

The Maryland Heritage Areas Program and Murals: Frequently Asked Questions

Has the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) funded murals?

Yes! Typically, MHAA funds murals that include historical and cultural content. Examples include:

- “Crossroads of America Mural” at Canal Place
 - Includes content on Native American presence, geography, Fort Cumberland, transportation, and manufacturing, and is accompanied by an interpretive sign that puts the mural’s depictions in context
- A Series of Murals in Heart of Chesapeake County Heritage Area
 - Interpretive themes proposed included African American history, Captain John Smith's 1608 landing/Colonial life, agricultural history, and Native American history

Are mural projects considered capital or non-capital grant requests?

It depends. In most cases, murals are considered Capital projects because of the extent to which they alter the structures they are created on and their potential to last for more than 15 years. However, in some cases when murals are created on removable panels and attached to structures in such a way that they are entirely reversible projects, they can be considered Non-Capital for the purposes of an MHAA grant.

What are some important considerations when applying for MHAA funding for a mural?

One thing to consider is the building or structure for which the mural is proposed. If it is a historic structure, you may want to consider planning the mural in such a way that it is removable (created on panels as described above for example). All mural projects will need to be reviewed by the Maryland Historical Trust to determine if the project will have an adverse effect on an historic property. If the property where the mural is planned is subject to a Maryland Historical Trust Preservation Easement or if it is on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, more detailed review will be required prior to beginning work, and it is unlikely that a mural painted straight on the historic building itself would be approved. Keep in mind that the design and content of the mural will also need to be reviewed and approved by MHAA staff. MHAA does not require that murals be realistic in style, rather MHAA’s review strives to make sure that proposed murals are not misleading in terms of historical or cultural content (e.g. representing a Native American person of Maryland but using the clothing and artifacts of Native American groups from another region).

In terms of content, it is important to consider if the images depicted will highlight your heritage area’s unique historical, cultural, and natural resources. If your mural will depict locally or regionally significant stories and content, it will be more likely to be funded by MHAA, especially if those stories illuminate previously untold or underappreciated aspects of Maryland’s history and culture.

In terms of outcomes, you should consider if and how the proposed mural will attract heritage tourists and/or contribute to the unique regional and local character of the area where it is proposed. Will it be included as part of a guided tour? Will it offer an opportunity for visitors to

take photos? Have you spoken with your local tourism office and enlisted their help you in promoting the mural? Will it allow visitors to learn more about local or regional history or other resources through interpretive signage nearby? Will the mural's content spur visitors to travel to other related sites? Even if the mural may not be a visitor draw on its own, will it add value, character, or sense of place to an area that already attracts visitors? You should describe these potential outcomes in your MHAA grant application, and the extent to which the mural promotes heritage tourism will likely be the most important consideration for reviewers when scoring and ranking of your project.

Finally, please consider that the mural may need to be maintained with touch-ups and repainting, as it will fade over time. Consider including a description of how you anticipate paying for future maintenance-related costs.

What other funding sources are available for murals?

There are a number of other potential funding sources for murals, but one source of funding that might be a particularly good fit for these projects is the [Public Art Project Grant](#) offered by the Maryland State Arts Council. Unlike the MHAA grant program, there is no need for these projects to be located within one of Maryland's heritage areas.