

**Assembly 2007  
Baltimore, Maryland**

**“Beyond Grant Making” Workshop**

***Discussion Notes***

**State Arts Agency Role Diversification**

Although a majority of state arts agency resources (financial and human) are dedicated to grant-making, state arts agencies also pursue a wide portfolio of other constituent services, including:

Convening  
Training/TA  
Information Services  
Collections Acquisition and Maintenance  
Trade Missions  
Facilities Management  
Communications  
Research  
Documentation  
PR Campaigns  
E-Commerce  
Advocacy  
Loans  
Cultural Trails  
Cultural District Certification  
State Quarters  
Etc., Etc., Etc.

**What Factors Drive SAA Role Diversification?**

- SAs are looking for creative ways to expand their visibility and influence.
- Providing services allows SAs to reach more/different people than grants alone.
- The needs of the arts field are evolving and diversifying.
- SAs are able to see “the big picture” and are natural leaders for identifying statewide needs and finding policy/programming solutions.
- Sometimes the provision of training and technical assistance is the best way to maximize the impact of a grant or other direct financial investment.
- The size and value (relative to inflation) of SAA grants are on the decline, forcing SAs to look for other ways of making a difference.

- Legislators have the expectation that the SAA will implement all arts or culture-related policy. (Regardless of whether resources are provided to do this!)
- New theories or concepts (e.g., Richard Florida) have led to different ways of doing things.
- SAAs want to foster independence among grantees. Services and training can empower them to secure other resources, expand their audiences, etc.
- Staff have the interests and skills to pursue initiatives, and are often interested in taking a fresh approach.

### **So Why Not Focus on Those Activities, Rather Than Grants?**

- Legislators and citizens expect tax dollars to be returned to their community in tangible/measurable ways.
- Grant-making creates infrastructure – it fosters arts organizations and artists to become assets within their communities.
- Organizations and artists need the money!
- SAA grant-making performs some unique/essential roles:
  - Provides irreplaceable support – especially for small organizations
  - Sometimes the SAA is the only arts grant-maker in the state
  - Other funding mechanisms may not reach underserved areas and/or serve all of the disciplines the state needs
  - GOS and fellowship support are especially difficult to secure from other sources
  - Guarantees that the public interest is taken into account
  - Fosters community engagement, good planning, accountability
  - Helps to attract other funds
- The recognition (“seal of approval”) provided through SAA grants is a useful visibility tool that rewards and highlights best practices.
- SAA grants encourage local decision making about the deployment of funds – it empowers local action by attaching resources to those plans.
- The process of adjudication (not patronage) is an essential part of the public process.
- Other sources of arts grant funds are on the decline.
- Competition for grants spurs excellence – both in quality of programming and quality of serving the public.
- Grant-making informs “beyond grant making” and vice versa – SAAs need to pursue both strategies in order to achieve their goals.

### **Impact on State Arts Agencies**

- The competition – for time and resources - between grants and “beyond grants” is intensifying.
- Grants and services accomplish unique goals. Most SAAs need to do both.

- Non-grant activities tend to be highly human resource intensive.
- Moving beyond grants requires highly knowledgeable staff, and sometimes staff with new/different skills than those that are best for grants management.
- Most “beyond grants” efforts are not evaluated formally. This makes it difficult to document impact and advocate for sufficient resources.
- Legislators need to be shown the constituent demand and cost effectiveness of services. Create opportunities for firsthand legislative involvement.

## ***Participant Comments: What Advice Do You Have for SAAs Considering Non-Grant Activities?***

### **Key Issues to Consider**

#### **Program/Activity Structure:**

##### 1. Assessment & Background Research

- Is there a desire or a need for this project?
- How will we assess and document the current needs of stakeholders?
- Are there any other states that have done a similar project?
- Is anyone else in our state providing this service?
- What about this program is important to measure?
- Is there a way to collect evidence on the cost and return on investment?
- Is there baseline data? (quantitative or qualitative)
- Does the research have actionable metrics?
- Is this program tied to the strategic outcomes of the SAA?
- Does the program consider the values and practices of lawmakers?

##### 2. Planning

- Be strategic in the opportunities you choose pursue.
- Ensure that the program fits the mission and goals of the agency. Try to tie all current and new activities to your strategic plan.
- Determine costs and benefits for right now but also for 5, 10, and 20 years in the future.
- State your intended results and develop the partnerships/leadership needed to attain those results.
- Include human resource needs and cost in planning. Don't kick off a program without sufficient capacity.

- Plan ahead to dedicate staff time for planning the initiative up front, as well as for communicating about it and implementing it over time.
- Air grievances, red flags, concerns, questions, hesitations and ambivalences early in the planning process. Don't lose motivation as a result, but let them influence scope and direction.
- Truly consider the end result before plunging in and creating a new program.
- Be realistic about the time the initiative will take.
- Engage staff and others for complete buy-in for the planning process.
- Discuss possible negative outcomes prior to beginning the change.
- Allow time for reflection and brainstorming.
- Determine who has the "high stakes" in the current system and whether they have the influence to make it impossible for you to act.
- Ground your planning decisions in response to constituents and the public. "We are doing this because citizens asked us to do it," instead of, "we had this idea in a committee meeting."

### 3. Goals

- Clearly identify the outcomes you expect to achieve.
- Choose goals that will have an impact or influence on statewide sustainability of cultural industries.
- Define a goal that has a measurable performance indicator.
- Define immediate and long-term goals.
- Identify shared goals by all partners involved in the project in advance.

### 4. Evaluation

- Develop measures and messages that show you are supporting your goals.
- Assess the success of shared goals with partners.
- Ensure that the need for change and your actual changes are well documented/established.
- While expanding the numbers of participation is important, don't lose sight of the quality of the of the participation experience.
- Be realistic about performance measures. Know what can be reasonably collected and used.

## **Internal Impact:**

### 1. Staff

- Evaluate staff capacity.
- Assess staff: Review current roles and define knowledge base of each staff member in relationship to achieving new goals.
- Be intentional about allocating staff-time to new things and accepting that other things will be done less or later.

- Allow staff to lead the projects that will interest them the most.
- Consider staff dedicated solely to technical assistance and activities directly tied to things other than grants.
- Keep communication lines open among staff.
- Consider the stress on current staff.
- Be willing to provide time and resources for staff professional development.
- If possible, gear up your programs towards the strengths and passion of your staff. Their skills and drive will make these efforts successful. They can also burn out on programs they do not believe in or enjoy or excel at.
- Get buy in and enthusiasm of whole staff for new service because it will effect everyone.

## 2. Operations

- Don't be afraid to stop doing something. Make the transition openly and with integrity.
- Geographic and administrative decentralization may help with convening, dialogue and as a network facilitator.
- Don't be afraid to get out of the office.
- Multi-year review panels for grant applications free up time to provide more services.
- Make grant programs more efficient and less work intensive to help focus on new programs.
- Reduce unnecessary paperwork.

## **External Impact:**

### 1. Constituents

- Get input from all stakeholders, both the positive and the negatives. (Not just the usual suspects.)
- Engage your constituents in the process and determine how to ensure constituent buy-in.
- Fieldwork is vital to monitoring constituent needs. It also ensures that the program staff is a respected, relevant and trusted partner.
- Consider in whose best and worst interest is the change.
- Consider the impact on organizations with smaller budgets.
- Talk to people who are not engaged in the arts (to see things differently).
- Communicate with the current grantees (and the arts community and the public) about the intention of new programs during strategic planning.

### 2. Partners

- Seek partners who can deliver new services.

- If entering into a partnership, be sure that the roles of each group are clearly defined.
- Be responsive and inclusive to utilize expertise within and outside of the organization.
- Avoid redundancy of efforts.
- Do not trump an existing program or service that is already being provided by an organization funded by your SAA.
- Form a strategic coalition that brings forth greater resources.
- Use the partnership resources on NASAA's Web site to assess your relationships:
  - <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/1-PshipTypes.pdf>
  - <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/3-PshipEvaluation.pdf>
  - <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/2-PshipChooseTypes.pdf>
  - <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/4-PshipQuestions.pdf>

### 3. Legislators and Council

- Make sure the authorizing environment understands what you are doing and why.
- Identify specific elected officials that will support the shift, and involve them in the process.
- Have a strong advocacy arm to promote this effort among legislators and constituents.
- Advocate for funding to reflect the shift. Request increased dollars for programmatic/administrative costs, not just increases for grants.
- Assess advocacy impact of both before making considered choices.
- Get your own self out of the way. Relinquish control of personal agendas which ultimately disembody the unity of the vision in which your state is moving forward to the future.

### **Other Advice and Questions**

- This is not one-size fits all work. It is highly labor intensive.
- Whatever you project for staff time in a service related project – double or triple that.
- “Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts.”
- Don't wait for new money. Instead, use staff plus available money now for non-grant investments.
- Don't punish yourself over missed opportunities.
- Learn to tell the story. Get everyone around you to begin thinking in terms of what was changed in your life, the lives of other individuals and organizations because of this.
- Start small with a pilot program that will deliver quantifiable results.
- Be open and willing to rethink how you do the work.
- Read the book *Falling Forward*.

- Be prepared for the “darkest before the dawn” effect.
- Don’t expect the change to happen immediately.
- Take it slow and be consistent in your message.
- Don’t shift too often. You’ll look confused and indecisive to funders and constituents.
- Don’t act out of frustration.
- Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.