



# Maryland Humanities Council

*Vision 2020:*  
2015–2020 Strategic Plan

## **Educate**



## **Inspire**



## **Exchange**



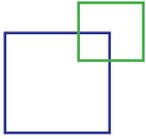
## **Enrich**



[www.mdhc.org](http://www.mdhc.org)

 [marylandhumanitiescouncil](https://www.facebook.com/marylandhumanitiescouncil)

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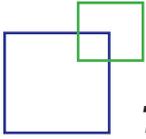


## ***The Maryland Humanities Council***

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.

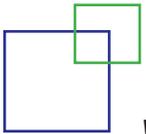


## ***The Case for Lifelong Learning in the Humanities***

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.

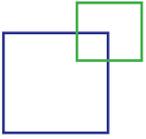
Learning does not begin with Pre-K and end with a diploma, GED, or degree. For Maryland to develop a robust culture of learning that honors discovery and encourages curiosity, everyone of all ages needs to be fully engaged.



## ***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.



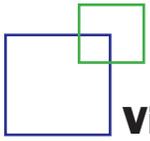
## **The Maryland Humanities Council's New Mission**

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*

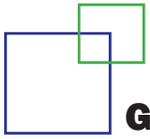
- Creating high-quality educational opportunities for Marylanders of all ages and access to meaningful and engaging learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom
- Developing and using the best programming practices to set priorities, make decisions, take action, and measure results

#### *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.

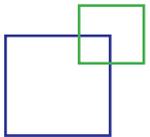
### **To achieve these goals, MHC will:**

- 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

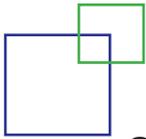
As a result of our programs and activities, all Marylanders will be inspired to:

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

And, secondarily:

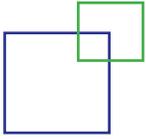
- Deepen their understanding of and respect for themselves and others
- Value the centrality of the humanities in their everyday lives
- Appreciate Maryland's unique cultural and historical presence and its influence on contemporary life

*These impacts strengthen the fabric of society and improve the quality of life in Maryland's communities.*



## Strategic Shifts

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

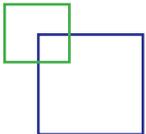


## **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #1: Deliver a Variety of Programs for Diversified Audiences**

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.

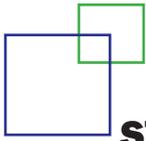


## **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #2: Provide Leadership in the Humanities Field**

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

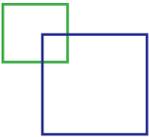


### **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #3: Strengthen Organizational Capacity and Funding**

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

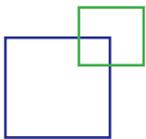


### **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #4: Strengthen Collaborations and Partnerships**

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

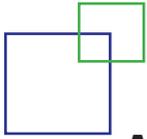


### **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE #5: Build Visibility & Presence**

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.

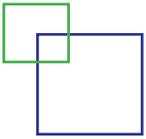
#### **Initiatives:**

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



## **Assessing Our Progress**

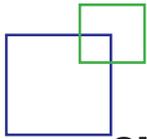
Evaluation of progress on the plan will take place at monthly staff and Executive Committee meetings, and reporting and benchmarking our progress will happen at our full Board meetings. Progress on the long-range, six-year goals of the plan will be determined by completion of action steps and the achievement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



## **Strategic Planning Committee**

### MHC Board Members:

Silvia Golombek, *Co-Chair*  
Steve Sfekas, *Co-Chair*  
Diedre Badejo

Liz Cannon  
Michael Glaser  
Lenneal Henderson

Judi Moore Latta\*  
David Phillips\*  
Heather Sarkissian\*

### MHC Staff:

Michele Alexander  
Lauren Ayers  
Beth Barbush\*\*  
Robyn Busch\*\*  
Judy Dobbs

Auni Gelles\*\*  
Aaron Heinsman  
Jim Kitterman  
Grace Leatherman  
Andrea Lewis

Lauren Saunders\*\*  
Phoebe Stein  
Jean Wortman\*\*

\* - Former Board Member  
\*\* - Former MHC Staff Member

### Consultants:

Beth Greenland  
Kathy Hedge

Rob Sheehan

## **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

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Rhonda Dallas\*  
Prince George's Arts and  
Humanities Council  
Prince George's County

Monique Dixon  
NAACP Legal Defense and  
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College of Maryland  
St. Mary's County

Silvia Golombek,  
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Youth Service America  
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Pete Leshner\*,  
*Government Liason*  
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  
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National Museum of Health  
and Medicine  
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Maarten Pereboom  
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Wicomico County

Matt Power  
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Association  
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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

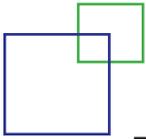
Keith Stone  
Brown Advisory  
Baltimore City

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



## **Maryland Humanities Council Staff**

Michele Alexander  
Communications Officer

Lauren Ayers  
Program Coordinator  
Grants, Museum on Main Street

Jessica Baldwin  
Program Assistant  
Maryland Center for the Book Programs

Marilyn Benaderet  
Program Officer  
Grants, Strategic Partnerships

Judy D. Dobbs  
Program Officer  
Chautauqua, Maryland History Day

Aaron Heinsman  
Director of Development

Courtney Hobson  
Program Assistant  
Chautauqua, Maryland History Day

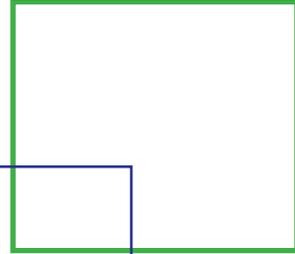
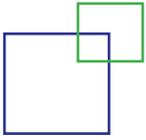
Katy Kincade  
Office Operations Manager/Executive Assistant

Jim Kitterman  
Fiscal Officer

Grace Leatherman  
Maryland History Day Outreach Coordinator

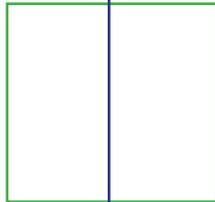
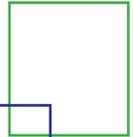
Andrea Lewis  
Program Officer  
Maryland Center for the Book Programs

Phoebe Stein  
Executive Director



**MHC welcomes your feedback  
and ideas about how we  
can work together:**

Maryland Humanities Council  
Attn: Phoebe Stein, Executive Director  
108 West Centre Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410.685.0095  
info@mdhc.org



The creation of Vision 2020, our strategic plan, was supported in part by the Goldseker Foundation and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Awards ([www.BakerArtistAwards.org](http://www.BakerArtistAwards.org)).

Cover Photos (clockwise): 1927 Morgan State Basketball team, courtesy of Dr. Edwin Johnson and the Banneker-Douglass Museum, part of the Museum on Main Street "Hometown Teams" exhibition. Marian Licha as Frida Kahlo at Chautauqua 2014, courtesy of the College of Southern Maryland. Curator Bob Winans at the opening of the MHC grant-supported exhibit, "Making Music: The Banjo in Baltimore and Beyond." Leadership Circle donors at the 2013 Letters About Literature Awards ceremony; photo by Nick Simko. Audience members waiting to have their books signed by King PEGgy, Baltimore Book Festival 2013; Photo by Ken Stanek. Student Matthew Sciamanna with his 2014 Maryland History Day medal; photo by Mitro Hood. Student Alexis Brown and her family celebrate her 2014 Letters About Literature Award; photo by Nick Simko.