

Assembly 2007
Baltimore, Maryland
Friday, December 7, 2007

***The Arts in Today's America:
Implications for State Arts Agencies***

This breakfast session featured a special video interview with NASAA CEO Jonathan Katz and Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Gioia offered his perspectives on trends in arts engagement, as well as the unique contributions that the arts – and public support for the arts - make to American life.

Following the interview, Assembly 2007 attendees explored two questions raised in the video:

What are the greatest challenges to a diverse and stimulating cultural life in the United States?

What are the implications for state arts agencies?

Discussion highlights are outlined below. For a copy of the video interview with Chairman Gioia, or a recording of the entire plenary session, contact Dennis Dewey at dennis@nasaa-arts.org.

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What are the greatest challenges to a diverse and stimulating cultural life in the United States?

- Language that defines the arts
- Access to the arts
- Money
- Technology
- Bringing young people to the table
- Old paradigms

- *We're* the biggest challenge we're facing
- Proliferation of activities that are not stimulating or engaging
- Shifting definitions and identities
- Perceptions of the arts
- Size and the diversity of the country
- Differing definitions of stimulating cultural life
- Lack of local appreciation for local talent
- Prevalence of pressing/basic needs
- Outreach to citizens beyond the arts community
- Celebrity culture
- Providing life-changing experiences
- Cultural diversity
- Need for cultural facilities
- Literacy
- Cuts to literature and creative writing
- Commercialization of culture
- Put arts at the table for mediating cultural diversity
- How do we quantify the arts experience?
- Need to re-define the arts
- Make arts part of urban redevelopment
- Corporate culture
- Instant gratification is a cultural expectation
- Lack of social cohesion
- Stereotypes
- Alternative venues/spaces for arts participation

What are the implications for state arts agencies?

- Create an advocacy culture
- Share good practices in participation and audience-building
- Close the gaps between the engaged and the unengaged
- Engage young people in arts education
- Involve youth perspectives on panels, committees and in policy development
- Take risks in arts learning programs
- Educate the public about the lack of arts education in our schools
- Apply new technologies to traditional arts instruction

- Help arts teachers learn about new modalities and contemporary approaches
- Provide operating support (flexible support that helps organizations address the challenges identified above)
- Plan boldly, and for the long term
- Engage constituents in conversations about these challenges
- Think comprehensively (beyond budgets) to address many overlapping cultural scenes
- Become catalysts for dialogue
- Encourage conversation about new audiences, deepening connections
- Adjust guidelines
- Clarify roles and responsibilities w/ departments of education
- Consider best ways to do outreach with diverse populations
- Be strategic in bringing other cultures to the table
- Provide multilingual materials
- Launch special initiatives that address the needs of underserved populations
- Use technologies to bridge the divide
- Redefine what we do and how we distribute money
- Get beyond the largest/mainstream organizations
- Provide internships for young people
- Foster community advocacy – local strategies
- Get teaching artists into the schools
- Know the arts resources in our own states
- Ask where can we get the biggest bang for the buck – recognize catalytic opportunities
- Create statewide dialogue about value of the arts
- Brand the arts
- Develop a compelling message and make sure that all convey it
- Encourage everyone to think “outside the box”