Since 1974, the Maryland Humanities Council (MHC) has brought humanities education to Maryland’s public in a variety of engaging ways that touch every corner of the state. For its first two decades, MHC awarded hundreds of grants worth millions of dollars to community organizations to develop programs using humanities scholars and content to discuss civic issues and public policy.

Beginning in the 1990s, MHC supplemented its grantmaking by offering programs that served a specific audience or purpose and that could be brought to scale. These programs included Maryland History Day, a national program engaging middle and high school students in research projects that are judged in a series of contests at the local, state, and national levels. Maryland History Day has grown from serving 3,000 students to more than 22,000 students in 21 of the state’s 24 school districts.

In 2007, after being designated by the Library of Congress as Maryland’s Center for the Book, MHC began offering programs such as Letters About Literature, a writing contest that encourages young readers to write about how an author and book changed their worldview and themselves. MHC developed One Maryland One Book in 2008 to encourage Marylanders from every community to read and discuss the same literary work, stimulating a statewide discussion on a range of themes, from race and socioeconomics to the perseverance of the human spirit.

In all of our work, MHC has engaged with numerous partners in every county in Maryland, including K–12 public schools, libraries, museums, historic sites, preservation groups, business groups, senior centers, correctional facilities, and hospitals. MHC’s grants program has an even wider reach, with grantees ranging from Frostburg State University to Wide Angle Youth Media to the Migrant Clinicians Network Eastern Shore office. MHC has turned the limitation of having no event venue of its own into the virtue of working with partners to introduce programs to diverse audiences in their communities. In the process, we have gained an enviable reputation as a well-run nonprofit organization with creative, committed staff; high-quality, substantive programs; and hundreds of partnerships that are characterized as supportive and based on trust.
The Case for Lifelong Learning in the Humanities

One of the nation’s most pressing needs is a well-educated public. Maryland, as well regarded as it is for its public school system and educated workforce, is only eighth among all states in college attainment (source: Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey). At the same time, global competition in a digital world has put a premium on knowledge, skills, openness to new ideas and cultures, and ability to communicate.

Being better educated has many benefits—competitive employment, cultural literacy, civic participation, self-awareness, and understanding of others. These benefits for individuals also translate into benefits for employers and the economy, for society, our democracy and national security, and benefits for individual families and communities.

Learning does not begin with Pre-K and end with a diploma, GED, or degree. For Maryland to develop a robust culture of learning that honors discovery and encourages curiosity, everyone of all ages needs to be fully engaged.

Why the Humanities?

Truly understanding an issue requires seeing it through the lens of many disciplines—economics, ethics, psychology, history, literature, and art. STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, math) without humanities and the arts are not sufficient to nourish a full life and a successful career. Developments in science and technology are rapid, and the humanities can help us make sense of these dizzying advances and what they mean for our lives.

The humanities help us understand what it means to be human—to engage productively and respectfully with individuals with different views and different cultural traditions and to become informed citizens willing and able to improve our communities.
The Maryland Humanities Council’s New Mission

In 2012, MHC Board and staff revisited the organization’s strategic plan from 2006, beginning with a review of mission. The Board and staff recognized that the organization’s previous focus on civic engagement had shifted, and while it was still important, it was more of a future benefit of MHC’s programs rather than their central goal.

Board and staff felt strongly that MHC needed a new mission to reflect its proven, impactful programs and new strategic goals.

Our New Mission:

The Maryland Humanities Council creates and supports educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities.
Vision

We envision a Maryland where the humanities are understood as central to everyday life because they help us reflect on the past, understand the present, and shape the future. The result will be a state where thoughtful and informed Marylanders are committed to a lifetime of learning that invigorates and strengthens our democracy through an open-minded exchange of ideas.

Values

We believe in the power of lifelong learning in the humanities to create thoughtful citizens and thus a stronger democracy. We believe that the humanities offer a rich source of knowledge and an invaluable set of skills that promote rigorous thinking and challenge people to consider new ideas and alternative points of view. We believe in respect for others and celebrate diverse backgrounds and opinions. We believe in collaboration because we know that partnerships help build strong communities.

We value:

Impact
- Creating high-quality educational opportunities for Marylanders of all ages and access to meaningful and engaging learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom
- Developing and using the best programming practices to set priorities, make decisions, take action, and measure results

Diversity
- Encouraging openness to diverse viewpoints and remaining impartial and balanced when exploring divisive issues
- Expanding and strengthening the diversity of our staff, board, partners, and participants
- Being sensitive to the cultural traditions and economic realities of individuals, groups, and local communities

Collaboration
- Working through partnerships in local communities across Maryland to achieve our mission, pursue our vision, and maximize our resources and impact
- Actively listening and responding to and learning from our partners and the public
Goals

Our goals are ambitious. We seek to serve a broader, more proportionally representative cross-section of the Maryland population; increase our local presence throughout the state; dramatically expand our reach; and quantitatively demonstrate the impact of our work.

To achieve these goals, MHC will:

• Strengthen our organizational capacity in program development and evaluation, technology, and fundraising
• Continue to benefit from the considerable talent and energy of our staff, Board, and partners throughout the state
• Reach out to our current funders and legislative supporters and secure new sources of funding to advance our agenda
• Seek new partners who can benefit from the humanities and encourage their feedback on how we can best meet their needs

In pursuing the goals of this plan, we will demonstrate that MHC is both an educational organization and an organization that is always learning.

Five strategic imperatives provide the framework for our plan:

• Offer a variety of programs for diversified audiences
• Provide leadership in the public humanities field
• Build organizational capacity and funding
• Invest in further collaborations and partnerships
• Raise visibility and presence

Impacts

As a result of our programs and activities, all Marylanders will be inspired to:

• Practice an open-minded exchange of ideas
• Embrace lifelong learning
• Increase their cultural and civic literacy and participation

And, secondarily:

• Deepen their understanding of and respect for themselves and others
• Value the centrality of the humanities in their everyday lives
• Appreciate Maryland’s unique cultural and historical presence and its influence on contemporary life

These impacts strengthen the fabric of society and improve the quality of life in Maryland’s communities.
### Strategic Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From:</th>
<th>To:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MHC mission focuses on civic engagement.</td>
<td>MHC mission focuses on education and lifelong learning in the humanities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC is a convener on critical issues.</td>
<td>MHC is an advisor on how the humanities can further dialogue on community issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC is product-focused: develops programs and then markets them to various audiences.</td>
<td>MHC is market-focused: targets specific audiences, assesses their needs, and tailors programs accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC delivers live, in-person programming only.</td>
<td>MHC delivers live, in-person programs and online digital enhancements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC fundraising and legislative outreach efforts are staff-led.</td>
<td>MHC fundraising and legislative outreach efforts are led by both Board and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC employs a broad grantmaking approach.</td>
<td>MHC employs a more strategic and selective grantmaking approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC evaluation efforts measure outputs and focus on individual programs.</td>
<td>MHC evaluation efforts measure outcomes and focus on collective impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC has an ad hoc approach to developing new programs and services.</td>
<td>MHC has a proactive and systematic approach to developing new programs and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC develops seasonal relationships with event-specific partners to deliver programs.</td>
<td>MHC fosters long-term relationships with strategic partners for program co-creation and delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC is viewed mainly as a grantmaker and program provider.</td>
<td>MHC is viewed as taking a leadership role in building the field of humanities providers and providing visibility to the humanities in Maryland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHC emphasizes marketing and name recognition of our various programs.</td>
<td>MHC invests in brand development and promotes the MHC brand as well as our programs.</td>
</tr>
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STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #1:
Deliver a Variety of Programs for Diversified Audiences

The Maryland Humanities Council seeks to expand our reach in the next six years, serving more and a more diverse range of Marylanders. We will build on what works by strengthening and expanding our programs. We will strengthen program impact by creating an internal capacity for robust program evaluation and development. We will increase access and reach by forming new partnerships, exploring digital programming, and investing in online platforms.

Initiatives:

• Strengthen MHC-initiated programs for greater reach and impact (Maryland History Day, Chautauqua, One Maryland One Book, Museum on Main Street)
• Serve as the Library of Congress’ Maryland Center for the Book (MCFB) and offer related programs (expanded library partnerships, reading and discussion programs)
• Develop a rigorous program research, development, and evaluation capacity
• Produce digital products and services
• Develop online platforms to promote programs and engage Marylanders online with a new user-friendly, responsive website easily accessed via mobile device.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #2:
Provide Leadership in the Humanities Field

For more than 40 years, MHC has brought humanities education to the state in a variety of engaging ways, primarily through partnerships and collaboration. Our longstanding grantmaking has extended its reach throughout Maryland in support of public humanities programs. MHC is a trusted organization known for its quality work, exemplary staff, and supportive partnerships.

Initiatives:

• Develop a system for evaluation of public humanities programs with the intention of developing a framework that can be used in Maryland and beyond
• Implement a statewide study to measure the impact of public humanities on lifelong learning
• Convene a statewide conference for the field of humanities providers in Maryland
STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #3: Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Funding

In order to achieve our ambitious goals, MHC must strengthen its organizational capacity and funding. Both public and corporate sources of funding for humanities programming have declined due to the recession and lagging economy. State councils nationwide have had to diversify their funding streams; Maryland is no exception.

Initiatives:

- Diversify and increase funding sources
- Grow earned income sources
- Increase legislative outreach
- Invest in Board and staff development

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #4: Strengthen Collaborations and Partnerships

MHC relies on organizational partners across the state—such as schools, libraries, and historical societies—to shape, organize, and deliver the majority of our programming. Partners are on the ground locally and in the best position to provide critical feedback about what works and what doesn’t. MHC will grow and leverage these relationships and create new ones to expand our reach and to enrich the experience and impact of existing programs.

Initiatives:

- Grow volume and scope of MHC’s grantmaking
- Seek new partners to expand MHC’s reach and serve new audiences
- Deepen relationships with partners to increase both programmatic and mission impact

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #5: Build Visibility & Presence

MHC develops programs and provides grants for all regions of Maryland. While MHC programming is present in all Maryland counties, we know there is more we can do to bring the humanities to all. Over the next six years, we will strengthen MHC’s local presence throughout the state and promote humanities programming that makes a visible difference in those regions.

Initiatives:

- Foster regional MHC representation
- Develop and build awareness of MHC as a brand
Assessing Our Progress

Evaluation of progress on the plan will take place at monthly staff and Executive Committee meetings, and reporting and benchmarking our progress will happen at our full Board meetings. Progress on the long-range, six-year goals of the plan will be determined by completion of action steps and the achievement of outcomes identified for each year of the plan.

Our Planning Process

Over the course of two years, MHC’s Strategic Planning Committee (including members of the Board and staff) and three consultants worked to produce new mission, vision, values, and a strategic framework and implementation plan, utilizing research, SWOT analysis, program evaluation, and envisioning and planning.

Four focus groups were held around the state in summer 2013, followed by more than two dozen meetings with stakeholders (partner organizations and donors) from November 2013 to May 2014. The full Board voted in October 2014 to approve the plan.
MHC's strategic planning process was also informed by:

Volunteers:
Lou Gieszl, Assistant State Court Administrator for Programs at Maryland Administrative Office of Courts
Taylor Jachman, 2013 Summer Intern
Daniel Liu, 2013 Summer Intern
Robert Morton, MHC volunteer

Feedback sessions were conducted with the following organizations:

Baltimore Clayworks
Baltimore Community Foundation
Baltimore National Heritage Area
Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts
Campus Compact
Casa de Maryland
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at University of Maryland College Park
Douglass High School
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Esperanza Center
Goldseker Foundation#
Ivy Bookshop
Maryland Citizens for the Arts
Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Prison Libraries
Maryland State Arts Council
Preservation Maryland
Public Justice Center
Town Creek Foundation
UMBC, Dresher Center for the Humanities
Weinberg Foundation
William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund#
Women’s Giving Circle
Maryland Humanities Council 2015 Board of Directors

Lenneal J. Henderson, Jr., Chair
University of Baltimore
Baltimore City

Diedre Badejo, Program Committee Chair
University of Baltimore
Baltimore City

Elizabeth Cannon, Vice Chair
Hewlett Packard
Garrett County

Barb Clapp
Clapp Communications
Baltimore City

Elizabeth Cromwell
Frederick County Chamber of Commerce
Frederick County

Rhonda Dallas*
Prince George’s Arts and Humanities Council
Prince George’s County

Monique Dixon
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
Baltimore City

Albert Feldstein
Public Historian
Allegany County

Michael S. Glaser
Emeritus, St. Mary’s College of Maryland
St. Mary’s County

Silvia Golombek,
Secretary and Grant Committee Chair
Youth Service America
Baltimore County

Pete Lesher*, Government Liaison
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
Talbot County

O.F. Makarah
Heritage Film Festival
Prince George’s County

Hilary B. Miller
Law Offices of Hilary B. Miller
Montgomery County

Adrianne Noe
National Museum of Health and Medicine
Montgomery County

Maarten Pereboom
Salisbury University
Wicomico County

Matt Power
Maryland Independent College and University Association
Prince George’s County

Cynthia Raposo
Under Armour
Montgomery County

Tom Riford, Development & Communications Committee Chair
Homewood Retirement Centers
Washington County

Nancy Rogers
Retired, NEH/IMLS
Montgomery County

Stephen Sfekas
Judge, Circuit Court of Baltimore City
Baltimore City

Davis Sherman, Treasurer
Venable LLP
Baltimore City

Keith Stone
Brown Advisory
Baltimore City

Lindsay Thompson,
Governance Committee Chair
Johns Hopkins Carey Business School
Baltimore City

Yolanda Maria Vazquez*
Maryland Public Television
Howard County

David W. Wise
Retired CEO, The Genetics & IVF Institute
Anne Arundel County

* - Gubernatorial appointee
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Communications Officer

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Grants, Museum on Main Street

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Program Assistant
Maryland Center for the Book Programs

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Grants, Strategic Partnerships

Judy D. Dobbs
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Chautauqua, Maryland History Day

Aaron Heinsman
Director of Development

Courtney Hobson
Program Assistant
Chautauqua, Maryland History Day

Katy Kincade
Office Operations Manager/Executive Assistant

Jim Kitterman
Fiscal Officer

Grace Leatherman
Maryland History Day Outreach Coordinator

Andrea Lewis
Program Officer
Maryland Center for the Book Programs

Phoebe Stein
Executive Director
MHC welcomes your feedback and ideas about how we can work together:

Maryland Humanities Council
Attn: Phoebe Stein, Executive Director
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