

**Assembly 2007
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Chairs and Council Members

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NASAA, the NEA and the State Arts Agencies
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The National Endowment for the Arts identifies the state arts agencies (SAAs) as “our primary partners in serving the American people through the arts.” The SAAs extend the reach of the federal arts dollars through their support of community programs, artist residencies, touring, and other activities aimed at making arts programs available to Americans throughout the country. State arts agencies help government at the federal, state and local levels to achieve broad public policy goals, such as promoting education excellence, stimulating economic growth and strengthening communities.

In 2007, state arts agencies manage nearly \$426 million in federal, state, and non-governmental funds for distribution through state arts agency-funded projects. Each year, state arts agencies fund approximately 18,000 organizations, schools and artists in more than 5,300 communities across the United States. The principles of public support for the arts which state arts agencies work to address are a good fit with the objectives of the NEA.

The federal government established the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965, and required it to apportion a percentage of its budget to any state that established an arts agency. Utah and New York were among the first, and within a few years, nearly every state had some type of SAA. Most of the fifty state and six jurisdictional arts agencies were created in response to the national example and financial incentive provided by the Arts Endowment.

For more than 40 years the Arts Endowment’s support for SAAs has helped to attract state funding that for most agencies now far exceeds the federal support. The NEA is required by law to redistribute 40 percent of its budget to state arts agencies, which use these dollars to leverage state funds and to support grants and services. NEA funds granted to state arts agencies ensure that every state receives a significant share of federal funds. This partnership ensures for each state a stable source of arts funding and policy.

As the partner agencies of the arts endowment, state arts agencies greatly extend the NEA’s reach and impact, translating national leadership into local benefit. As they carry out their state plans, they work cooperatively with the NEA to carry out common goals. NASAA consults regularly, on behalf of the SAAs, with the arts endowment on how they can best work together to address these goals.

This past year, NEA staff and NASAA leadership worked together to improve the flexibility of federal arts support to the states by simplifying the structure of the State Partnership Agreements to make the federal grant support to the states more flexible. The 40% of agency grant making funds that used to be allocated to four separate components (Basic, Underserved, Challenge America, and American Masterpieces) will continue to be allocated to the SAAs, but will now be allocated entirely to the State Arts Plan and Underserved components.

The Arts Endowment and its state partners believe that these changes will:

- Give the states greater flexibility in using federal and state resources more strategically and more effectively.
- Provide the states with greater leverage in securing matching funds.
- Enhance opportunities for collaborative planning and grant making between the NEA and the SAAs.
- Increase administrative efficiency for the SAAs and the NEA.