

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Action Plan Highlights: Fiscal Year 2016 Report

October 2015 – September 2016

Organized around NASAA's [strategic plan](#), this document highlights key activities and accomplishments during the 2016 membership year.

Goal 1: Develop resources, relationships and public policies that advance state arts agencies.

1A. Represent state arts agency interests to federal decision makers.

- NASAA [mobilized support for a federal budget deal](#) that ultimately enacted a \$2 million **increase in FY2016 appropriations to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**.
- NASAA **submitted [testimony](#)** urging Congress to continue growth in the NEA's budget for fiscal year 2017. Both the House and Senate recommended an appropriation increase. Although passage of a new federal budget before March is [unlikely](#), the budget recommendations are indicators of solid bipartisan support for the arts.
- NASAA worked in coalition with other arts advocates to ensure that the arts were included in the new **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**. After its passage, NASAA helped state arts agencies understand the [arts provisions](#) in the new law and their [opportunities for shaping its implementation](#) at the state level.
- As a cosponsor of national **Arts Advocacy Day**, NASAA played an active role in developing the [arts issue briefs](#) used by attendees. NASAA participated in briefing sessions and led, in cooperation with Maryland and Wisconsin, a forum about the **importance of the partnership portion of the NEA's budget**.
- [Federal Updates](#) from NASAA provided **timely policy information** for state arts agencies. Regular Legislative Alert e-mails notified members about congressional actions affecting state arts agencies and their constituents.
- NASAA's board and staff leadership met regularly with senior **NEA leadership** to discuss issues affecting the federal-state partnership.
- In collaboration with our Idaho members, NASAA coordinated discussions with **Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho)** following his expression of interest in substantially increasing the NEA's budget in future appropriations cycles. This is an item that will be revisited in the future, after the upcoming elections.
- NASAA served as a resource on arts related issues to members of Congress.

1B. Foster support for state arts agencies among key policy audiences.

- NASAA initiated a new relationship with the **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)** Rural Development Office. CEO Pam Breaux presented at an [August convening](#) of state rural development directors, promoting the value of the arts as an economic development asset. NASAA is facilitating connections between those directors and state arts agencies and is helping state arts agencies tap into USDA technical assistance resources.
- NASAA began outreach to the **U.S. Small Business Administration** to explore how the arts can connect to its policy portfolio.

New in '16

- NASAA played an active role in assisting the transition of the **Arts Education Partnership** (AEP) to become part of the policy portfolio of the [Education Commission of the States](#). This change [positions the AEP](#) to increase its influence with state legislatures, chief state school officers and other state policymakers—a timely change given that ESSA delegates more education policy authority to states. NASAA CEO Pam Breau served on the search committee for the AEP's new executive director, Jane Best, appointed in April.
- NASAA managed the [National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards](#) for the **President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities**, recognizing outstanding after-school creative youth development programs. Awardees for 2015 were celebrated at a White House event. A Leadership Enhancement Conference provided communications training to help 2016 awardees make the most of their recognition.
- NASAA met with the leadership of **regional arts organizations** to discuss potential strategies for collaborating on federal advocacy and ways to best support individual state arts agencies in crisis.
- NASAA represented and promoted state arts agencies within numerous **influential networks**, including Americans for the Arts, Data Arts, the State Arts Action Network, Grantmakers in the Arts, the Federation of State Humanities Councils, the National Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Cultural Research Network, the National Center for Creative Aging, League of American Orchestras, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, National Center for Arts Research, and the National Association of Elementary and School Principals.
- NASAA linked state arts agency data to **national and regional arts research initiatives**, including DataArts, Western States Arts Federation's Creative Vitality Suite and Sustain Arts, a project of the Foundation Center, Grantmakers in the Arts, Fractured Atlas, and the Hauser Institute at Harvard.
- NASAA responded to ongoing **press coverage of arts policy issues**, fielding media inquiries from local and state news outlets and consulting with state arts agencies to ensure that NASAA reinforced members' key messages.

1C. Strengthen the advocacy practices of state arts agencies.

New in '16

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- [Who's Who in Government Arts Funding](#) is a **new infographic** that spotlights government funding for the arts, the benefits of those investments and the networks that make the case for support. It's designed primarily as an orientation tool for council members and cultural advocates new to our field.
- NASAA introduced a new series, **The Practical Advocate**, to provide advocacy tips tailored to state arts agency council members and state arts advocacy groups. The first issue in the series focused on [Being an Arts Ambassador](#).
- In our ongoing efforts to **share succinct advocacy messages** via social media and other channels, NASAA began offering "Top Ten" lists focused on the benefits of state arts agencies and their programs. The debut edition, [Ten Great Reasons to Support Public Art](#), was widely circulated through Facebook and drove a fresh wave of on-line traffic to our related NASAA website resources and our [Percent for Art Policy Brief](#).
- NASAA's **state legislative tracking system** pinpointed arts related bills affecting state arts agencies, their resources or their constituents. We monitored 106 arts related bills introduced during states' 2016 legislative sessions.
- NASAA provides **hands-on support during advocacy crises** occurring at the state level. This year we provided in-depth assistance to three states facing major legislative threats and one agency considering restructuring. We briefed agency leaders on issues, provided tactical advocacy advice, offered comparative data, drafted talking points and supported

positive communications efforts. NASAA is strictly guided by its members in this work, avoiding the imposition of a D.C. agenda on state level decisions.

- NASAA connected regularly with **state arts advocacy organizations**. NASAA distributed funding and policy alerts and fulfilled numerous information requests from citizens' groups. We collaborated with Americans for the Arts to offer a Joint State Arts Agency / State Arts Action Network Forum at Assembly 2016, tightening the focus of that meeting on the timely post-ESSA issue of arts education advocacy.
- To support state arts agencies' federal advocacy efforts, NASAA updated our annual **Fast Facts about the National Endowment for the Arts**. These [sheets](#), which were customized for 51 state arts agencies, distill key statistics and talking points about federal support for the arts and state arts agencies.
- NASAA participated in advocacy sessions convened by the **Western States Arts Federation** to facilitate Capitol Hill visits by representatives of 13 western agencies.

Goal 2: Increase the knowledge and skills that state arts agencies use to serve the public effectively.

2A. Maintain a comprehensive fact base about state arts agencies.

- NASAA provided authoritative data on **state arts agency budgets**. NASAA's [State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2016](#) report provided analysis of all revenue sources and included appropriations, state rankings, line items and trends over time. The [State Arts Agency Legislative Appropriations Preview](#) offered a succinct forecast of FY2017 appropriations.
- NASAA released FY2016 **staff size and compensation** data, offering [customized salary and staffing comparisons](#) to help members evaluate state arts agency pay rates and human resources.
- NASAA maintains comprehensive information on **state arts agency grant making**. Using the latest Final Descriptive Report data from all of the states, NASAA generated maps and statistical analyses showing the distribution and impact of 20,707 awards in the past year. A [new infographic](#) illustrates state arts agency investments in low-income areas. Updates to our collection of grant-making fact sheets address key topics such as [operating support](#), [rural arts funding](#), [arts education](#), [individual artists](#) and [local arts agencies](#).
- At the request of the NEA, NASAA produced **state fact sheets** summarizing the demographics of each state, jurisdiction and region. These sheets, which also include a succinct state and federal funding history for each agency, are used by NEA Partnership Agreement panels every January.

New in '16

2B. Facilitate members' use of information for planning, decision making and case making.

- NASAA fulfilled 502 **information requests** during this fiscal year. Most inquiries come from members requesting data comparisons or consultation on funding, operations, planning or policy. Nonmembers, including the NEA, advocacy groups, consultants and students also request information. Every inquiry receives a customized response.
- NASAA's **interactive data tools** help members use data in dynamic ways. We expanded on our [Per Capita Appropriations map](#) and [Per Capita Ranking Estimation Tool](#) with a new [Appropriations Explorer](#) that invites members and advocates to run state and regional comparisons, look at trends over time and see the effects of inflation on the buying power of arts appropriations. NASAA also promoted our [Grant-Making Explorer](#). This interactive

New in '16

on-line tool graphs a decade of data on grant dollars awarded by state, discipline and type of grantee.

- We revised **on-line resource areas** cataloging state [economic impact studies](#), [dedicated revenue strategies](#) and [strategic plans](#) to reflect the latest releases.

2C. Provide analysis of current trends and key issues affecting state arts agencies.

- NASAA released two resources supporting state arts agency **arts and military** activities. Our [State Arts & Military Initiatives Strategy Sampler](#) and the [findings from a snap survey](#) of the field showcase state and regional efforts to serve active-duty military personnel, reservists, veterans, their families and other members of the military community.
- Thoughtful **curation of research relevant to state arts agencies** is one of NASAA's trademark services. We shared research on culturally specific organizations, state budgets, cultural entrepreneurship, neuroscience and strategies for funding indigenous communities, to name just a few.
- NASAA completed a comprehensive inventory of all **arts education goals** present in state arts agency strategic plans.
- We observed the 2016 **NEA Partnership Agreement panels** to gather information about agency planning practices and monitor programmatic developments in the field. A new edition of [Tips for Preparing NEA Partnership Agreement Applications](#) helped members polish their proposals for federal funding.

2D. Deliver educational programs that strengthen members' knowledge and leadership skills.

- NASAA created a new **learning on demand** slidecast: [The State Arts Agency Story](#). Packaged on NASAA's [YouTube](#) channel, The State Arts Agency Story is an 8-minute visual tour recapping the genesis and achievements of our field and commemorating the 50th anniversary of many of our member agencies.
- NASAA **web seminars** provided on-line learning to 91 participants from 28 states in sessions on [State Arts Agencies and STEM](#) and [Changing Demographics](#). [Session resources](#) for all NASAA webinars are available on-line.
- The biennial **Boot Camp** for [new executive directors](#), held in July 2016, provided an orientation and networking opportunity for seven recently appointed state arts agency executives. The agenda addressed policy and programmatic priorities as well as advocacy and change leadership strategies.
- The **Executive Directors' Retreat**, held in May 2016 in Big Fork, Montana, provided a networking and learning opportunity for attendees to explore policy and programmatic, leadership and management practices.
- The 2015 **Professional Development Institute** (PDI) was a joint program for state arts agency arts education managers and state education agency directors of arts education. Convened in Jackson, Mississippi, the PDI focused on building relationships that strengthen arts education policy, practice and equity. [Proceedings](#) from the PDI are available on-line. NASAA manages the PDI through an NEA cooperative agreement.
- The **2015 Leadership Institute** convened 146 participants in Salt Lake City, Utah. The agenda, tailored to executive and appointed state arts agency leaders, marked a departure from prior years and focused on change management skills and the future of state arts agencies. We engaged a [graphic recorder](#) to illustrate the sessions and elevate significant discussion themes. [Proceedings](#) from the Institute are available on-line.

- [Assembly 2016](#) takes place in September in Grand Rapids, Michigan, hosted by the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs. The [agenda](#) includes a wide array of learning sessions, artistic offerings and outings to local cultural venues. [Keynote speakers](#) offer insights into America's creative ecosystem, the role of the Arts in a diverse democracy and the power of innovation. The **2016 Professional Development Institute** is held in conjunction with the Assembly convening. It's agenda focuses on diversity, equity, inclusion and human-centered design.
- Site selection was completed for the **2017 Leadership Institute**. All state arts agency executive directors, deputies, chairs and council members are invited to Portland, Oregon, next October!

2E. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, evaluation, improvement and change.

- [State to State](#), a monthly column in the NASAA Notes e-newsletter, profiled 31 **innovative state and regional initiatives** this year. Among the programs highlighted were Oklahoma's work to launch an [arts and military pilot program](#); Missouri's [Ghost Light Program](#), which ensures that all 163 state legislative districts benefit from Arts Council funding; a new [public art collaboration](#) between the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the DC Department of Public Works; Iowa's year-long commemoration marking the 35th anniversary of its [Art in State Buildings](#) program; the [Creative Minds Out Loud](#) podcast, which highlights Massachusetts's cultural capital; and [Alaska](#)'s public-private partnership to develop the [Alaska Native Artist Resource Workbook](#).

New in '16

- To help state arts agencies advance **diversity, equity and inclusion**, NASAA published [State Policies & Programs Addressing Diversity](#). This resource provides an extensive catalogue of actions state arts agencies are taking to address diversity through their planning, operations, governance, funding, services and partnerships.

New in '16

- NASAA introduced a new **bento box** format for circulating short, "shareable" samples of innovative state arts agency programs. The premier edition, [Happy Anniversary](#), featured seven state arts agency anniversary celebrations along with supporting material from NASAA and the NEA.

New in '16

- NASAA joined the **National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response** (NCAPER) steering committee. NASAA is circulating best-practice recommendations with members to guide responses to disasters and other emergencies affecting state arts agency constituencies.

New in '16

- NASAA helped states comply with **evolving federal reporting requirements**. We issued a technical manual on [Activity Location Reporting](#) that offers methods for documenting how the benefits of state and regional investments extend into numerous neighborhoods and communities beyond a grant award site.

Goal 3: Sustain a strong Assembly to support the work of state arts agencies now and in the future.

3A. Keep state arts agencies informed and connected with one another.

- NASAA used our [Facebook](#) page to promote the good work of our members and share news of note with the state arts agency community. Our two most popular items of the year featured our 2017 Legislative Appropriations Preview (garnering 12,227 post impressions) and a [Georgia advocacy video](#) (11,197 post impressions). Help NASAA widen our network by Liking our page yourself!

- Monthly issues of the [NASAA Notes newsletter](#) shared current news and resource alerts useful to state arts agencies and their constituents. [Past editions of NASAA Notes](#) and a comprehensive index to all [recent NASAA communications](#)^M are available on-line.
- NASAA issued Report to Councils in [January](#), [March](#) and [May](#). Specifically designed for **volunteer leaders**, this report offers highlights of NASAA activities and serves as a handy insert in council meeting materials.
- The [For Council Members](#) web page gives appointed state arts agency leaders **streamlined access** to a "short list" of NASAA resources.
- NASAA maintained peer-to-peer **listservs** for executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, public information officers, grants officers, arts education managers and community development managers. We launched a new listserv for folk and traditional arts managers this spring. Members use these listservs to share news and to query their colleagues for best-practices advice and information.

New in '16

New in '16

3B. Engage state arts agencies in the work of the Assembly.

- **Member participation** in all aspects of NASAA's work has been extensive. [Fifty-two member agencies](#) were active as board or committee volunteers, event faculty, conference attendees, donors, and/or information users.
- NASAA **recognized outstanding leadership** in the state arts agency field through two [national awards](#) that celebrate individuals who creatively, effectively and efficiently serve the public through the arts. Randall Rosenbaum of Rhode Island received the Gary Young Award and Bruce Richardson of Wyoming received the Distinguished Public Service Award.
- NASAA's 2016 **Nominating Committee** interviewed 84 member directors and council chairs. In addition to shaping the slate for NASAA's 2017 board of directors, the [findings](#) from this outreach process provided valuable input into NASAA's future planning efforts.

3C. Develop and maintain the financial, human and operational capacities required to serve and advance state arts agencies.

- 2017 will be a **strategic planning** year for NASAA, so we devoted a portion of 2016 to those preparations. We kicked off the process with a visioning session on [state arts agency change](#) in October 2015. The Planning & Budget Committee and board of directors subsequently approved a [process and timeline](#) for developing a new plan to take effect in FY2018. Members (and a diverse array of informants from other sectors) will have multiple opportunities to participate in the process throughout the year ahead.
- **Contributed support** for NASAA is strong. Since October 1, 2015, NASAA has received \$59,220 in [donations](#) from 230 individuals, with gifts ranging in size from \$15 to \$5,000. NASAA secured \$164,000 from foundations, corporations and the state of Michigan to support Assembly 2016.
- NASAA's Audit Committee supervised a successful **annual independent audit** of our finances and internal controls. The committee also supervised updates to NASAA's financial policies and procedures manual. Additionally, NASAA completed an **NEA compliance audit** in conjunction with the NEA instituting more frequent reviews of all its major cooperators.

New in '16

^M = NASAA member-only content

- NASAA's board revised the **investment policy** guiding the management of our board-designated operating reserve, a fund set aside for strategic, nonrecurring opportunities as well as emergency stabilization.
- Two committees with roles relating to NASAA's long-term **financial sustainability** undertook important work this spring. The Dues Task Force formulated a five-year plan for NASAA dues (2018-2022). Members vote on the plan during the September 2016 business meeting. This year's Development Committee also began a strategic analysis of NASAA's contributed income from corporate, foundation and individual sources. Its recommendations will feed into NASAA's strategic planning process.
- NASAA **addressed staff transitions** in two vacant positions. We brought a new research associate on board in August and recruitment is under way for a new development manager.
- As a prelude to a comprehensive website overhaul, NASAA completed an **assessment of the NASAA website**. A user survey, content plan and model wireframes will guide our redevelopment of a freshly designed and user-friendly site in 2017.
- NASAA conducted **evaluations** of the 2015 Leadership Institute, Boot Camp, our web seminars, e-mail open rates and performance metrics relating to website utilization and Facebook engagement. NASAA draws on these resources to inform 2017 annual action planning and ongoing performance improvement.

New in '16