



MARYLAND
**CULTURAL DATA
PROJECT**

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Cultural Data Project Launches in Maryland

Unique Tool Provides Standardized System to Help Arts Organizations Apply for Funding and Manage Data

June 13, 2007 (Baltimore, Maryland) – The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance announced today that the Cultural Data Project (CDP), a powerful data collection tool for arts organizations and the cultural sector, launched in Maryland this month. The web-based system will streamline the grant application process while giving cultural organizations access to financial reporting tools. In addition, the project will provide policymakers and advocates with a source of consistent, reliable information on Maryland’s cultural sector.

“We asked ourselves why, in an age of technology, was it so difficult to share and get good information on the sector?” said Nancy Haragan, Executive Director of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. “With this new system, an all-volunteer choir can provide a clear and meaningful financial report to a prospective new board member in an instant, or a large institution can assign a single staff person to produce dozens of reports in various formats with the click of a mouse. For organizations like ours, the ability to pull aggregate data to describe important trends in the arts and culture of the region is simply a dream come true.”

One of the most comprehensive Web tools of its kind in the country, the CDP has two major functions: It provides a streamlined funding application process for arts organizations by allowing them to use a standardized financial form on the user-friendly website as part of their application for grants from all participating funders in their state. Once the organizations supply their historical financial and organizational information, the CDP acts as a repository, making it possible for participants to manage and analyze their data.

A statewide consortium of private and public funders in Maryland raised \$200,000 to bring the CDP to the state. The Maryland Cultural Data Project, www.MDCulturalData.org, launched on June 4 and will be introduced to cultural organizations throughout the state via training workshops taking place this summer and fall.

“Working with our partners, we are thrilled to embrace a new system for data collection about the culture industry in our state and the Baltimore region,” said Doreen Bolger, Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art and Board Chair of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. “We are equally thrilled with the financial management tools that will be available for individual cultural organizations. This really levels the playing field for organizations of all sizes.”

The launch of the Maryland Cultural Data Project was made possible with funding from: Alex. Brown & Sons Charitable Foundation, Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF), Cooper Family Fund at BCF, Harry L. Gladding Foundation, Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland State Arts Council, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, T. Rowe Price Associates Fund at BCF, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund. The Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance is facilitating the project.

The initiative started in Pennsylvania in 2004 as a state-wide collaborative project of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, The Heinz Endowments, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Pittsburgh Foundation and William Penn Foundation.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, based in Philadelphia, houses and administers the project, including staffing a help desk and reviewing all data profiles, building partnerships in each state, promoting best practices on cultural data and research, and providing training. CDP staff at Pew will continue to run the project for both states, helping to ensure the integrity of the database and comparable, standardized data across regions.

“Traditionally, arts managers have had to spend valuable time supplying a great deal of data to different funders in multiple formats. This can be particularly time consuming for smaller organizations,” said Barbara Lippman, Project Director for the CDP. “The Cultural Data Project provides much-needed manpower for these groups.”

Once the organizations complete their annual data submission, the tool continuously supplies information back to them, allowing them to improve management practices and better communicate their contributions and needs to the community and stakeholders. It helps arts organizations better manage their operations by allowing them to track their individual data and trends over time, easily report out on the information, and compare how they operate relative to their peers. For example, a theater in Maryland could quickly and regularly compare its ticket sales with the aggregated sales of other theaters of its size in the state.

The project fills a much needed niche by providing a consistent, reliable and useful source for standardized data on arts and culture in the participating states. As a result, cultural institutions will have a robust tool to aid them in advocating for public support, and researchers and policy leaders will have an additional new source for the information they need to analyze and interpret the cultural sector.

In Southeastern Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Cultural Data Project has already contributed significantly to public understanding of the role of arts and culture for the region. The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance’s landmark study, *Portfolio*, documented the breadth, diversity and strong contributions of Southeastern Pennsylvania’s nonprofit cultural resources. The information was based on aggregated data from PACDP on 218 local cultural organizations and resulted in editorials and op-eds on the value of the arts, calling for increased government support.

In Pennsylvania, 500 arts organizations now participate in the project, and it has the capacity to impact 400 groups in Maryland.

Visit www.md-cultural-data.org and click “Online Training” to watch a two-minute introductory video that further illustrates the benefits of the CDP.

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Here is what members of our community are saying about The Maryland Cultural Data Project:

"The Maryland State Arts Council is very excited to be involved in the collaborative effort that resulted in the launch of this state-of-the-art technology in Maryland. The benefits are innumerable both to us as a major funder of the arts, as well as our hundreds of grantees across the state. As a division of the Department of Business and Economic Development, we are proud of our public-private partnership that allowed this project to come to fruition," said **Theresa Colvin, Executive Director of the Maryland State Arts Council.**

“The Cultural Data Project will transform the way that mid-sized organizations look at their numbers. It is the greatest thing since wood fired porcelain,” said **Deborah Bedwell, Executive Director of Baltimore Clayworks.** “This investment by our state and local foundation community will pay dividends for small and mid-sized organizations for years to come.”

James Kinstle, Artistic Director at the Baltimore Shakespeare Theatre said, "It's good for the community to recognize the importance of the arts not only culturally, but economically. Baltimore is making a great transition from an industrially driven to a culturally driven economy. The MD Cultural Data Project will enable even the smallest arts organization to track their impact on several aspects of the community – and that information is important to convey to possible funders. It's an important day for arts businesses."

"The Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Heritage Authority enthusiastically joined the arts community and other state-wide funders to support this new program. This web-based tool will allow both applicants and funders to uniformly and efficiently track financial data and program performance," said **J. Rodney Little, Director of the Division of Historical and Cultural Programs, at the Maryland State Department of Planning.**

"**The Baltimore Community Foundation** has identified Art and Culture as one of nine interrelated paths central to advancing a broad economic development agenda for the region. Within this path, we are especially focused on building and strengthening the capacity of the arts and culture sector and, in particular, the abilities of individual organizations to engage residents, future residents, and visitors in meaningful cultural experiences and civic participation," said **Melissa Warlow, Program Officer.** She continued, "We support the Maryland Cultural Data Project because it is a powerful financial tool that gives every organization the ability to track its own fiscal and program trends and lets each one compare its performance with that of its peers."