts and pricing guidelines for various artistic disciplines, and provides guidance on how to hire an artist.
- **[Rates of Pay for Artists Guidance](#), Northern Ireland**: The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI)'s policy sets guidelines and best practice principles, rather than legislatively mandating fair pay standards for artists/freelancers. These principles include:
  - **Pay Rates**: includes pay guidelines for organizations receiving funding from ACNI. This guidance includes suggested pay levels by artistic discipline, and encourages transparency and the use of contracts with artists.
  - **Contracting Practices**: guidance recommends providing a contract for engagements, being transparent about terms of engagement, and explicitly listing and protecting artist payment in budgets.
  - **Public Funding**: organizations' policy and approach to paying artists can be used as part of their ACNI funding application assessment.

Additional resources
- **[Working Artists and the Greater Economy (WAGE)](#), New York**: WAGE operates two connected programs, WAGE Certification for institutions that hire artists and WAGENCY for artists.
  - **WAGE Certification**: Launched in 2014, this certification publicly recognizes nonprofits that demonstrate a commitment to voluntarily paying artist fees that meet WAGE standards.
  - **WAGENCY**: provides collective bargaining power in the absence of a union for artists and arts workers to negotiate with non-WAGE certified institutions.
- **[CARFAC-RAAV Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule](#), Canada**: These organizations publish annual minimum fees for visual and media arts workers, which are widely adopted across Canada on a volunteer basis.
- **[Teaching Artists Guild's Teaching Artist Pay Rate Calculator](#)**: This calculator helps artists determine their pay rate in order to earn a livable wage, based on their location, household size, and employment type.

- **[Artists at Work](#)**: Based on the depression era Works Progress Administration, Artists at Work began during the COVID pandemic as a way to support artists by providing them with a W2 salary and benefits to address community challenges with their artistic practice. The program has continued through 2025 across 12 states.

Recommended next steps
- **Research and benchmarking**: Review and adapt national and international artist pay models to Maryland's arts ecosystem, including cost-of-living considerations.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Convene focus groups of independent artists, arts organizations, and funders to identify practical, Maryland-specific standards.
- **Guideline development**: Draft Artist Pay Guidelines and companion professional development materials (workshops, webinars, downloadable tools).
- **Pilot and seek feedback**: Test the guidelines with a small group of MSAC grantees and independent artists; gather feedback and refine.
- **Launch and publicize:** Roll out the finalized guidelines statewide, leveraging MSAC's communications channels, networks, and grantee base.

Resources/inputs required
- **Research report:** Report to provide information on national and international models to adapt to Maryland.
- **Marketing and communications**: Dedicated communications staff time for outreach and promotion, and facilitated conversation with stakeholders for feedback.
- **Professional development**: Publishing and promoting resources and conducting ongoing professional development sessions.

2. Expand Unrestricted Artist Funding

Current offering
The MSAC Grants for Artists (GFA) program currently awards $350,000–$400,000 total annually through $2,500 unrestricted grants, distributed via eligibility-based random selection. In FY 2025, 154 awards were made from 1,159 applications, meaning only 13% of applicants received funding.

Identified issue/opportunity
Unrestricted funding for artists fills a market gap, augmenting the revenue that artists receive from contracts and project-specific grants and allowing artists to grow their practices within Maryland. Unrestricted funding also supports institutions and venues that hire artists, allowing both artists and the organizations that hire them to thrive in a challenging market. It also creates a welcoming creative atmosphere in Maryland, potentially leading to the attraction of artists from out of state. Demand for unrestricted artist funding in Maryland greatly exceeds available resources, leaving most applicants without support. This limits artists' ability to sustain their practice, take creative risks, and fully contribute to the state's cultural vitality. **The workgroup recommends increasing the amount of unrestricted funding available and the number of awards MSAC is able to make in order to significantly strengthen the independent artist sector statewide.**

Models/case studies
- **[Creatives Rebuild New York (CRNY)'s Guaranteed Income for Artists](#), New York**
    - See legislative recommendation #4 above for more information on this program.
- **Springboard for the Arts' [Guaranteed Income for Artists Pilot](#), Minnesota**
    - See legislative recommendation #4 above for more information on this program.
- 27 states award unrestricted grant funds to individual artists, often through fellowship programs. These awards range from a few hundred dollars to $50,000 for legacy artists in California, with most states offering between $5,000 - $10,000. Additional information may be found in this [NASAA policy sampler](#). Some example grant programs include:
    - **Massachusetts Cultural Council's [Grants for Creative Individuals](#)**: This grant program provides $5,000 unrestricted grants to individual artists. In 2025, the program awarded a total of $2,235,000 to 447 creative individuals.
    - **California Arts Council (CAC)'s [Individual Artist Fellowship](#)**: This program awards grants between $5,000 - $50,000 via eight administering organizations that each set up their own selection process. CAC ensures that funds reach artists in each of California's 58 counties.
    - **The Delaware Division of the Arts' [Individual Artist Fellowships](#)**: This program provides $5,000 - $12,000 in unrestricted grants per artist. In 2025, 21 out of 191 applicants received funding.
    - **The Minnesota State Arts Board's [Creative Individual Grants](#)**: This program provides unrestricted funding between $2,000 - $10,000 for individual artists. The program is currently a pilot, with funding coming from [Minnesota's Legacy Amendment](#), which provides funding to the arts (and to protect drinking water, wetlands, parks, and other water sources) via an increase in sales tax.

Recommended next steps
- **Expansion**: Increase budget for MSAC's GFA program, potentially increasing both number of grants and grant amount to be more in line with peer states.
- **Evaluation**: Conduct a program evaluation to fully understand the impact, and develop recommendations for program and policy changes to improve outcomes.
- **Promotion**: Expand awareness of the program through targeted marketing across the state.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for coordination, planning, and facilitation.
- **Funding** to produce study if conducted externally.
- **Increased State allocation** through the Preservation of Cultural Arts Fund.

3. Increase Listening Sessions Opportunities for Independent Artists

Current offering
MSAC currently engages artists through virtual convenings (scheduled as needed), in-person office hours held at ten sites statewide each year, program editing processes, and other ad hoc or opportunistic connections.

Identified issue/opportunity
Current offerings provide valuable dialogue, but there is an opportunity to more intentionally engage independent artists—particularly those in rural areas and those representing BIPOC communities—in MSAC's public listening process. Expanded listening sessions will generate additional data that can inform MSAC's programming to better support arts organizations, who will then be better equipped to support Maryland's artists. **The workgroup recommends broadening and better promoting listening sessions to enrich the range of perspectives informing MSAC's program design and policy development, ensuring MSAC programs remain responsive, equitable, and artist-centered.**

Models/case studies
- **Indiana Arts Commission (IAC)'s [Artist Needs Assessment 2022-2024](link)**: This statewide assessment included 11 in-person listening sessions with nearly 150 artists participating. The IAC then conducted a statewide theme that built on themes discussed in the listening session. Feedback was used to inform IAC's new programs and services for individual artists, including professional development, financial support, spaces access, and more.

Recommended next steps
- **Commission a needs assessment**: Explore new opportunities for virtual and in-person sessions that increase access and participation for independent artists.
- **Integrate Artist Voices:** Invite past grantees and independent artists to share their experiences in info sessions and presentations, creating peer-to-peer connections.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Build partnerships with grassroots groups, local artist networks, and community-based organizations to co-host sessions, with a focus on rural and BIPOC artists.
- **County/state collaboration**: Expand collaboration with county arts agencies to coordinate outreach and engage independent artists statewide.
- **Community ambassadors pilot program**: Research and pilot a program of "MSAC Community Ambassadors" to support grassroots, regenerative outreach, and relationship-building with independent artists.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity and new partnerships**: Collaborations with local cultural leaders and grassroots organizations.
- **Marketing and communications**: Increased resources for outreach, promotion, translation, and accessibility support.

- **Participant honorariums**: Funding to compensate artists for their time and expertise in listening sessions.

4. Develop Cross-Agency Programs Serving Independent Artists

Current offering
MSAC actively engages within the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Development Center, and with other departments (Departments of Housing and Community Development, Labor, Service and Civic Innovation, Aging, Health, etc.) to develop info sessions and access to resources, including the following sessions produced in Fall 2025:
- Maryland Innovation Center (MIC), September 2025: this session focused on growing artist and creative businesses with support from the MIC, and included an overview of MIC resources.
- Maryland Apprenticeship Training Program (MATP): this session included an overview of grant, tax credit, and training resources available to MATP participants.
- Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC): this session included an overview of using the SBDC to access consulting, training, and long-range planning resources for artistic and creative businesses.

Identified issue/opportunity
Independent artists face needs across multiple sectors—housing, healthcare, transportation, and business development—that are not fully addressed through existing MSAC programs. **The workgroup recommends that MSAC leverages cross-agency partnerships to develop coordinated, artist-informed resources, trainings, and pilot programs that are accessible, relevant, and responsive to these challenges.**

Models/case studies
- **Space to Create, Colorado**: This program assists communities with the development of affordable live-work and commercial spaces for the creative sector in rural areas. The program is led by Colorado Creative Industries, and supported by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, History Colorado, Artspace, and the Boettcher Foundation.
- **State of the Arts Fellowship, New York**: The New York State Council on the Arts' is embedding artists into NY State agencies to directly collaborate with non-artists on public facing initiatives.

Recommended next steps
- **Map cross-sector needs and opportunities**: Conduct a scan of priority issue areas (housing, healthcare, digital access, business development) to identify where MSAC can have the most immediate impact.
- **Identify funding sources**
- **Produce pilot programs**: Launch 1–2 cross-sector initiatives in partnership with other state agencies.

- **Develop resources collaboratively**: Co-create guides, training, and programs tailored for independent artists.
- **Embed artist leadership**: Involve artists in designing, presenting, and promoting these initiatives to ensure relevance and accessibility.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for coordination, planning, and facilitation.
- **Inter-agency partnerships**: Agreements with state agencies clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- **Funding for pilot programs**: Seed resources to design, implement, and evaluate initial initiatives.
- **Artist participation support**: Honorariums to compensate artists for their contributions in design, delivery, and outreach.

5. Establish Anti-Retaliation Protocols and Guidance for Independent Artists and Grantees

Current offering
MSAC grantees currently agree to follow state and federal law. MSAC provides information sessions in partnership with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (MDVLA) on artists' rights and protections including the Fair Employment Practices Act (FEPA) and Whistleblower Protection Act.

Identified issue/opportunity
Independent artists, particularly early-career artists, often need guidance on navigating existing legal protection and emerging challenges such as DEI restrictions, censorship, and retaliation. **The workgroup recommends that MSAC:**
- transparently explains restrictions impacting MSAC and the safeguards MSAC can offer.
- provides clear guidance and training on protections for artists and grantees.
- informs and encourages grantee organizations that work with independent artists to adopt stronger assurances in contracts, hiring practices, and agreements. Specifically encourage arts organizations and venues to:
  - include contract clauses against retaliation and harassment, and ensure dispute resolution procedures are transparent to artists before work begins.
  - designate a specific contact (besides the direct supervisor) for concerns about harassment, underpayment, unsafe conditions, censorship, or retaliation.
  - establish a policy guaranteeing that artists will not lose work in retaliation for raising good faith concerns, and communicate this policy to all contracted artists.
- develops accessible resources and protocols to support artists in understanding and exercising their rights while protecting both artists and MSAC.

Models/case studies
- [Freelancers Union](): New York's Freelancers Union supported the effort to pass the

Freelance Isn't Free Act, which served as a blueprint in other cities and states. Their website contains considerable resources.
- **Australia's National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA)'s [Code of Practice](#)** includes recommendations for grievance and dispute resolution for artists and parties that hire artists.

Recommended next steps
- **Develop anti-retaliation protocols**: Establish clear policies for grantees, outlining protections and procedures for addressing retaliation concerns.
- **Create guidance and resource guides**: Produce easy-to-use guides for artists and grantees covering legal protections, best practices in contracts, and organizational responsibilities.
- **Offer training and workshops**: Partner with MDVLA and other legal experts to conduct in-person and virtual sessions for artists and grantees.
- **Promote transparency and awareness**: Ensure that protections, resources, and expectations are clearly communicated to all applicants and grantees.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity:** Dedicated time for policy development, resource creation, and training coordination.
- **Legal expertise:** Support needed for content and workshop facilitation.
- **Funding** for materials, workshops, and expert honorariums.
- **Communications capacity:** Support needed to ensure wide awareness and accessibility of resources.

6. Expand Housing Partnerships and Tax Benefits for Independent Artists

Current offering

The [Arts & Entertainment District Property Tax Credit](#) program currently offers a 10-year property tax credit for local property taxes imposed on a building that has been renovated for use by an artist or arts organizations. This incentive is intended to encourage renovation of manufacturing, commercial, or industrial buildings for use by artists and/or arts organizations by reducing the increased tax burden that such renovations would incur. The credit is not intended for residential buildings and therefore does not help with the lack of affordable housing for artists. It also cannot be applied to any property for which any other tax subsidy is being received from the city/county. Other more advantageous tax subsidies are available, making the Arts & Entertainment District tax credit less useful.

Identified issue/opportunity

The current Arts & Entertainment District incentive and other existing housing programs do not fully meet artists' residential needs. Additional data and research is needed to fully understand the limitations, but **the workgroup recommends that MSAC considers proposing an expansion of the geographic reach beyond just Arts & Entertainment Districts, allowing the credit to be**

applied to residential buildings, requiring property owners to stack multiple tax subsidies so that the Arts & Entertainment District tax incentive could be used in combination with other tax subsidies, targeting MSAC-connected artists, and exploring cross-sector partnerships to improve access to affordable housing and related benefits. MSAC could also partner with other agencies and nonprofit organizations to support the creation of new affordable artist housing in Maryland. (See related Legislative Recommendation #4 for additional information.)

Models/case studies
- [**NYC Affordable Real Estate for Artists (AREA)**](#)**, New York City**
  - **Program Lead**: This program is administered by the Mayors' Office, Department of Cultural Affairs, Housing Preservation and Development, and NYC Economic Development Corporation.
  - **Format**: The program supports both affordable housing and workspaces by identifying developers and operators to create and manage affordable arts spaces, converts underutilized city-owned buildings to arts spaces, and allocates funding to support these conversions. The program also assesses demand by surveying arts and cultural organizations about their space needs.
- [**Artist and Public Life Residency**](#) **(APLR), Indianapolis, IN**
  - **Program Lead**: [Big Car](#)
  - **Format**: This program includes 18 homes on a single block in Indianapolis, surrounding Big Car's Tube Factory art space. The homes are a combination of co-ownership between the artists and Big Car, and affordable rentals that are priced 50% below market rate. Participating artists are selected by long-time residents, other APLR artists, Big Car staff, and artistic experts. Participants benefit from affordable housing and access to Big Car resources and staff, in exchange for 16 hours per month of work in the community via their artistic practice.
  - **Funding:** Glick Philanthropies, Lilly Endowment, the Herbert Simon Family Foundation, Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, Efroymson Family Fund, Impact 100
- [**Second Story Collective's Homesharing Program**](#)**, Philadelphia, PA**
  - **Program Lead**: Second Story Collective and Drexel University
  - **Format**: In exchange for helping around the home, younger residents receive reduced rent in older Philadelphia residents' homes. Homeowners and homesharers participate in arts workshops to build trust.
  - **Funding**: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, M&T Bank, Philadelphia Insurance Companies, Saint-Gobain North America, The Barra Foundation

Recommended next steps
- **Data collection**: Collect data on who benefits from current Arts & Entertainment District incentives.
- **Tax incentives**: Explore the expansion of tax incentives to additional geographic areas.

- **Pilot housing programs**: Develop pilot initiatives targeting artists connected to MSAC programs or networks.
- **Cross-sector collaboration**: Partner with housing, urban development, and health agencies to integrate arts and affordable housing initiatives. (See Cross-Sector Agency Collaboration Recommendations above.)

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for data collection, program design, and coordination with other agencies.
- **Partnerships:** New relationships with local and state housing authorities, and community organizations.
- **Funding:** Needed for pilot programs, feasibility studies, and potential expansion of tax incentives.
- **Communications capacity**: Outreach resources to ensure artists are aware of available programs and benefits.

7. Evaluate and Address Multilingual Needs in Grant Programs and Materials

Current offering
MSAC currently provides automated translation services for all materials, including website content, guidelines, and applications. Various alternate application formats are also available, and programs are regularly revised with access and equity considerations in mind.

Identified issue/opportunity
MSAC lacks information on how language barriers affect limited English proficiency speakers' access to programs and funding. **The workgroup recommends simplified multilingual grant materials, targeted outreach, and technical assistance to improve equitable access and increase participation among these artists and artist-serving organizations.**

Models/case studies
- **New York State Council on the Arts' (NYSCA) [Language Access Plan for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency](#)**
  - This 2024 plan is the NYSCA's required Language Access Plan.
  - The plan includes:
    - Description of population with limited English proficiency in service area.
    - How NYSCA notifies the public about language access services.
    - Resources and methods for providing language access services.
    - Explanation of how NYSCA staff are trained in language access services.

Recommended next steps
- **Outreach**: Gather information and feedback from people with limited English proficiency speaking artists to determine which languages, translation methods, and types of support services are most needed.

- **Inclusion**: Ensure people with limited English proficiency are involved in existing program editing processes.
- **Production**: Develop new resources based on this feedback, monitor results, and collect additional input.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for research, application redesign, and technical assistance.
- **Funding** for translation services, multilingual materials and outreach efforts.
- **Partnerships**: New relationships with community organizations for targeted support and outreach.

8. Expand Demographic Analysis of and Reporting on MSAC Applicants and Grantees

Current offering

MSAC has revised grant reporting requirements to include an access and equity lens. As a state agency, MSAC is limited in the demographic information it can request or require from applicants.

Identified issue/opportunity

To increase transparency around equity and funding reach, MSAC could expand demographic data analysis and public reporting on grantees, including non-demographic metadata such as artistic discipline. **Because demographic information cannot legally be collected as part of an application, the workgroup recommends that MSAC explores alternative methods, such as using zip codes to extrapolate demographic and community-level indicators.**

Models/case studies
- **Maryland DHCD "Just Communities"**: This program selects areas based on factors like Priority Funding Area, homeownership rates, property value trends, redlining history, and health indicators, which could inform this approach to better understand communities with the greatest need and opportunity.
- **National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA)'s Equity Choice Points: A Grant-making Reflection Tool for State Arts Agencies** (2020)
  - **Summary:** This tool was created to help state arts agencies address issues of intended inequities in their grantmaking practices, acknowledging the limitations most states have in collecting demographic data.
  - **Recommendations:** The tool's recommendations include advice on eligibility criteria, panel recruitment processes, award structures, reporting requirements, leading change, and closes with additional recommended resources.
  - **Note**: NASAA's report credits MSAC for "shifting its applications to become tools that ask organizations to reflect on programs and operations while considering equity, diversity and inclusion. MSAC redefined community responsiveness,

engagement and artistic excellence in its guidelines for Grants for Organizations and Creativity Grants."

Recommended next steps
- **Collect data**: Explore methods for estimating demographic reach using zip codes and community-level data.
- **Develop indicators**: Identify metadata and indicators that provide meaningful insight into access and equity.
- **Internal assessment**: Assess existing MSAC grantmaking procedures to ensure elimination of unintended inequitable practices.
- **Reporting and promotion**: Develop public reporting mechanisms to share findings with stakeholders.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff time** for data analysis and mapping and partnerships with demographic research experts.
- **Creation of new tools or designs** for data visualization and reporting.
- **Funding** to support research and reporting.

9. Enhance Tracking and Reporting of Independent Artists Investments Across MSAC Programs

Current offering
MSAC currently produces annual reports by program and geographic area, providing general information on funding distribution.

Identified issue/opportunity
Current reporting does not fully capture the diversity of independent artists, their practices, or how they define themselves. Expanding data collection to include artist self-identification, emerging disciplines, and nuanced categories of practice would provide a clearer picture of funding distribution. **The workgroup recommends analyzing investments across all programs to offer additional insight into MSAC's impact, highlight underserved artistic communities and geographic areas, and inform future program development and equity-focused strategies.**

Models/case studies
- **NASAA's [State Arts Agency Grant Making Facts: Individual Artists](#)**: NASAA produces reports on state arts agencies' investments into individual artists, which includes national data and state level data. In 2023 (the most recent year available), state arts agencies awarded more than $38 million to individual artists, representing just 5.3% of all grant dollars awarded. The median award size was $5,000 per artist.

Recommended next steps
- **Inventory existing data**: Identify opportunities for cross-program analysis.

- **Determine priority data points and reporting goals**: Consult with key stakeholders to accomplish this.
- **Analyze recommended data collection for access**: Analyze any data collection methods to understand potential barriers they would create and weigh the benefit and cost before implementing.
- **Categorize artists**: Develop mechanisms to capture independent artist identification and nuanced discipline categories across programs.
- **Produce reports**: Highlight geographic, disciplinary, and demographic trends to inform policy and program development.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity** for data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- **Data management tools** to track artist-level investments across programs.
- **Consultation** with independent artist networks to refine discipline and practice categories.

Next Steps

The recommendations in this report include a number that are likely budget neutral, with focus on altering programs and procedures rather than generating major new tax incentives. While the more fiscally intensive recommendations are included due to their anticipated significant impact, work can begin first on the budget neutral recommendations while the fiscal impact of the other recommendations is explored. The workgroup therefore recommends first exploring the following recommendations:

Legislative Recommendations:
      1. Statewide Artist Pay Standards and Protections
MSAC Recommendations:
      1. Develop Artist Pay Guide and Companion Professional Development Resources
      3. Increase Listening Sessions Opportunities for Independent Artists
      4. Develop Cross-Sector Programs Serving Independent Artists
      5. Establish Anti-Retaliation Protocols and Guidance for Independent Artists and Grantees
      7. Evaluate and Address Multilingual Needs in Grant Programs and Materials.
      8. Expand Demographic Analysis and Reporting on MSAC Grantees and Recipients.
      9. Enhance Tracking and Reporting of Independent Artists Investments Across MSAC Programs

Simultaneously, MSAC staff and/or external consultants should begin collecting additional information on the fiscal impacts, expected benefits, and best practices associated with the remaining recommendations so that these may be appropriately phased.

Closing

If enacted, the preceding recommendations will make Maryland one of the most welcoming and supportive states for artists by supporting the arts and cultural institutions that provide Maryland's artists with places to rehearse, create, perform, and show their work. The workgroup's recommendations are all grounded in reality and based on precedent policies and programs in peer states and cities. They have all been included because they work: the models and case studies on which the recommendations are based have been in place elsewhere long enough for their impact to be evaluated. This report provides a roadmap for Maryland to benefit from the experiments that have worked elsewhere and match or exceed the creative ecosystems of other states.

With support at and coordination between the Maryland General Assembly, the Maryland State Arts Council, and across Maryland's arts and culture institutions, nonprofits, and advocates, the time is right to make Maryland an even more supportive state for artists.

For a simplified report focused exclusively on recommendations, please see the separate Arts Incubator Workgroup Implementation Roadmap.

Arts Incubator Workgroup Implementation Roadmap

December 22, 2025

Created as an addendum to the full *Arts Incubator Workgroup Final Report*, this *Implementation Roadmap* is intended as an abbreviated version of the report to be used by those charged with implementing the report's recommendations. The following pages include only the report's legislative and MSAC recommendations, with identified issues, recommended next steps, and resources/inputs needed listed under each recommendation. Precedents and important case studies on which these recommendations are based, as well as a broader explanation of the workgroup and the report's purpose, are included in the full report.

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Legislative Recommendations

1. Statewide Artist Pay Standards and Protections

Identified issue/opportunity

As non-salaried freelancers, independent artists in Maryland face inconsistent pay standards. Artists must contend with the absence of standardized rates, lack of pay transparency, and limited awareness of payment best practices among both artists and the organizations that hire them. Furthermore, independent artists have reported experiencing unethical treatment in employment situations. Mandating a standard of compensation and protection for artists involved in publicly funded projects would give organizations guidance for fair compensation and help make Maryland a more stable and reliable place for artists to work and live. **The workgroup recommends further study of this matter as well as the introduction of legislation to standardize pay structures and expectations, while also ensuring that legal recourse and resources are available to artists statewide and that entities that employ artists are aware of legal requirements and supported to pay artists at standard pay rates.**

Recommended next steps
- **Commission study**: This study should include a census that collects data on current artist pay rates by artistic discipline and by region, as well as an exploration of the pervasiveness of whistleblower issues and the need for additional protections.
- **Develop recommendations**: Based on stakeholder interviews, feedback on pay rate census and whistleblower protection exploration, and best practices in other cities/states, produce a set of recommendations to standardize artist pay and improve whistleblower protections in Maryland.
- **Develop legislation**: Use recommendations to draft legislation to support artist pay standards, including whistleblower protections, in Maryland. Refer back to MSAC to provide resources to artists and arts organizations about existing protections as appropriate.

Resources/inputs required
- Commissioned study
- Stakeholder (artists, artist employers, arts organizations) participation in interviews
- Departments of Commerce and Labor staff and legislative staff time and capacity

2. Tax Incentives for Artists and Art-Supportive Businesses

Identified Issue/Opportunity

The benefits of arts activity are often indirect and intangible, and with rapidly rising costs of production combined with consumers' inability to increase the money they spend on the arts at a commensurate level, the economic model for the arts includes a gap and therefore requires subsidy. **The workgroup recommends the study, creation, and/or expansion of tax deductions, exemptions, and incentives for artists and entities that hire artists in order to provide this subsidy.**

Recommended next steps

- **Commission study on income tax and sales tax exemptions**: Determine the potential fiscal impacts for the state for both exemptions. Consider expanding the income tax subtraction modification to include W2 artists and artists working outside Arts & Entertainment Districts. Explore the possibility of creating a sales tax exemption for either Arts & Entertainment Districts or for the full state. Interview state officials in Rhode Island and Louisiana.
- **Develop legislation**: Based on findings in study, and political appetite, draft legislation.

Resources/inputs required

- Commissioned study
- Legislative staff time and capacity

3. Affordable Housing for Artists

Identified issue/opportunity
Rising housing prices are a barrier to independent artists' ability to retain residency in Maryland. **The workgroup recommends further investigation into leveraging existing programs to address the issue of affordable housing for artists and pursuing new legislation if existing programs do not adequately address the issue.**

Recommended next steps
- **Commission study**: Examine model programs as potential models, speak to staff at Commerce and DHCD, and develop ideas for new programs in Maryland. Explore creation of a tax credit for affordable artist housing.
- **Consider fiscal impacts**
- **Develop legislation**: Based on findings in study and fiscal impact, draft legislation.

Resources/inputs required
- Commissioned study
- Coordination between the Department of Commerce, Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Comptroller's Office
- Commerce/DHCD staff time and capacity
- Legislative staff time and capacity

4. Guaranteed Income for Artists

Identified issue/opportunity

Even with robust support for the arts in Maryland, artists struggle to make ends meet. Guaranteed income, a system in which certain groups of people (frequently artists) receive unrestricted monthly payments to supplement their income, is a model gaining popularity to address poverty, economic inequality, and financial insecurity. **The workgroup recommends further exploring a guaranteed basic income program for artists in Maryland. Since financial instability was identified as a major obstacle across all focus areas, a guaranteed income model directly supports artists promoting career stability, boosting workforce retention, and helping Maryland attract and keep a diverse and lively creative community.**

Recommended next steps

- **Commission study on best practices for guaranteed income for artists**: While guaranteed income programs have proliferated across the country and world over the past five years, the format of these programs varies drastically in terms of payment amount, eligibility requirements, program length, funding sources, and partners involved. Recommendations and best practices exist, but a study that tailors recommendations to the specific needs of Maryland artists is needed to ensure the greatest impact.
- **Fundraising and consideration of fiscal impacts**: A program budget will need to be developed, and funding sources (potentially both public and private) will need to be identified.
- **Develop legislation**: Numerous models exist on which Maryland's program could be based.

Resources/inputs required:

- Commissioned study
- Legislative staff time and capacity
- Funding for program development and management, and for guaranteed income distributions.

MSAC Recommendations

1. Develop Artist Pay Guide and Companion Professional Development Resources

Identified issue/opportunity

As non-salaried freelancers, independent artists in Maryland face inconsistent pay standards. Artists must contend with the absence of standardized rates, lack of pay transparency, and limited awareness of payment best practices among both artists and the organizations that hire them. **The workgroup recommends MSAC expand its current resources for independent artists and organizations that employ artists by developing guidance and best practices for fair artist compensation in Maryland.**

The creation and dissemination of Artist Pay Guidelines and other resources tailored to the Maryland arts sector would support equitable compensation practices across the state. These guidelines and best practices could be created in parallel to the Statewide Artist Pay Standards recommended previously (Legislative Recommendation #1 above). By leveraging its existing networks and grantee base, MSAC can:

- Provide professional development and educational opportunities for artists on fair pay practices and contract negotiation.
- Offer non-monetary resources to organizations—particularly current grantees—on how to fairly compensate artists and execute fair contracts. These resources should encourage arts organizations and venues to:
  - publish clear information on pay rates, stipends, and fees for artists across all activities, including calls, auditions, commissions, residencies, educational work, and community engagement;
  - consider planning meetings, rehearsals, community activities, and post-event efforts like talkbacks, social media posts, and documentation as paid time;
  - align internal pay policies with established artist pay guidelines;
  - use written agreements whenever engaging independent artists, regardless of project length of type; and
  - when contracting, avoid broad IP rights language or non-compete clauses that limit artists from marketing their work.
- Increase transparency and raise sector-wide awareness of equitable pay standards.
- Work with grantee organizations (through listening sessions, surveys, data collection, etc.) to understand what they need to implement the guidelines and adjust MSAC's grant programs where possible based on these learnings (see MSAC Recommendation #3 below for additional recommendations related to listening sessions).

Recommended next steps

- **Research and benchmarking**: Review and adapt national and international artist pay models to Maryland's arts ecosystem, including cost-of-living considerations.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Convene focus groups of independent artists, arts organizations, and funders to identify practical, Maryland-specific standards.
- **Guideline development**: Draft Artist Pay Guidelines and companion professional development materials (workshops, webinars, downloadable tools).
- **Pilot and seek feedback**: Test the guidelines with a small group of MSAC grantees and independent artists; gather feedback and refine.
- **Launch and publicize:** Roll out the finalized guidelines statewide, leveraging MSAC's communications channels, networks, and grantee base.

Resources/inputs required
- **Research report:** Report to provide information on national and international models to adapt to Maryland.
- **Marketing and communications**: Dedicated communications staff time for outreach and promotion, and facilitated conversation with stakeholders for feedback.
- **Professional development**: Publishing and promoting resources and conducting ongoing professional development sessions.

2. Expand Unrestricted Artist Funding

Identified issue/opportunity
Unrestricted funding for artists fills a market gap, augmenting the revenue that artists receive from contracts and project-specific grants and allowing artists to grow their practices within Maryland. Unrestricted funding also supports institutions and venues that hire artists, allowing both artists and the organizations that hire them to thrive in a challenging market. It also creates a welcoming creative atmosphere in Maryland, potentially leading to the attraction of artists from out of state. Demand for unrestricted artist funding in Maryland greatly exceeds available resources, leaving most applicants without support. This limits artists' ability to sustain their practice, take creative risks, and fully contribute to the state's cultural vitality. **The workgroup recommends increasing the amount of unrestricted funding available and the number of awards MSAC is able to make in order to significantly strengthen the independent artist sector statewide.**

Recommended next steps
- **Expansion**: Increase budget for MSAC's GFA program, potentially increasing both number of grants and grant amount to be more in line with peer states.
- **Evaluation**: Conduct a program evaluation to fully understand impact, and develop recommendations for program and policy changes to improve outcomes.
- **Promotion**: Expand awareness of the program through targeted marketing across the state.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for coordination, planning, and facilitation.
- **Funding** to produce study if conducted externally.
- **Increased State allocation** through the Preservation of Cultural Arts Fund.

3. Increase Listening Sessions Opportunities for Independent Artists

Identified issue/opportunity
Current offerings provide valuable dialogue, but there is an opportunity to more intentionally engage independent artists—particularly those in rural areas and those representing BIPOC communities—in MSAC's public listening process. Expanded listening sessions will generate additional data that can inform MSAC's programming to better support arts organizations, who will then be better equipped to support Maryland's artists. **The workgroup recommends broadening and better promoting listening sessions to enrich the range of perspectives informing MSAC's program design and policy development, ensuring MSAC programs remain responsive, equitable, and artist-centered.**

Recommended next steps
- **Commission a needs assessment**: Explore new opportunities for virtual and in-person sessions that increase access and participation for independent artists.
- **Integrate Artist Voices:** Invite past grantees and independent artists to share their experiences in info sessions and presentations, creating peer-to-peer connections.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Build partnerships with grassroots groups, local artist networks, and community-based organizations to co-host sessions, with a focus on rural and BIPOC artists.
- **County/state collaboration**: Expand collaboration with county arts agencies to coordinate outreach and engage independent artists statewide.
- **Community ambassadors pilot program**: Research and pilot a program of "MSAC Community Ambassadors" to support grassroots, regenerative outreach, and relationship-building with independent artists.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity and new partnerships**: Collaborations with local cultural leaders and grassroots organizations.
- **Marketing and communications**: Increased resources for outreach, promotion, translation, and accessibility support.
- **Participant honorariums**: Funding to compensate artists for their time and expertise in listening sessions.

4. Develop Cross-Agency Programs Serving Independent Artists

Identified issue/opportunity
Independent artists face needs across multiple sectors—housing, healthcare, transportation, and business development—that are not fully addressed through existing MSAC programs. **The Workgroup recommends that MSAC leverages cross-agency partnerships to develop coordinated, artist-informed resources, training, and pilot programs that are accessible, relevant, and responsive to these challenges.**

Recommended next steps
- **Map cross-sector needs and opportunities**: Conduct a scan of priority issue areas (housing, healthcare, digital access, business development) to identify where MSAC can have the most immediate impact.
- **Identify funding sources**
- **Produce pilot programs**: Launch 1–2 cross-sector initiatives in partnership with other state agencies.
- **Develop resources collaboratively**: Co-create guides, trainings, and programs tailored for independent artists.
- **Embed artist leadership**: Involve artists in designing, presenting, and promoting these initiatives to ensure relevance and accessibility.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for coordination, planning, and facilitation.
- **Inter-agency partnerships**: Agreements with state agencies clarifying roles and responsibilities.
- **Funding for pilot programs**: Seed resources to design, implement, and evaluate initial initiatives.
- **Artist participation support**: Honorariums to compensate artists for their contributions in design, delivery, and outreach.

5. Establish Anti-Retaliation Protocols and Guidance for Independent Artists and Grantees

Identified issue/opportunity
Independent artists, particularly early-career artists, often need guidance on navigating existing legal protection and emerging challenges such as DEI restrictions, censorship, and retaliation. **The workgroup recommends that MSAC:**
- transparently explains restrictions impacting MSAC and the safeguards MSAC can offer.
- provides clear guidance and training on protections for artists and grantees.
- informs and encourages grantee organizations that work with independent artists to adopt stronger assurances in contracts, hiring practices, and agreements. Specifically encourage arts organizations and venues to:
  - include contract clauses against retaliation and harassment, and ensure dispute resolution procedures are transparent to artists before work begins.
  - designate a specific contact (besides the direct supervisor) for concerns about harassment, underpayment, unsafe conditions, censorship, or retaliation.
  - establish a policy guaranteeing that artists will not lose work in retaliation for raising good faith concerns, and communicate this policy to all contracted artists.
- develops accessible resources and protocols to support artists in understanding and exercising their rights while protecting both artists and MSAC.

Recommended next steps
- **Develop anti-retaliation protocols**: Establish clear policies for grantees, outlining protections and procedures for addressing retaliation concerns.
- **Create guidance and resource guides**: Produce easy-to-use guides for artists and grantees covering legal protections, best practices in contracts, and organizational responsibilities.
- **Offer training and workshops**: Partner with MDVLA and other legal experts to conduct in-person and virtual sessions for artists and grantees.
- **Promote transparency and awareness**: Ensure that protections, resources, and expectations are clearly communicated to all applicants and grantees.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity:** Dedicated time for policy development, resource creation, and training coordination.
- **Legal expertise:** Support needed for content and workshop facilitation.
- **Funding** for materials, workshops, and expert honorariums.
- **Communications capacity:** Support needed to ensure wide awareness and accessibility of resources.

6. Expand Housing Partnerships and Tax Benefits for Independent Artists

Identified issue/opportunity
The current Arts & Entertainment District incentive and other existing housing programs do not fully meet artists' residential needs. Additional data and research is needed to fully understand the limitations, but **the workgroup recommends that MSAC considers proposing an expansion of the geographic reach beyond just Arts & Entertainment Districts, allowing the credit to be applied to residential buildings, requiring property owners to stack multiple tax subsidies so that the Arts & Entertainment District tax incentive could be used in combination with other tax subsidies, targeting MSAC-connected artists, and exploring cross-sector partnerships to improve access to affordable housing and related benefits. MSAC could also partner with other agencies and nonprofit organizations to support the creation of new affordable artist housing in Maryland.**
(See related Legislative Recommendation #4 for additional information.)

Recommended next steps
- **Data collection**: Collect data on who benefits from current Arts & Entertainment District incentives.
- **Tax incentives**: Explore the expansion of tax incentives to additional geographic areas.
- **Pilot housing programs**: Develop pilot initiatives targeting artists connected to MSAC programs or networks.
- **Cross-sector collaboration**: Partner with housing, urban development, and health agencies to integrate arts and affordable housing initiatives. (See Cross-Sector Agency Collaboration Recommendations above.)

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for data collection, program design, and coordination with other agencies.
- **Partnerships:** New relationships with local and state housing authorities, and community organizations.
- **Funding** for pilot programs, feasibility studies, and potential expansion of tax incentives.
- **Communications capacity**: Outreach resources to ensure artists are aware of available programs and benefits.

7. Evaluate and Address Multilingual Needs in Grant Programs and Materials

Identified issue/opportunity

MSAC lacks information on how language barriers affect limited English proficiency speakers' access to programs and funding. **The workgroup recommends simplified multilingual grant materials, targeted outreach, and technical assistance to improve equitable access and increase participation among these artists and artist-serving organizations.**

Recommended next steps
- **Outreach**: Gather information and feedback from people with limited English proficiency speaking artists to determine which languages, translation methods, and types of support services are most needed.
- **Inclusion**: Ensure people with limited English proficiency are involved in existing program editing processes.
- **Production**: Develop new resources based on this feedback, monitor results, and collect additional input.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity**: Dedicated time for research, application redesign, and technical assistance.
- **Funding** for translation services, multilingual materials and outreach efforts.
- **Partnerships**: New relationships with community organizations for targeted support and outreach.

8. Expand Demographic Analysis of and Reporting on MSAC Applicants and Grantees

Identified issue/opportunity

To increase transparency around equity and funding reach, MSAC could expand demographic data analysis and public reporting on grantees, including non-demographic metadata such as artistic discipline. **Because demographic information cannot legally be collected in an application, the workgroup recommends that MSAC explores alternative methods, such as using zip codes to extrapolate demographic and community-level indicators.**

Recommended next steps
- **Collect data**: Explore methods for estimating demographic reach using zip codes and community-level data.
- **Develop indicators**: Identify metadata and indicators that provide meaningful insight into access and equity.
- **Internal assessment**: Assess existing MSAC grantmaking procedures to ensure elimination of unintended inequitable practices.
- **Reporting and promotion**: Develop public reporting mechanisms to share findings with stakeholders.

Resources/inputs required
- **Staff time** for data analysis and mapping and partnerships with demographic research experts.
- **Creation of new tools or designs** for data visualization and reporting.
- **Funding** to support research and reporting.

9. Enhance Tracking and Reporting of Independent Artists Investments Across MSAC Programs

Identified issue/opportunity
Current reporting does not fully capture the diversity of independent artists, their practices, or how they define themselves. Expanding data collection to include artist self-identification, emerging disciplines, and nuanced categories of practice would provide a clearer picture of funding distribution. **The workgroup recommends analyzing investments across all programs to offer additional insight into MSAC's impact, highlight underserved artistic communities and geographic areas, and inform future program development and equity-focused strategies.**

Recommended next steps
- **Inventory existing data**: Identify opportunities for cross-program analysis.
- **Determine priority data points and reporting goals**: Consult with key stakeholders to accomplish this.
- **Analyze recommended data collection for access**: Analyze any data collection methods to understand potential barriers they would create and weigh the benefit and cost before implementing.
- **Categorize artists**: Develop mechanisms to capture independent artist identification and nuanced discipline categories across programs.
- **Produce reports**: Highlight geographic, disciplinary, and demographic trends to inform policy and program development.

Resources/inputs required:
- **Staff capacity** for data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- **Data management tools** to track artist-level investments across programs.
- **Consultation** with independent artist networks to refine discipline and practice categories.