



Howard County Arts Council
Request for Proposals
Howard County Arts & Cultural Plan

Purpose – The Howard County Arts Council (HCAC) seeks proposals from qualified, experienced consultants to lead an equitable community engagement process to develop a comprehensive arts and cultural master plan for Howard County, MD that captures and articulates a shared vision and presents a 10-year roadmap to strengthen arts and culture in our communities.

Project Description – The Howard County Arts Council, in collaboration with a coalition of community partners, aims to develop a comprehensive plan that will:

- Map Howard County’s existing arts and cultural assets;
- Identify strategic pathways to grow and engage these creative resources;
- Guide future programming, policy, and investments in arts and culture;
- Capture and meet the changing needs of diverse arts and cultural communities;
- Ensure the sustainability and continued enhancement of the creative sector; and
- Grow economic and community development.

Howard County’s previous comprehensive arts and cultural plan was adopted in 1991 and last updated by HCAC in 2003. Over the past 20 years, the county has grown substantially and experienced significant shifts in population and demographics, changing the demands for arts and cultural experiences along with the needs of artists and arts organizations.

Submission Deadline – Wednesday, May 1, 2024 by 4:00PM EST

About HCAC – Since 1981, HCAC has been the cornerstone of the arts in Howard County, MD, working for the shared benefit of our community’s arts organizations, artists, and audiences. HCAC is a private, non-profit 501-c-3 organization dedicated to serving and enriching our community by advancing the arts. We manage the Howard County Center for the Arts (HCCA), a 32,000 sq ft facility where we present exhibitions, provide affordable studio and meeting spaces for artists and arts organizations, and offer engaging visual and performing arts programs for people of all ages. With initiatives such as Head StART in ART and Fabulous 50+ Players, HCAC provides traditionally underserved audiences with enriching arts experiences. We also serve as the lead advocate and voice for the arts – communicating the value of the arts to local and state elected officials. And, through our partnership with Howard County government, we serve as the primary arts funder in Howard County. As a granting organization, we provide arts and cultural organizations with the financial support necessary to deliver high-quality arts programming to our community. Each year, HCAC serves a combined audience of 280,000: directly serving 30,000 at

HCCA and indirectly serving 250,000 through 6 primary grant programs that award 50-60 grants totaling more than \$650k annually.

As the primary arts advocate and funder, HCAC is seen as a trusted leader and convener with strong connections to area arts and community organizations including formal partnerships with 25 local arts organizations, Howard County Public School System, Howard County PTAs, Community Action Council HeadStart, 12 Baltimore City arts/culture organizations, 7 arts advancement organizations, 23 Community Arts Agencies of Maryland, Howard Community College, Howard County Government, Howard County Library, Howard County Recreation and Parks, , Howard County Tourism, Maryland Citizens for the Arts, and Maryland State Arts Council, among others. In addition, HCAC informally collaborates with dozens of local businesses, creatives, and nonprofits, providing technical assistance, facilitating relationships, offering resources and best practices, and securing funding.

HCAC will draw on these relationships and our partnership with Howard County Government, to identify and recruit individuals to serve on the Howard County Arts & Culture Steering Committee. The committee will provide support, guidance, and oversight for the planning process and will be made up of a wide cross-section of the community, representing the public and private sector, philanthropy, education, communities, cultural groups, artists, and other creatives. The committee's role is to advise and support the planning process.

[Learn more about the Howard County Arts Council](#)

About Howard County – Centrally located between Baltimore, MD, and Washington, D.C., Howard County is often ranked among the most affluent, educated, and best places to live in the United States. Most of the county's development occurred over the last 50 years centered around the planned community of Columbia, MD as conceived by developer Jim Rouse as an integrated, diverse, and accessible community. Currently, Howard County is home to a diverse population of 335,000 (48% White, 21% Black, 21% Asian, 8% Hispanic, and 2% Other) and 118,000 households with a median income of \$140,000. Ninety-five (95%) of the population has a high school degree and 64% has a bachelor's degree or higher. The poverty rate in the county is 5.7%.

[Learn more about Howard County, MD](#)

Background Documents & Materials

[HoCo by Design \(2023\)](#)

[HCAC FY24-FY29 Strategic Plan](#)

[Needs Assessment for Arts Facilities \(Webb Management, 2015\)](#)

[ArtsVision: State of the Arts in Howard County 2003](#)

Scope of Work and Deliverables – HCAC is seeking a consultant to provide comprehensive arts and cultural planning services that will result in a shared community-wide vision and 10-year plan for arts and culture which at a minimum should include:

Preliminary Research & Analysis: Conduct a broad environmental scan and assessment of Howard County's arts, culture, economic, environmental, demographics, and social trends to include:

- Inventory and review existing studies, plans, surveys, and policies related to planning and the arts to develop a comprehensive understanding of Howard County.
- Provide **comparative benchmarking analysis** to other communities with similar populations, demographics, geography, and economic sectors to Howard County. Consider and compare how these communities collect data, fund the arts and cultural sectors, and structure their support systems including other service organizations, government resources, space, transportation and housing. Identify tools or supports in the peer communities that Howard County could benefit from.
- Inventory and create an **arts and cultural asset map** of Howard County and provide implications of the mapping activity.

Arts & Culture Community Engagement: Plan and conduct extensive and meaningful community outreach to engage a broad segment of individuals who live, work, and play in Howard County including artists, cultural and arts organizations, and current and prospective audiences, and ensure engagement opportunities are equitable, inclusive, and accessible. To prepare for successful community engagement efforts, the consultants should:

- Work with HCAC to convene the **Howard County Arts & Culture Steering Committee** to define committee roles and responsibilities, define governance structure, and set committee goals.
- Work with the Steering Committee to define the planning schedule and provide a written **Project Work Plan and Timeline** that includes goals and a clear methodology, accompanied by a timeline indicating the delivery of progress reports, presentations to key stakeholders, and release of the final product.
- Facilitate and manage activities and communications related to the Steering Committee and subcommittees, including meeting schedules, agendas, and material preparation, for planning purposes as well as progress reports.
- Develop and deploy a written **Communications Plan** to build awareness and generate diverse engagement in the planning process to include an engaging and accessible website. The consultant will work in concert to share communications through HCAC channels.
- Develop and deploy a written **Community Engagement Plan** that includes a variety of community engagement opportunities including but not limited to virtual/in-person information sessions, focus groups, town hall meetings, interviews, surveys, and guided social media discussions. Community engagement activities and opportunities should utilize a variety of techniques and formats to ensure a positive and inclusive public participation process. Facilitate community engagement opportunities or train local leaders to solicit input from as many people as possible, including those who already access arts and cultural programs and resources and those who do not, ensuring the process collects input from audiences of diverse backgrounds, including from those for whom English is a second language.
- Develop and manage the tools to collect community input and data.
- Provide **written summaries and analysis** of the results of the community engagement efforts.

Arts & Cultural Plan Development: Oversee the development and refinement of a comprehensive arts and cultural plan that includes detailed action steps, timelines, responsible parties, success metrics, and financial impact for Howard County. At a minimum, the consultants should include:

- Collect, review, and analyze all data and information collected from community engagement activities. After synthesizing research findings and outcomes of public engagement efforts, propose to the Steering Committee priority topics to be explored in greater depth by subcommittees.
 - Organize and support subcommittees in their efforts to identify creative solutions and strategies to address Howard County’s arts and cultural needs and interests.
 - Connect subcommittees with area experts as needed.
 - Ensure subcommittee recommendations include a set of coordinated actions within a defined timeframe (short, mid, and long-term); an assessment of the resource requirements for implementation, including types of investments, possible cost ranges, and potential funding sources; and goals accompanied by measurable objectives and metrics for tracking progress.
- Develop and present a **Situational Analysis** of Howard County’s current arts and culture ecosystem. Situational analysis should include:
 - Review existing data collected by HCAC, Howard County, and local arts and cultural organizations.
 - Review who is participating in Howard County’s arts and cultural programming and who could be, including segmented demographics.
 - Review and assessment of the community’s preferences for participation, their level of interest, and their desire for additional arts and cultural activities.
 - Assessment of youth participation and access to arts and cultural programming.
 - Arts education status and needs within Howard County.
 - Assessment of Howard County public art programming, to include:
 - Preferences and desires for public art.
 - Recommendation for the development of a specific plan.
- Develop and present an analysis of existing **Funding Strengths and Opportunities** through an equity lens that includes strategies for creating and sustaining appropriate funding levels for new and existing arts and cultural organizations, programs, and services including additional sources of earned and contributed income and other revenue such as taxes, incentives, special funds, etc.
- Develop and present an analysis of Howard County’s **Supportive Infrastructure** including live and workspace for artists, emerging, and small organizations, affordable housing, collaborative marketing opportunities, and fit-for-purpose space for established organizations.
- Draft an **Arts & Cultural Plan** for Howard County that includes written goals, objectives, action steps, success metrics, and policy development. Produce charts, graphs, maps, and other data as needed to support the plan and its presentation to multiple stakeholder audiences. Upon completion of the draft plan:
 - Develop a marketing campaign for public communication of the plan.
 - Design and implement a review process to ensure community input on the draft plan and incorporate feedback as appropriate.
 - Present the final plan to various audiences as requested including the County Executive, County Council, and the public.

- Work with HCAC and the Steering Committee to ensure the final Arts & Cultural Plan for Howard County is formally endorsed by the County Executive and adopted by Howard County Council.
- Collaborate with HCAC on the design of collateral materials including but not limited to social media, newsletters, web content, and the final report document.
- Attend any press or media events associated with the release and adoption of the plan.

Deliverables: At a minimum, the consultant shall provide the following deliverables:

- Comparative Benchmarking Analysis
- Arts & Cultural Asset Map
- Project Work Plan and Timeline
- Communications Plan & Website
- Community Engagement Plan
- Community Engagement Activities
- Community Engagement Summaries
- Situational Analysis
- Funding Strengths and Opportunities Assessment
- Supportive Infrastructure Assessment
- Howard County Arts & Cultural Plan

Timeline

HCAC reserves the right to revise the schedule below:

- May 1, 2024 – Proposals due
- May - June 2024 – Submission review
- June - July 2024 – Consultant interviews
- August 2024 – Consultant selected and contract executed
- September 2024 – December 2025 – Research and asset mapping; community engagement; draft plan, solicit committee feedback, revise plan, solicit public input, revise & finalize plan
- January 2026 - Final Howard County Arts & Cultural Plan presented to Howard County Arts Council for approval
- February – March 2026 - Final Howard County Arts & Cultural Plan due presented to Howard County Council for approval

Proposal Requirements

- Contact information
- An overview of your arts & cultural **planning approach & summary of experience**, including work with arts organizations and experience incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in the process and community engagement approach and experience
- A **work plan** that demonstrates a clear understanding of the work to be performed, estimated hours, and other information relevant to the project including community engagement
- **Qualifications** of all consulting staff who will be assisting with the project such as education, position within consulting firm, years & type of experience
- **Work samples** – up to three (3) relevant work samples.
- **Itemized cost projections**

Evaluation Requirements

All proposals will be reviewed for compliance with the mandatory requirements as stipulated within this RFP. Proposals deemed incomplete or non-responsive will be eliminated from further consideration. Remaining proposals will then be ranked according to their relative merits as measured against the evaluation criteria set forth below:

- Demonstrated understanding of project articulated through proposed approach and process
- Quality of match between qualifications/capabilities and experience, project scope, and requirements
- Quality of proposed community engagement plan
- Quality of work samples
- Expertise of project team
- Cost and explanation of fees

In submitting a proposal, consultants agree that (the fine print):

- Their proposals are a firm offer to sell the proposed services to HCAC. Once submitted, all offers must remain valid for 90 days. No offer may be withdrawn after the due date for a period of 90 days.
- HCAC is not liable for costs incurred by consultants prior to execution of a contract. All costs incurred because of this proposal, including travel and personnel costs, are the sole responsibility of the consultant.
- HCAC reserves the right to reject any proposals that do not address all terms and conditions of this bid request.
- HCAC reserves the right to select and award a contract based upon the whole proposal, by line item, or by part. HCAC may reject any or all portions of any proposal, reject all proposals or re-issue the RFP at any time when it is determined to be in HCAC's best interest to not make the award from submitted bids.
- Those portions of the consultant's proposal which are separable will be treated as separable. No exclusivity must exist in the proposal. The consultant will not make any portion of its proposal contingent on the acceptance of any other separable part, the whole of the proposal, or the acceptance of its chosen subcontractors.
- Awards will be based upon the criteria discussed in Proposal and Evaluation Requirements. The award will be made to the consultant whose proposal is determined, solely by HCAC, to be the most advantageous to HCAC.
- In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP prior to deadline, addenda will be provided to any prospective consultant who has indicated intent to propose by April 15, 2024.
- The proposal cost shall include all labor, materials, taxes, insurance, etc., to cover the finished work.
- The consultant shall be responsible to HCAC for all acts and omissions of employees or subcontractors while performing any work related directly or indirectly with the project covered by the contract documents or related instruction and documents.
- This RFP does not obligate HCAC or the selected consultant until a contract is signed and approved by both parties. If approved, it is effective from the date the contract is signed. HCAC shall not be responsible for work done, even in good faith, prior to the final approval of the proposed contract.

- Consultant acknowledges that a negotiated percentage of payment will be reserved until HCAC accepts final work product.
- News releases or the release of information to media pertaining to this proposal request, the service or project to which it relates shall not be made without prior approval of HCAC.
- HCAC acknowledges that information obtained from consultants may be proprietary. Upon receipt and acceptance of any proposal resulting from this request, HCAC affirms confidentiality of all information contained in the proposal document. Only HCAC selection committee shall have access to information and will treat information on a confidential basis.

Questions/Clarifications

We are happy to answer any questions you may have regarding HCAC or the RFP in advance of the submission deadline. We will be hosting live Q&A sessions via ZOOM on the following dates:

- **Thursday, March 14 at 10am EST** [Register Here](#)
- **Tuesday, April 2 at 12PM EST** [Register Here](#)

We are also available via email at development@hocoarts.org, phone at 410-313-2787, and can set up virtual meetings as requested.

Prior to submission, the consultant may submit questions for the sole purpose of clarifying terms, conditions, or scope of work in this RFP. Questions will be accepted by e-mail or phone. Answers which make a material difference in the way consultants may propose their offer will be shared by April 22, 2024 with all consultants who have indicated intent to propose. Likewise, answers that may change either the terms and conditions or their interpretation will be made in the form of an amendment issued to all consultants with intent to propose by April 22, 2024. After the initial receipt of proposals, discussions may be requested and conducted by HCAC with consultants who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award.

Proposal Submissions

Proposals are due no later than 4:00 EST pm on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. Hard copy or electronic copy is acceptable. Mail: Coleen West, Howard County Arts Council, 8510 High Ridge Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043. Email: coleen@hocoarts.org; development@hocoarts.org

Acknowledgements

Portions of this RFP have been derived from the following municipalities that have recently engaged in cultural planning activities including the City of Charlotte, NC, City of Denver, CO, City of Durham, NC, City of Somerville, MA, and the Cultural Planning Office of Pikes Peak Region, among others. The Howard County Arts Council would like to extend our appreciation for their input and expertise.

The Howard County Arts & Cultura Plan is sponsored in part by the:



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