



Chair and Council Member Peer Session Notes Building Our Resources and Relationships

Participants: Forty-seven people participated in the Chair and Council Member Peer Session. See the [peer group roster](#) for the full registration list. Session Facilitator: Susan Landis (CH-WV)

Thursday, October 14

Orientation to the State-Federal Relationship

Thomas L. Birch, NASAA Legislative Counsel

[Orientation to the State-Federal Relationship](#) mapped out the relationship between state arts agencies and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Tom Birch discussed how funding for the NEA works; the 40% of the NEA's grants budget that goes to state arts agencies; the financial and political impact of the state-federal relationship; and NASAA's role in securing NEA funding. He reviewed everything NASAA does to help states maintain their relationship with their federal partner. Download the [presentation](#) or contact NASAA to get a customized version for your state. Call Tom Birch at 202-347-3666 or Laura Smith at 202-347-6352 ext. 120 for more information. See also [NASAA's Advocacy resources](#).

Advocating for State Resources

Thomas B. Schorgl, President and CEO of Community Partnership for Arts and Culture in Cleveland, OH

In this facilitated discussion, Tom Schorgl asked participants to consider their advocacy roles in their states and share their thoughts, ideas, strategies and challenges with the group.

What is the most unique and compelling evidence to help you make your case?

- **Use a combination of stories and facts**, such as the number of jobs provided because of grants programs and the tax dollars returned to the state by those jobs. Include information about not-for-profit organizations as well as for-profit businesses.
- **Kids are the future.** Children who have access to and experience the arts are less truant in school, have higher test scores and are more productive citizens. Find stories to illustrate this point. Here are examples from two states:
 - A multistate report and a series of single-state reports surveying arts education in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Utah will be published soon. The **Idaho Commission on the Arts** (ICA) intends to distribute its state report to schools and policymakers throughout Idaho, to be used to tailor arts education services where and how they are needed most. The Idaho survey was a collaboration between the Idaho Department of Education and ICA and will include a cover letter from the state superintendent of public instruction to emphasize that a quality arts education is supported at the highest levels of state education leadership.

- The [Arts in Basic Curriculum](#) (ABC) Project is a long-term statewide partnership of the **South Carolina Arts Commission**, the South Carolina Department of Education and Winthrop University to integrate the arts into school curriculums. Research on the initiative has provided clear evidence that integrating the arts into school curriculums improves student learning—in the arts and in other subjects. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- **Community revitalization happens through the arts.** Use the indigenous assets of a particular place or region to transform economies around the arts and tourism.

There are many ways to effectively make your case for the arts because they have *intrinsic, economic* and *historical* value. The arts support community vitality, increase civic pride, attract business, enhance education, and preserve cultural traditions. Chairs and council members must spread the word widely about how people use and participate in the arts in their states. Find the specific stories and numbers to support your case. Use evidence at the local level to help you build your case.

Who are the best people and groups with whom to join forces?

In this segment, participants were asked to think broadly and go beyond obvious partners such as artists, arts education programs, arts organizations and state arts advocacy groups.

- **California** is focusing on the entertainment and technology industries, gaming, creative and fashion industries, and the retired teachers union.
- **Oregon** has a cultural trust that showcases everyday culture in all state communities via an annual celebration called [Oregon Days of Culture](#). A website publicizes information about activities and also invites people across the state to submit their "cultural confessions" on-line. Click [here](#) for more information.
- **Nevada** is targeting business owners who benefit from business diversification.
- **Wyoming** is working with city planners.
- **New Hampshire** is partnering with property and community developers.
- **Ohio** is focusing on universities.
- **Kansas** is looking for ways to work with banks to provide tax incentives for artists.

Other groups with whom to consider partnerships include:

- transportation groups
- indigenous groups
- neighborhood groups and community development organizations
- hospitals
- unions
- chambers of commerce and convention and visitors bureaus
- political contributors (find ways to engage the major individual donors of winning candidates)
- hospitality and restaurant industry
- university extension programs such as 4-H and Future Farmers
- police
- military

The idea is to identify the major industries and other influential groups in your state and look for ways to work with them. The arts add value to every social issue or challenge we face, and they tangibly improve the quality of life for all citizens. Focusing on the arts and health care, or the

arts and jobs, or the arts and global cultural understanding will help others see the bottom line: that the arts can help make all public policy better.

How do we fortify our ties with state advocacy organizations?

- Ask on your applications if applicants are members of your statewide advocacy group and whether they support the joint initiatives of the arts agency and the advocacy organization. [Note: This may not be appropriate in every state. In some states, it may cross a line—real or perceived—about an agency's limitations on lobbying. In other states, it may be entirely acceptable to ask grantees receiving state funds to help advocate for them by supporting the state advocacy organization. You need to determine what is right for your state.]
- Convene a meeting with your state arts agency staff and council members and your statewide advocacy group and invite Tom Birch to do a presentation.
- Put friends and spouses of political leadership on your board.
- Work to increase membership in your state advocacy organization. Council members can explain to the boards of your grantee organizations where the money comes from, where it goes, and the role of the advocacy group in securing those funds. As recipients of public funds, grantees and their boards should be members of their statewide advocacy organizations.
- Work in partnership with statewide advocacy organizations, e.g., get together for statewide arts advocacy days, have joint meetings and run joint campaigns.

What is the most important role you play? What would you like to do that you are not currently doing? What's missing?

- Lean on the administration, the legislative staff and the governor to make sure they're always paying attention to what's going on.
- Help the state's major arts organizations see that they all sink or swim together.
- Host the biennial governor's arts award ceremony.
- Set criteria for our grantees: encourage racial, geographic and economic diversity.
- Talk to legislators and the governor frequently.
- Help tourism agencies understand the value of partnering with the arts agencies.

What do we see as our top challenges, concerns or opportunities?

- Board development: how to make our boards better and make ourselves better as board members
- The role of technology, especially in reaching young people and creating new markets
- Getting our councils to think strategically to go from *surviving* to *thriving* to meet the needs of people in the state
- Taking advantage of partnerships in our states given limited staffs
- The role of the council when a major arts organization gets in trouble
- Changing populations and demographics
- How to increase our funding from the general fund
- Protecting our license plate funding
- Engaging the younger generation to become arts advocates

Saturday, October 16

Roundtable Discussion Highlights

On Saturday, the group broke into roundtables to discuss the following four challenges.

Rebuilding Resources/Advocacy

We need to change our message to focus on jobs and revenue to relate to legislators' main concerns. As a general rule, we need to always be attuned to the concerns of policymakers and how we relate to those concerns. Ideas for rebuilding our resources include:

- Expand our relationships. Figure out who has influence, then figure out who influences them.
- Compelling stories, backed up with solid facts and case studies, help us make the strongest case.
- Use research that matters to legislators, such as the [arts policy briefs](#) produced by the National Governors Association in collaboration with NASAA. In particular, the [Arts and the Economy](#) brief showcases many models of how states use the arts to support economic development.
- Ask arts organizations to include their legislators in their events. Also require them to invite school boards and county commissioners. These people have influence over dollars and also have contacts with legislators.
- Ask grantees write a letter to their legislators.
- Advocate for a license plate program or an arts-specific check-off box on the state income tax form.
- Consider alternative sources of funding, beyond federal and state dollars. Solicit individuals, companies, community foundations and private foundations for state arts agency funds.
- Refocus your advocacy efforts on the local level, including city and county councils. Ask these groups to advocate for the arts at the state level.
- Promote local arts councils. If cities and counties allocate more funding to the arts, states might be motivated to increase support as well.
- Establish a separate statewide arts advocacy group, if you don't already have one. (Some 30 states do have one.)
- Ask teachers to contact parents to ask them to advocate for more arts education funding.
- Get on agendas to give presentations about the arts, e.g., speak to the association of school boards or your local chamber of commerce.

Helping Grantees Become Stronger Advocates

This group discussed three aspects of how grantees can be better advocates for the arts in their states: how state arts agencies can help grantees directly; things state arts agencies can require of their grantees and constituents; and general information about advocacy, lobbying and political issues.

State Arts Agencies

- Help grantees understand that advocacy is not just about getting money. It's also about encouraging dialogue within a community. Every constituent has a role to play in talking about the arts in their lives.
- Have legislators give checks to grantees as a media event.
- Have a statewide conference for artists.
- Develop an advocacy toolkit for arts organizations.
- Develop a page on the agency website devoted to arts advocacy.
- Survey politicians on their arts support and publicize the information so that constituents know candidates' positions on the arts.
- Encourage specialty license plate sales. Include a printed insert in every license renewal letter about the plates.
- Have a Facebook and Twitter page through your advocacy group.
- Provide workshops on social media for artists and grantees at locations around the state.

Requirements

- Ask grantees to invite legislators to every event and send follow-up thank-you notes. (Councils provide grantees with address information)
- All grantees must have the state arts agency and NEA logos on all their promotional materials.
- Encourage grantees and council members to be involved in the state advocacy organization.
- Require media coverage of events supported by the state arts agency.
- Include a question on your grant application that asks grantees and potential grantees "What do you do to advocate for the arts?"

Political Issues

- Limit membership in state arts caucuses to make them exclusive groups for committed members.
- Follow advice from legislators and meet with them in their hometown (not while they're in session)
- Focus on elections—the best time to develop a relationship with an elected official is within 48 hours of his/her election.

Widening Our Circle of Supporters

Too many people don't know what state arts agencies are, where our money comes from and what we do. We all want to find ways for people to know us. The challenge is to find ways to be personal and make citizens see how we matter to *them*. Ideas include:

- Reach out to others using conventional types of publicity through companion foundations, state cultural trusts and/or statewide advocacy groups.
- Use technology to widen support. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) is especially important with younger constituents. Legislators in South Carolina were effectively influenced this year by passionate young people who helped organize arts advocacy efforts using social media.
- Partner with a consultant or a marketing group for public relations and outreach. One example of a good partnership is [Discover Jersey Arts](#), a project of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the ArtPride New Jersey Foundation to raise awareness and arts participation in the state. Trying to do marketing through a state arts agency can take a long time, so New Jersey buys marketing through ArtPride.
- Take advantage of statewide meetings—arts council meetings, town hall meetings, public forums, etc. Wear a badge that identifies you as a council member and talk to people about the mutual interests of the agency and the group with which you're meeting.
- Nurture the personal relationships we already have with corporations, for-profit and nonprofit boards, civic groups, and others.
- Develop relationships with universities and schools—one of many ideas for developing broad-based arts support that is mapped out in [The Arts Ripple Effect](#) report.
- Focus on branding. Get the word out beyond putting your logos on materials. Help constituents get to know you. Make sure that grantees properly acknowledge the arts council. Make sure that legislators, elected officials and their staffs are properly acknowledged. Communicate regularly with all constituents, especially legislators.
- Remember that council members have many hats to wear and can represent the arts in every situation.

Council Engagement/Council Development

Council members get appointed from many different walks of life. Some people are familiar with the work of state arts agencies and many are not. Serving on a state arts agency council is different from serving on the board of a nonprofit arts organization. A comprehensive and professional orientation to council service is crucial to helping appointees understand public service and their specific roles and responsibilities, especially when it comes to advocacy. Ideas for developing and engaging council members include:

- Be explicit in orientations about mission, goals and expectations, especially advocacy expectations. Help council members learn how to put expectations into practice.
- Include checklists of advocacy tips in orientation materials. (NASAA can help with this.)
- Use council meetings to educate people, including:
 - Have panelists report on panel meetings.
 - Provide entertainment with grantees.
 - Do reports on advocacy activities and arts issues, etc.
 - Have receptions to help council members get to know each other better.

- Find out what council members are interested in and ask them to serve on appropriate committees.
- Have telephone conference calls with executive directors from other states on issues similar to those in your state.
- Encourage council members to get to know NASAA.
- Use grant panel service as a way to get people up to speed quickly.
- Take chairs and council members to visit the boards of grantees.
- Put NASAA on every council meeting agenda.
- Keep the council regularly informed with advocacy packets and other short fact sheets.
- Bring prestige to board assignments. Issue press releases on council activities and make council members' identities known to community and state leaders.
- Use the chair and council member listserv that NASAA will establish as a problem-solving exchange forum.