

**2015 LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH**

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HOSTED BY
THE UTAH DIVISION OF
ARTS & MUSEUMS

Chairs and Council Members Peer Session

October 8, 2015

Open Session Notes

Following a facilitated group discussion led by certified Change Leader instructors, state arts agency chairs and council members spoke with NASAA's new CEO, Pam Breaux. Ken Verdoia, chair of the Utah Division of Arts & Museums, then led a conversation about the challenges and opportunities appointed leaders face in their state arts agency roles. The session ended with a federal update from NASAA Legislative Counsel Isaac Brown on the latest happenings in Congress and a discussion of council members' roles in political campaigns and the 2016 elections.

State Arts Agency Challenges and Opportunities

What common challenges do state arts agencies face?

- Having enough resources for our agencies
- Achieving equitable distribution of resources among grantees
- Having an impact in areas that don't have an arts infrastructure
- Building the capacity of local arts agencies and helping them develop their own voice
- Tensions between supporting the art that people say they want and art that people don't know they want
- Building strong public input processes for public art so it's not "top down"
- Attending to the internal needs of the board, given the board's other responsibilities
- Visiting all parts of the state

What is working well in connecting with constituents?

- Programs that bring artists from city institutions to rural areas
- Bus programs to bring children from rural areas to cultural institutions
- Proactively seeking community input on public art projects
- Creating new grants for organizations with very small budgets
- Lowering the minimum budget needed to apply for a grant
- Wearing an arts council badge, which helps council members see themselves as ambassadors and is a way to easily engage others in conversation
- Designating time during council meetings when arts organizations can speak with the council about their work
- Council members spreading out to visit all parts of the state

What do we wish we'd known at the beginning of our service?

- How effective the state arts agency is in reaching the entire state. No one is left out! Our agencies reach every community. More people should know that.
- Better understanding about the nature of the actual work, i.e., what does a state arts agency do? What is expected of me as an appointee?
- Difference between nonprofit (or other board service) and state arts agency service, because the skills required to be effective are different than expected
- Greater understanding earlier on of how politics and advocacy work

Federal Advocacy Update and Q&A

Isaac Brown noted that chairs and council members are uniquely able to represent their states and the best interests of their constituents. NASAA is here to support members in their advocacy work, so please reach out to NASAA or Isaac at any time. He emphasized the special importance of personal relationships with elected officials. How do we cultivate these relationships?

- Emphasize the partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the states, as many representatives don't know this unique funding relationship exists (a great state-federal case study)
- Use NASAA's customized fact sheets and talking points about NEA funding in your state to help with your conversations
- Try to find a non-arts issues that you agree on, let the representative know you support them on this, and voice your support publicly. They will likely remember this and it may help your relationship.
- Find a meaningful emotional connection to augment/get around the financial argument
- Ask constituents to send letters of support to their legislators
- Reach out to elected members and their staffs during off-election times
- Make a donation to NASAA in honor of a legislator as a way to start a personal relationship with that person
- Be seen as a resource for elected members and their staffs. Be proactive in talking about all the good work you're doing. Invite staffers and officials to arts events and tours.

Resources to Share

Bolster your work as an arts advocate by plugging into NASAA's helpful resources:

- Make the most compelling case for public arts support with [Why Should Government Support the Arts?](#)
- Read [NASAA Notes](#) each month to stay on top of relevant news and commentary. Contact [Sue Struve](#) to subscribe.
- Read NASAA [Report to Councils](#) for succinct news, advice and links to assistance (loved by many, designed especially for chairs and council members).
- Get to know the citizen oversight work of state arts agencies with [State Arts Agency Council Terms, Powers and Duties](#).
- Get the scoop on what other state arts agencies are up to in [State to State](#).
- Learn [what NASAA has done](#) for members and the field.
- Check out the wealth of resources, research and information on NASAA's [website](#).
- Contact NASAA [Staff](#) any time.
- Like NASAA on [Facebook](#)!

Peer to peer resources:

- Contact [Roger Brooks](#), chair of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, if you have questions to ask presidential candidates when they visit New Hampshire.
- Contact [Carol Trawick](#), chair of the Maryland State Arts Council, for more information about Maryland's Ambassador Program.