



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES  
**2013 LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**  
OCTOBER 16-18, 2013 JACKSON, WYOMING

## **Deputy/Assistant Director Peer Session Summary**

October 17, 2013

Each person introduced themselves and gave a single sentence about a project they are excited about.

### **Five-Minute Presentations** (replacement for NEA session)

#### **Lou MacMillan, ArtsWA—[Audience Participation Leadership Initiative](#):**

ArtsWA developed the Arts Participation Leadership Initiative web portal and a handout. The site is geared to arts agencies and nonprofits. The project has three major goals:

- attract younger audiences,
- integrate social and digital media and technology, and
- engage the state's diverse cultural groups.

Visitors to the website can create a login to My Portfolio, which allows them to save their favorite pages for easy reference.

**Ann Weisman, New Mexico Arts—[Arts Trails](#):** New Mexico Arts realized that although the state had wonderful artists, there was insufficient marketing. The agency started developing trails to bring tourists to artists. The first was the Fiber Arts Trails, supported by the New Mexico legislature. Now the agency provides support, including technical support and grant money, to artist groups wanting to develop trails; it is also doing more marketing, including in *Southwest Art Magazine*. It has not yet figured out how to measure program effectiveness. New Mexico Arts markets the programs as a whole and provides funding to develop new trails or expand existing ones. Trails include fiber arts, community based, pottery and glass (in development). Generally there is an organization in charge of the trail, such as a local arts council. The agency is looking to improve its web presence in this area.

#### **Barbara Edwards, Alabama State Council on the Arts—Partnership**

**Programs:** In these programs, the Alabama State Council on the Arts partners with two groups: organizations it has developed and organizations it has helped to restructure. The organizations receive operating support money from the arts council, and their executive directors come to arts council staff and board meetings. The partners extend the work of the council, providing more staff and the option to do things the council could not, such as bring in contemporary dance companies,

run artist trainings or do extensive rural outreach. Edwards provided a list of partners and a quick overview of the various groups. The arts council does little programming—it is primarily a granting organization—but the partnerships have allowed it to do a lot of programming. The agency also partners with state agencies with like minds and missions, including the department of archives and history, department of education, tourism, and public television. It commits a lot of money—around \$50,000 and sometimes more—to pay for staff and office infrastructure for the partner organizations. Organizations are invited to partner, there is a working agreement with them, and grants are approved by the arts council board. They are independent organizations.

**David Slatery, Massachusetts Cultural Council—[YouthReach Initiative](#):** This program helps at-risk youth transition to adulthood. The Cultural Council provides a series of multiyear grants for out-of-school programs using arts to promote youth development. It issues RFPs and receives applications from cultural organizations, human services organizations, and organizations that have grown out of this initiative and do only youth development. Next year is the program's 20th anniversary.

**Michael Donovan, Missouri Arts Council—[Accelerate](#):** Accelerate is a capacity-building program—it is a redeveloped program as the Missouri Arts Council (MAC) has been doing capacity building for about 15 years. Through review of the program, MAC realized that engaged boards are critical; organizations most in need of capacity building had the least capacity to self-assess. The agency no longer uses the term "capacity building." It decided not to offer capacity-building project grants; instead, organizations are accepted into the program and MAC commits \$1,500 to them. Organizations (all staff and board members) then take an on-line survey to help them do an assessment, develop an action plan (a simple template is provided) with their board, and then determine the use of the funds. MAC staff has had to take a more consultative approach to working with the organizations, which can be fairly time consuming.

### **Dan Pallotta TED Talk on Nonprofit Funding**

Participants viewed a TED Talk by activist and fund-raiser Dan Pallotta, [The Way We Think about Charity Is Dead Wrong](#), which generated these discussion points:

- We keep qualified talent out of the nonprofit sector because we don't pay them equitably.
- We see this thinking in our grant panels—X person makes too much, X expenditure is too high.
- Our agencies do a lot of things which cannot be monetized, just like many charities.
- State arts agencies are shifting toward doing more advertising.
- Ask grantees what the return on investment is for their grant. What would they tell a legislator about the outcomes?
- How do we affect the huge wall of public opinion against administrative overhead?

- Government suffers from this thinking as much as nonprofits.
- Economies of scale are not necessarily applicable to small communities; maybe this doesn't apply on the community level.
- The notion of low overhead being desirable has perpetuated in state government. In South Carolina, a secretary of state puts out a list of charities that spend almost nothing on administration, called "angels," and a list of those with high overhead, called "scrooges."
- Why can't arts people think about economies of scale, even at the community level? I want my organizations to stop thinking \$5,000 is a great fund raiser, rather than \$20,000. I want think about how we might use this thinking to seriously change arts education in our state: could we raise the money to actually have an art or dance teacher in every school?
- We work on spreading the resources around, and give everyone less, which does not encourage risk taking.
- We take risks as agencies: anyone who comes to us who meets the eligibility requirements gets some money, and we give out fellowships for no measureable product.
- Government is not intended to be a business. There is a range of state services that are investments as public services.
- Risk should be grounded in what the community wants.
- Arts organizations are probably hesitant to tell funders about risky efforts.
- Do we think strategically about planning for cuts?

## **Succession Planning**

NASAA shared some information about succession planning that it has gathered over the years through staffing surveys. Since 1999, state arts agencies have lost nearly 200 positions overall, but some agencies have added staff. About half of the executive directors (22) have turned over in the past two years, with three more announced; about half were promoted from within the agency. Deputies are more tenured—they stay longer, on average, than executive directors. We currently have the largest crop of new executive directors in many years. Leadership change preparation is very relevant, especially now with appropriations and staffing levels down, and nearly half of the executive directors with fewer than three years of tenure.

In the discussion that followed, participants shared their experiences:

- People leaving is seen as a good way to rethink/redesign programs.
- There is a need to plan to capture valuable information that goes with retiring staff.
- When an executive director comes on board, it is a good opportunity to review the strategic plan.
- Sometimes you hire someone and they bring other gifts and take on other work.
- How about putting out there what the agency does, and then arranging positions to take advantage of people's skills and interest? However, a lot of agencies don't have that flexibility.

- Kentucky has a "termination" form that includes information on what a departing staff member will finish and what they will pass on (projects, files, etc.). It becomes a checklist for the employee.
- One agency is using motivator testing on the final candidates, which helps to focus on personality traits when skills are about even. This helps uncover what you can and cannot train.
- Check primary references and develop secondary references.
- Create instruction manuals—and update them regularly.
- Cross-train employees.
- Hire contractors to do some training.
- Offer leadership training to younger staff members.
- Maintain good relationships with retiring/departing staff—so you can call them for information!

Next year's committee: Michael Donovan (Missouri), David Slatery (Massachusetts), Marian Boyd (Arkansas), Camellia El-Antably (Wyoming)