

Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Session Report

NASAA Assembly 2008, September 11-13

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

Preconference Retreat

Retreat Topics: Team Leadership and Personnel Development; Managing from the Middle

Summary: The Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Group met for a preconference retreat at the Chattanooga Hotel. The retreat was facilitated by John Moore of JOMA Arts and Consulting, LLC.

Attendance: 13 state arts agency deputy and assistant directors from across the nation

Facilitator and Bio: John L. (Moe) Moore, III Principal, JOMA Arts & Consulting, LLC

John Moore began his career as an actor and has acted or directed in community, educational or professional theatres around the country for more than 30 years. In the early 1980s Moore segued into arts management as a career path and has since worked around the country in leadership positions with both community based and major institutions, as a grant seeker and a grants maker. In the late 1980s, while working with the erstwhile Washington Project for the Arts, an alternative arts space, Moore began producing theatre in a visual arts environment. He went on to develop the African Continuum Theatre Coalition, which is now a professional theatre company in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Moore has held positions such as executive director, Afro-American Cultural Center (Charlotte, North Carolina); senior program advisor, National Arts Stabilization (Baltimore, Maryland); and deputy director for programs, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania). Mr. Moore has sat on numerous boards, committees and panels, been a speaker or facilitator at several conferences and workshops, and has lectured at universities. Through JOMA Arts & Consulting, LLC he serves as a consultant/advisor for government agencies, foundations, individuals and nonprofit organizations and an independent producer for original projects.

Mr. Moore holds an M.A. in Performing Arts Management from the University of Illinois/Springfield and a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Morgan State University. He has also completed additional study in executive leadership at McColl School of Business/Queens University, Strategy at Harvard Business School, and arts management at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Retreat Notes: Moe facilitated a welcome and introductions around the room. Retreat participants then entered their information into a spreadsheet (projected on to a screen) in order to show similarities and differences in Deputy and Assistant Director positions across the country. Participants engaged in discussion about their positions and challenges they face.

The group reviewed the NASAA report titled *State Arts Agency Funding and Grantmaking* (March 2008) and then reviewed the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report titled *29 States Faced Total Budget Shortfall of at least \$48 Billion in 2009* (August 2008). Moe facilitated discussion about state arts agency budgets and the change agencies are facing. Participants discussed what the economic downturn might mean (or has meant) to operations, programs and services.

Moe presented some images and video clips to spark discussion about how imminent changes in state arts agencies can lead to challenges for deputy and assistant directors, in their efforts

to "manage from the middle." Jaime Dempsey from Arizona, Brian Rogers from Pennsylvania and Moe participated in a role playing exercise to demonstrate a typical "managing from the middle" situation for state arts agency personnel. Discussion followed.

Moe then presented a brief lecture on "change as a matter of leadership ability rather than management skill," and offered change management and managing transition articles to the group. In his lecture, Moe defined types of "change," and described when and how one can be a change agent within state arts agencies. Discussion followed.

The session adjourned and the group met soon after for dinner at the Chattanooga Big River Grille.

Thursday, September 11, 2008 **Peer Group Session One**

Session Topic: Managing Change

Summary: The Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Group met for its first session of the conference at the Chattanooga Convention Center. This session was facilitated by John (Moe) Moore.

Attendance: 23 state arts agency deputy and assistant directors from across the nation

Session Notes: Moe facilitated a welcome and introductions around the room, as 10 additional Deputy and Assistant Directors joined this session. Moe reviewed the discussion topics from Wednesday for those newly joining the group.

Moe presented some images and video clips to spark discussion about team leadership, developing a stronger work force and working toward broader agency goals. The role playing exercise from the Wednesday retreat was discussed and evaluated to demonstrate authority dynamics within state arts agency leadership teams, typically made up of board chairs, executive directors and deputy directors.

Moe then facilitated a discussion about next year's assembly, rumored to include team workgroups made up of board chairs, executive directors and deputy directors. Discussion followed.

Moe was thanked for his participation and facilitation, and the session adjourned.

Saturday, September 13, 2008 **Peer Group Session Two**

Session Topic: Managing for Progress; Deputy Peer Group Progress

Summary: The Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Group met for its second session of the conference at the Chattanooga Convention Center. This session was facilitated by Jaime Dempsey of Arizona and Brian Rogers of Pennsylvania.

Attendance: 21 state arts agency deputy and assistant directors from across the nation

Session Notes: Jaime facilitated a discussion about the future of the peer group, using the following questions as a guide:

- What are the skills that you feel you most need to develop?
- Which topics would be most helpful to you, for further discussion and development?
- Which peer group topics would get you out of your office, to attend a deputy peer group session?

The results from this discussion were recorded on flip charts as follows:

- Skills we are looking for:
 - Leadership skills, the art of managing people
 - Approach to management
 - Effective staff evaluation models and ideas
 - Developing our messaging skills
- Topics we want to develop, discuss or learn about:
 - How to develop a succession plan for agency staff
 - Working with realities of SAA personnel
 - How to work with Advocacy groups
 - Maintaining continuity with changes in executive staff, commission/board
 - Building stronger relationships between EDs and DDs
 - Approaches to working with budget cuts
 - How do we maintain capacity building with smaller budgets?
 - Working with legislative arts caucuses
 - How do we present data in more effective ways?
 - What will our message be during this challenging economic time?
 - Dealing with cities who use "art and culture"
 - What is the board's role in advocacy?
 - Scenario planning
 - Looking for concrete training opportunities

The group consolidated these ideas and identified four topics that would be most useful for subsequent peer group sessions:

- Planning and managing in a difficult economy
- Presenting data and research in effective and meaningful ways
- Developing effective management relationships between deputy and executive directors
- Managing personnel

The group determined that they would not be particularly interested in a mid-year deputy director retreat, mostly because of budget and travel constraints. Deputies and assistant directors might be interested in regional retreats, depending on scheduling and topics.

Most group members would be interested in another retreat connected to the annual NASAA conference, provided the retreat and peer group sessions provided relevant and content-rich learning opportunities. Members of the group suggested that the sessions include some creative or experiential content, and that the planning team remain mindful of the deputy/assistant director's unique professional need to focus on the broadest scope and the most minute detail in agency work.

Kelly Barsdate, NASAA's chief program and planning officer, joined the session to provide a brief overview of the initial plans for NASAA's 2009 Leadership Institute. Discussion results are listed below under "[Session Participants Discuss 2009 NASAA Leadership Institute.](#)"

Brian facilitated a discussion about the future of the Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Group, using the following questions as a guide:

- How can we revive and sustain our peer network?
- How can we best share resources?

The results from this discussion were recorded on flip charts as follows:

- Develop a vision statement and a three-year plan to outline the group's goals and desired learning, using reflective needs assessment.
- Develop regionally representative subcommittees from within the group:
 - Groups could convene on their own with less expense to their agencies
 - Subcommittee chairs could be appointed
 - Subcommittee chairs could plan and facilitate regional conference calls
- Develop a peer group book or article club; conduct an on-line discussion quarterly and as preparation for the annual conference.
- Develop a threaded listserv or blog.*
- Develop an on-line bulletin board to post documents or plans that might be of use to other agencies*:
 - Agency newsletters
 - Interview questions
 - Staff meeting structures and tips
 - Panel and grant processing procedures
 - Employee programs (non-medical and non-financial), benefits and professional development
- Develop mentor/mentee relationships within the group and with those new to their positions.*

* Group wonders if NASAA would be willing to manage these efforts?

Brian facilitated a brief discussion about methods of distributing information, using the following question as a guide:

- What form or format might be most effective for information sharing?

The results from this discussion were recorded on flip charts as follows:

- Threaded listserv
- Bulletin board
- Blog

Session Participants Discuss 2009 NASAA Leadership Institute

Kelly Barsdate provided a brief overview of the initial plans for NASAA's 2009 Leadership Institute. The Deputy and Assistant Director Peer Group provided the following feedback:

- The group appreciates the concept of the leadership team of three, whether the situation is healthy or needs improvement.
- Perhaps NASAA could imagine some flexibility within the leadership teams to allow for differences in how each agency manages similar tasks.
- Some peer to peer conversations or peer group sessions would still be useful.
- Feeling stronger and more aligned as a team (in terms of message and focus) upon departure is really important.
- NASAA might consider asking each leadership team to identify an issue, before the institute, that they want to workshop during the institute.
- Some agencies might need NASAA to engage in special recruitment assistance efforts to engage board chairs or board members. (NASAA would be willing to help recruit and engage board chairs and board members to attend.)

- The inclusion of some creative or experiential content would be welcome.
- We'll need to create a culture of candor from the outset.
- The group would like to see peer group sessions as well as leadership team sessions, maybe some facilitated and some not facilitated.
- Long range planning chair, if agency has one, should be invited to attend.
- Could there be a session where we discuss what state arts agencies might look like in the future?
- Maybe NASAA could commission a futurist to help determine what the future might look like for the arts sector and for state and regional arts agencies.
- We should make an effort during the institute to compare notes about the innovative things going on in our communities.
- The group suggests that NASAA work in partnership with regional agencies, which could help state agencies follow up with assembly/institute learning in smaller segments after the conference.
- The group would appreciate some NASAA counsel about providing postconference information to constituents and board members.
- Members of the group recommended we investigate the [Pecha Kucha](#) model for presentations during the 2009 Leadership Institute.

Moving Forward: Assignments

Jaime Dempsey of Arizona will continue coordinating the peer group session. Jim Bob McMillan of Texas agreed to cochair the peer group. Lisa Richards of D.C. and Brian Rogers of Pennsylvania agreed to help.

Camellia El-Antably of Wyoming agreed to investigate the development of a book or article club, and would consider facilitating such a group in the future.

Jaime Dempsey agreed to investigate different methods of capturing and organizing information within blogs, threaded listservs and online bulletin boards.