



## Deputy Directors Peer Group Session Notes

October 24, 2024

### Welcome/Lightning Introductions

Freddy Vélez kicked off the session with an enthusiastic invitation to enjoy San Juan and Puerto Rican arts and people. We learned the camping and glamping favorites of the 35 attendees.

### Icebreaker: Community Engagement Activity

Attendees shared the accomplishments they were most proud of over the past five years, and well as their hopes for where their state or jurisdictional arts agency (SAA) would be in five years.

### Roundtables

Deputy directors held two half-hour concurrent discussions on the four issues below. Customized worksheets on the topics were shared to help jump-start the conversations and to share pertinent resources.

### Discussion Notes / Share-outs

#### Community Engagement and Partnership Development

- Personal connections are often the driving force for getting these started
- Creative collaborative roundtables (assisted by other agencies)
- Cultural partnership districts
- Media exposure and marketing can be really helpful AND require a delicate balance
- Strategy examples for community engagement: Advisory councils for specific outreach opportunities, monthly peer convening facilitated by SAA staff/council
- Discussion about the importance of SAA's/RAO's roles as conveners.

- Find common ground with another state agency or group; use the arts to meet shared goals
- Get to know those state agencies that share the same building as your agency
- Listening tours to gather data and reconnect with community
- Bolster the cultural arts district program to reach new partners/communities
- Initiate a viral campaign that highlights a special anniversary, event or group (e.g., fellowship awardees)

### **Data Management and Reporting for General Communications, Advocacy, etc.**

- Need to get better at using public relations data
- Provide frameworks to empower grantees to collect and measure data in a consistent way, including calculating ROI using a trusted methodology that is consistent from grantee to grantee. Then both the grantee and SAA could use their data for advocacy.
- Add simple questions/radio buttons to closeout reports to turn success stories into ready-made social media posts, newsletter articles, advocacy storytelling. Include option/requirement to upload photos and a photo release form. (Montana is the model.)
- Many agencies maintain disparate data sets for things that are not specifically a grant. Seeking ideas on how to measure and codify nongrants activities of SAA/RAO in a measurable/meaningful way (e.g., public art, Poetry Out Loud, convenings, technical assistance, other programs/initiatives).
- How to collect data on public art? Lots of money goes to artists and businesses. One strategy is to create a "final report" for public art projects (concept of creating final reports on specific types of activities might work for other activities beyond public art).
- The Americans for the Arts arts and economic prosperity calculator is a helpful data tool
- Indiana Arts Commission has a strong data dashboard example
- Questions/reflections: How can SAA's better use National Endowment for the Arts Final Descriptive Report data? What is missing? What is the bare minimum information SAA/RAOs need to capture for both their purposes and federal reporting?

## Managing Change and Transition / Workplace Culture and Team Cohesion

- Internal vs. external strategies
- Helpful to codify *everything*; policies & procedures
- How to culturally create value around and time for things that aren't exciting but are important, e.g., standard operating procedures, onboarding processes
- Great need for establishing transition and succession processes to ensure continuity
- The need to develop a culture that welcomes acknowledgement of change, conversations around change, implications, etc.
- How do organizations / grantees help SAAs achieve plan priorities? Ask them.
- All of these strategies fit into organizational strategy conversations

## Transition / Succession Strategies around the Country

Several state arts councils have adopted best practices for succession planning to ensure leadership continuity and organizational stability. Here are some examples of effective strategies:

- **Colorado Creative Industries (formerly Colorado Council on the Arts)** implemented a comprehensive approach by conducting statewide arts town meetings to gather input from diverse communities. This allowed the council to align leadership transitions with the specific needs of each region. The process involved creating an 18-month strategic plan, supported by extensive community engagement, which resulted in the reorganization of staff by region rather than program area. This approach ensures that new leadership is well-informed about the state's diverse cultural landscape and stakeholder priorities. ([NASAA](#))
- The **Texas Commission on the Arts** emphasizes the critical role of the board in the succession process. Its approach involves creating a clear leadership profile based on the agency's current challenges and future goals. Texas also involves nonboard members in the hiring process, such as staff or external consultants, to bring a broader perspective to leadership transitions. ([Texas Commission on the Arts](#))
- The **Georgia Council for the Arts** has documented a step-by-step approach that includes understanding the community's needs through environmental scans and asset mapping, building a strong organizational foundation, and ensuring financial sustainability. This community-focused approach helps ensure that leadership transitions are aligned with the long-term goals of the arts council. ([Georgia Council for the Arts](#))

- **A Governance Framework for Leadership Succession Planning** outlines the importance of involving a search committee and using an executive search firm if necessary. This framework focuses on maintaining transparency, developing clear criteria for leadership roles, and ensuring the organization's mission and future needs are central to the succession process. This helps mitigate risks and ensures a smoother leadership transition. ([Arts Consulting Group](#))

## **Organizational Strategy and Development**

- RAOs can be leaders & help set the stage for SAAs
- RAOs can generally act with more flexibility than SAAs
- Adaptive strategic plans allow for flexibility
- Cautionary tale: contractors can help (with staff constraints) but can't be redeployed, especially with emergency response

## **Wrap-Up Activity**

Participants were given a stamped postcard from the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. Each participant wrote a note to themselves including a few follow up items they hope to achieve following the convening. The postcard will be mailed by NASAA after the New Year as a friendly reminder and motivation to participants to work on desired follow-up tasks.

## **Coordinators**

[Chad Buterbaugh](#), Deputy Director, Maryland State Arts Council

[Christine Costello](#), Deputy Director, Colorado Creative Industries

[Kate Van Steenhuyse](#), Assistant Director, Kansas Arts Commission

[Freddy Vélez](#), Deputy Director, Institute of Puerto Rican Culture

[Sylvia Prickett](#), Chief Operating Officer, NASAA