

STRATEGIC PLAN

2017 Edition

Contents

Introduction.....	Page 2
About This Plan	Page 2
Strategic Plan	Page 3
Fiscal Year 2017 Action Plan	Page 5
Strategic Planning Process.....	Page 10
Keeping the Plan Current.....	Page 11
Evaluation	Page 12
Members as Owners	Page 12

INTRODUCTION

The economic and political turmoil of recent years has created monumental challenges for the public sector and for state arts agencies (SAAs). Primary forces shaping the future of public support for the arts include a severely challenged fiscal climate, increasingly divergent views of the appropriate roles for government and a continuing evolution in the ways in which the public participates in the arts.

Most impressive is that even as some state arts agencies struggle with staggering losses of financial and human resources, they continue to prove their value—and resiliency—through innovation, through the diversification of services, and through the reimagining of their programs and operational structures. These adaptations have required tremendous resourcefulness and resolve, and state arts agencies have proved up to the task—designing programs that most clearly produce public benefits, energizing their constituencies and motivating support from decision makers.

Underpinning their work is the belief that in times such as these, state arts agencies do not become less relevant. They become *more* relevant. In the face of economic distress, natural disasters and other adversity, the arts are a powerful force for recovery and healing, a benefit that few other industries offer. The arts also provide powerful economic, educational, civic and cultural benefits. State arts agencies ensure that all communities—regardless of their geographic location, political affiliation or economic status—attain equitable access to these resources. State arts agencies also help states to foster innovation, develop a distinctive state brand identity, cultivate livable communities and pass their cherished cultural traditions along to future generations. These imperatives make the work of state arts agencies—and therefore the work of NASAA—more important than ever.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

During the 2011 fiscal year, NASAA initiated an [extensive review](#) of our strategic plan, our members' needs, their aspirations for the future and what NASAA can do to help. We examined state arts agencies' operating environments, their ideas about what was or was not working, and their assessment of the quality and value of the services NASAA provides. We received candid and creative feedback from state arts agency staff and volunteer leaders. The resulting plan ultimately reflects this high caliber of member input. This strategic plan was approved by the membership in fiscal year 2012, and its [currency](#) was affirmed by the board in 2014.

NASAA planning is modular, combining two kinds of plans: strategic plans and action plans. Our strategic plan charts NASAA's overall course. It sets forth the goals we want to achieve and articulates the principles that guide our work. NASAA's strategic plan is designed as an evergreen document that is revisited by the board every three years (or sooner, if environmental conditions dictate the need for change). [Action plans](#) are developed and approved by the membership annually. They complement the strategic plan, itemizing the near-term steps necessary to achieve our long-term goals. Combined with ongoing [evaluation](#), this approach ensures that NASAA's day-to-day priorities and management align with our strategic vision. This approach also allows NASAA to respond to emerging member needs, to make midcourse corrections in our work based on feedback and evaluation findings, and to adapt to new opportunities or unforeseen constraints.

In designing strategies to support state arts agencies, NASAA is inspired by the creativity, adaptability and optimism of its [own membership](#). Moving forward, NASAA's strategic and action plans position NASAA to be a uniquely and increasingly valuable to its members as a resource for knowledge, influence and leadership.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Strategic Plan

Approved October, 2011

Affirmed April 2014

MISSION

NASAA's mission is to strengthen state arts agencies.

ROLES

Representation: NASAA provides national representation for state arts agencies. We champion a robust public sector role in American cultural life and ensure that state arts agencies' policy and resource interests have a persuasive voice at all levels of decision making.

Knowledge: NASAA's research and education services inform and inspire effective service to citizens. NASAA helps members pioneer, share and apply knowledge that strengthens the leadership, programs and services state arts agencies provide to the public.

Community: NASAA unites state arts agencies as a professional community, connecting staff and council members with one another, creating common cause and making the collective wisdom of the field a resource for all.

GOALS

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

- A. Represent state arts agency interests to federal decision makers
- B. Foster support for state arts agencies among key policy audiences
- C. Strengthen the advocacy practices of state arts agencies

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

- A. Maintain a comprehensive fact base about state arts agencies
- B. Facilitate members' use of information for planning, decision-making and case-making
- C. Provide analysis of current trends and key issues affecting state arts agencies
- D. Deliver educational programs that strengthen members' knowledge and leadership skills
- E. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, evaluation, improvement and change

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

- A. Keep state arts agencies informed and connected with one another
- B. Engage state arts agencies in the work of the Assembly
- C. Develop and maintain the financial, human and operational capacities required to serve and advance state arts agencies

TOOLS AND TACTICS

To achieve our goals, NASAA employs a strategic array of tools and tactics throughout our annual action plans:

- **Strategic collaborations**, inside and outside the arts sector, that increase the expertise, ideas and influence of state arts agencies and NASAA.
- **Technology** that helps state arts agencies and NASAA communicate and connect in creative and affordable ways.
- The **knowledge and experience** of the state arts agency national network helps members and NASAA deliver value.
- **Personal attention** and respectful, confidential consulting that helps state arts agencies explore options and solve problems.
- **Customized** products and services that meet the unique needs and circumstances of individual states.
- Authoritative and timely **information** that states know and trust.
- Ongoing **evaluation** to help us chart NASAA's progress, learn from our experiences and achieve excellence in our work as an association

CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR WORK

NASAA will also be:

- Resolute in advancing the value of public support for the arts and culture in America
- Forward-looking and reality-based in our planning
- Respected for our influence and authority beyond the SAA community
- Recognized for the value and quality of service we provide to SAAs
- Timely, relevant and responsive to the needs of the membership
- Collaborative in our approach
- Focused on achieving our goals
- Welcoming and respectful of diversity in the professional community we create for SAAs
- Transparent and inclusive in our decision-making
- Responsible in our cultivation and management of resources
- Accountable to our members and to the standards we set for ourselves

KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) NASAA represents state arts agency interests and fosters planning and policy collaborations between the NEA and its state partners. NASAA also leads advocacy efforts that encourage Congress to support a strong federal leadership role for the arts in America.

State Policy Networks
NASAA works with national organizations that shape the opinions and knowledge base of state policy makers. Through these networks, NASAA helps governors, legislators and others understand the value of the arts and state arts agencies.

Regional Arts Organizations (RAOs)
NASAA supports the work of RAOs, and we share some common goals. To this end, NASAA will explore collaborative opportunities that can add value and impact to our respective organizations and shared memberships.

Cultural Policy Networks
NASAA participates in public, private and philanthropic forums that affect arts policy and cultural resources. NASAA represents state arts agency perspectives among arts grant makers, arts service organizations and arts education colleagues, and also facilitates the exchange of ideas across sector lines.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Fiscal Year 2017 Action Plan

Action plans complement NASAA's [strategic plan](#), outlining the near-term steps necessary to achieve our long-term goals. An action plan also serves as a management tool to organize activities and to chart our ongoing progress in meeting the needs of state arts agencies.

New action items are annotated throughout. [Items highlighted in blue denote activities that will receive special priority and require extensive staff time during the 2017 membership year.](#) Items marked with an asterisk (*) reflect fee-for-service activities available to individual member agencies upon request.

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

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

1. Advocate for a strong, well-funded National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).
2. Sustain the flexibility and amount of NEA Partnership Agreement dollars.
3. Foster policy consultation between the NEA and the states.
4. Cultivate productive working relationships with NEA leadership.
5. [Position state arts agencies for success with a new president and Congress following the November elections.](#)
6. Guide state arts agencies on how they can ensure the inclusion of arts in education policy during state level implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
7. [Advance NASAA's relationships with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Development branch to connect state arts agencies to beneficial tools provided by these agencies.](#)
8. Cultivate contacts within the U.S. Department of the Interior to build relationships supportive of the jurisdictional arts agencies.
9. Participate in coalition arts advocacy efforts through the Cultural Advocacy Group (CAG).
10. Engage the CEOs of CAG members in assessing advocacy goals and developing an agenda for future coalition advocacy efforts.
11. Proactively recruit member involvement in federal advocacy efforts.
12. Keep members apprised of federal activities and actions affecting state arts agencies and their constituents.

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

1. [Partner with the National Governors Association \(NGA\) and the NEA to promote the value of the arts as a rural development asset to governors and their chief economic advisors.](#)
2. Through the Arts Education Partnership and Education Commission of the States, encourage the adoption of state policies and practices that strengthen arts learning.

3. Cooperate with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH) to promote creative youth development and connect PCAH initiatives with state arts agencies.

C. Strengthen the advocacy practices of state arts agencies.

1. Produce talking points, fact sheets, "Ten Great Reasons" lists and visual materials promoting the impact of public funding for the arts.
2. Propagate public value messages through NASAA's social media channels.
3. Refresh and repackage "Why Should Government Support the Arts?" in advance of midterm elections.
4. Expand the Practical Advocate series to encourage advocacy best practices among state arts agency council members and citizen advocates.
5. Communicate regularly with members of the State Arts Action Network (SAAN) and collaborate with Americans for the Arts to optimize the effectiveness of the joint convening between SAAN and state arts agencies.
6. Provide customized guidance and information to individual state arts agencies seeking to develop new advocacy strategies or address crisis situations.

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

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

1. Publish timely and comprehensive information on state arts agency budget trends and revenue sources.
2. Supply authoritative information on the structure and operations of state arts agencies, including authorizing legislation, staffing, compensation and agency placement.
3. Provide data on state arts agency grant-making outlays as well as the agency policies and guidelines that shape those investments.
4. Maintain a public clearinghouse of seminal state arts agency policy documents, including economic impact studies and strategic plans.
5. In cooperation with the NEA, supply information about state arts agencies and provide data management services that assist the NEA State & Regional Office and other NEA divisions.
6. Contribute expertise and information to national or regional research initiatives (such as DataArts, the Creative Vitality Suite, the National Center for Arts Research and projects led by the NEA and Americans for the Arts) in alignment with the interests of state arts agencies.

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

1. Fulfill member information requests, providing prompt and customized responses to state arts agency inquiries.
2. Develop and promote on-line maps, data visualizations and interactive tools that facilitate the understanding and communication of information about state arts agencies.
3. Support state arts agency consideration of grant-making equity and distribution patterns by providing data analytics linked to population demographics.

New in '17

New in '17

4. Collaborate with the NEA Office of Research and Analysis to facilitate member understanding of new state level economic data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis's Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.
5. At the request of state arts agencies, produce customized benchmarking reports that provide state-to-state comparisons of key agency metrics.
6. Demonstrate how state arts agencies can utilize audience location information (per new NEA reporting requirements) to illuminate the reach and impact of state arts agency funds.
7. Provide technical assistance and documentation to help states and regions fulfill NEA reporting requirements.
8. Provide research, facilitation and consulting services to support individual members' planning, evaluation and advocacy efforts.

New in '17

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

1. Monitor state level legislation pertinent to state arts agencies. Provide legislative models and serve as a resource for members' policy entrepreneurship efforts.
2. Supply resource materials, strategy samplers or policy guidance on timely topics of interest to state arts agencies, such as:
 - legislative caucuses to advance arts policy at the state level
 - policies and programs that advance diversity, equity and inclusion
 - operating support grant investments
 - strategies used to secure dedicated or supplemental funding for state arts agencies
 - the structure and management of governors' arts awards programs
3. Curate and circulate research resources that inform members of policy or programmatic trends relevant to the work of state arts agencies.

New in '17

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

1. Offer year-round learning and leadership development opportunities, including in-person meetings (Assemblies and Leadership Institutes) and web seminars.
2. Implement a new webinar platform to support more dynamic multimedia sessions.
3. [Establish early contact with and distribute orientation materials to incoming state arts agency staff and council members.](#)
4. Cooperate with the NEA to convene a Professional Development Institute for state arts agency arts education managers.
5. Present sessions at state arts agency council meetings to educate members about national trends and NASAA.*
6. Deliver keynote presentations or workshops at state arts agency convenings.*

New in '17

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

1. Showcase state arts agencies' program and policy innovations through State to State, webinars, "bento box" samplers, research reports, social media and other communications channels.

Items marked with an asterisk (*) reflect fee-for-service activities available to individual member agencies upon request.

New in '17

2. [Develop state arts agency self-assessment tools that can help members proactively diagnose strengths, weaknesses and political vulnerabilities.](#)
3. Promote exemplary strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation practices.
4. Advise state arts agencies on valid research and evaluation methods.
5. Collaborate with national networks (such as the National Center for Creative Aging, Grantmakers in the Arts, Americans for the Arts and the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response) to offer resources relevant to state arts agency program design.

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

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

New in '17

New in '17

1. Distribute timely and systematic communications to members through the NASAA Notes newsletter, targeted e-mail communications and social media channels.
2. [Produce regular communications tailored to the needs of volunteer council members, including Report to Councils.](#)
3. [Reach out to every member state throughout the year, with an emphasis on newcomers and states that use NASAA services less frequently.](#)
4. [Make outreach to jurisdictional members a priority.](#)
5. Manage e-mail listservs and on-line forums to facilitate member-to-member networking.
6. [Redesign the NASAA website to improve utility for members, streamline navigation, achieve mobile device compatibility, give the site a fresh visual identity and run on a content management system.](#)
7. Expand NASAA's use of Facebook; develop Twitter hashtags for key events/issues; promote state arts agency video materials through NASAA's YouTube channel.

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

1. Foster two-way communications between NASAA's leadership and membership.
2. Sustain a member-driven governance model through NASAA's nominating process, volunteer committees and inclusive planning practices.
3. Encourage member participation in all aspects of NASAA's work (including advocacy, learning events, governance, fund development, etc.).
4. [Promote awareness of NASAA services through NASAA communications, regular reports of accomplishments, and staff and board outreach.](#)

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

1. Manage NASAA's assets for short- and long-term financial stability.
2. Sustain NEA Partnership grant and cooperative agreement support for NASAA.
3. Solicit contributed income from individual, corporate and foundation sources.
4. Identify long-term strategies and opportunities to grow and diversify contributed income.
5. Prepare for the implementation of NASAA's upcoming five-year dues plan, for FY2018-2022.

6. Maintain the operations, administrative systems and physical plant necessary to sustain effective service delivery to members.
7. Maintain the staff compensation, benefits and professional development necessary to sustain effective service delivery to members.
8. Update personnel policies and financial management procedures.
9. **Develop a new, comprehensive strategic plan for NASAA to take effect in FY2018. The planning process shall include:**
 - o Board assessment of key trends affecting state arts agencies and NASAA in the years ahead
 - o Data analysis and comparisons against professional association benchmarks
 - o Multiple points of participation and input for the membership at large as well as the NASAA board and key committees
 - o Outreach to diverse nonmember informants representing multiple arts and non-arts perspectives and policy interests
 - o A comprehensive review of NASAA resource development opportunities
10. Optimize the use of NASAA board advisory seats to expand the expertise and relationships available to the board to help it fulfill NASAA's strategic plan.
11. Adopt a new values statement reflecting the NASAA board's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
12. Evaluate NASAA programs and services to inform ongoing improvement.
13. Report on performance metrics that monitor NASAA's success as an association.

New in '17

New in '17

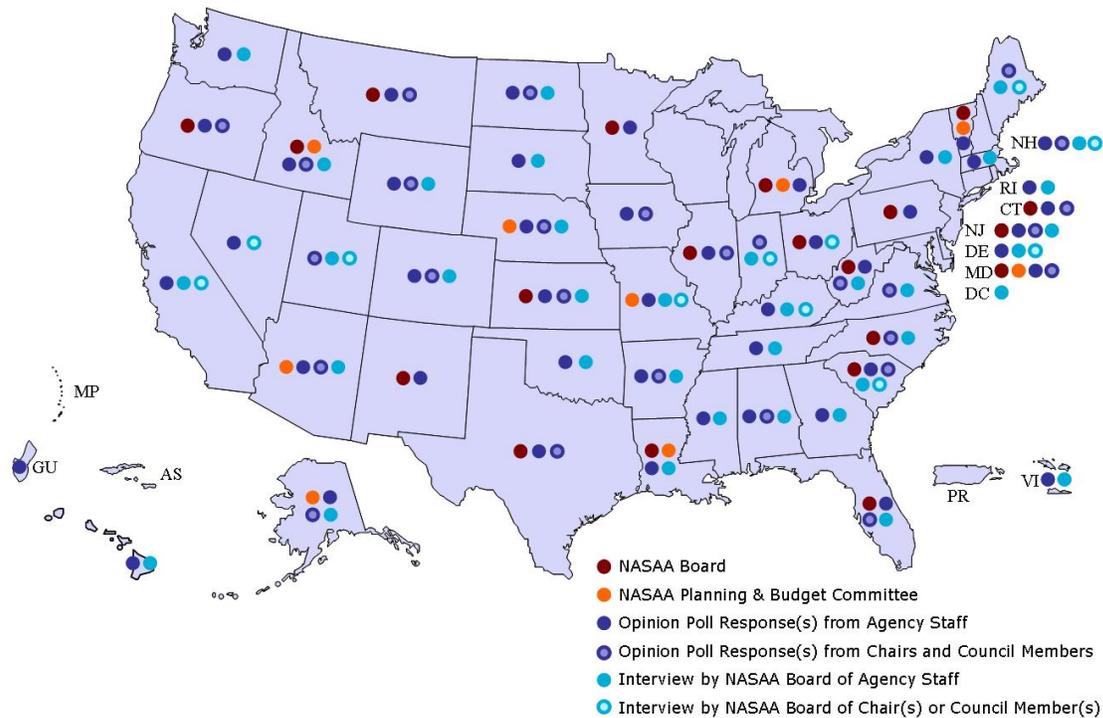
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic plan was first adopted by the membership in 2012 after a year-long planning process. In 2011, the NASAA board initiated a process designed to revise NASAA's strategic plan in light of significant changes occurring in the state arts agency environment. Planning activities involved a wide array of strategies to facilitate full membership participation in the process and ensure that every voice was heard. Major steps included:

- **Opinion Poll:** In March 2011, NASAA conducted an on-line opinion poll of the entire membership, including key staff groups and volunteer council members. The purpose of the poll was to guide the development of near-term and long-term priorities for membership service and to gauge membership satisfaction with NASAA programs and services. The survey also solicited ratings of the relevance of NASAA goals and the degree to which the organization was fulfilling key operating principles. It also invited members to suggest specific action steps and services that they would find helpful. 178 respondents from all 49 member states and three jurisdictions participated in the poll.
- **Telephone Interviews:** NASAA board members conducted extensive phone interviews with member states. The goals of these calls were to (1) check in on members' current needs and circumstances, (2) invite feedback and suggestions for use in NASAA's strategic planning process and (3) reinforce the connections between members of the NASAA community. A total of 46 agency directors, chairs and council members were consulted. NASAA board members used a standardized interview protocol and logged all responses into an on-line form, yielding a rich qualitative data set.
- **Strategic Planning Retreat:** NASAA's April 2011 board meeting was organized as a two-day strategic planning retreat. Using the results of the polls and interviews—combined with program evaluation reports and member participation data—board members considered NASAA's goals, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses. Discussions led by members of the Executive and Planning & Budget committees explored specific aspects of NASAA's work relating to state arts agency change and developing resources and relationships to strengthen state arts agencies. The board formulated a list of key questions and issues for the Planning & Budget Committee to address during its formulation of the plan.
- **Environmental Scan:** While member input was under way, NASAA also conducted an external scan of state arts agency, regional arts organization and policy association strategic plans. We compared various forecasts about the future of state government structure and finance from the National Governors Association, National Association of State Budget Officers, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the Rockefeller Institute of Government and the Council of State Governments.
- **Baseline Data Review:** As a first step toward the development of performance measures and indicators for a new plan, NASAA reviewed key organization data sets including the number and nature of member information requests, utilization of on-line resources, levels of member participation in NASAA services and activities, NASAA expenditure trends, and NASAA revenue projections.

NASAA's 10-member **Planning & Budget Committee** used all of this information to revise NASAA's plan in stages during the summer of 2011. Changes included revision of NASAA's goals, adjustment of NASAA's strategies, development of complementary near-term action plan steps and formulation of new budget projections.

Member Participation in NASAA Planning



Concurrently, NASAA's 8-member **Nominating Committee** contacted every member executive director and council chair to gauge their assessment of NASAA's leadership needs. These interviews also included a structured interview protocol about member satisfaction and desired NASAA priorities. Feedback from those interviews was conveyed to the Planning & Budget Committee and the full board to serve as an important reality check of the draft plan.

In September 2011, the NASAA board of directors approved the revised strategic plan and accompanying fiscal year 2012 action plan and budget as put forth by the Planning & Budget Committee. That plan was shared with the full membership, which adopted the plan unanimously on October 21, 2011, effective for NASAA's 2012 fiscal year.

KEEPING THE PLAN CURRENT

NASAA commits to a regular review of our "evergreen" strategic plan, to make sure that it stays in tune with the needs of the membership and the organization and adapts as needed to a dynamic environment. The NASAA board revisited the strategic plan in April 2014 and affirmed its currency through FY2015. This decision was based on positive member feedback gleaned through Nominating Committee interviews and a fresh [membership opinion poll](#) conducted in March 2014.

A timely, inclusive and member-driven process governs the development of annual action plans, too, ensuring the dynamic currency of NASAA's plan. Member feedback and input are solicited by the Planning & Budget Committee and board as well as through Nominating Committee interviews each year. Program evaluation results, performance measurement data and information on the demand for services also play prominent roles in the formulation of near-term actions designed to help NASAA attain its long-term goals while staying in step with current needs and trends.

EVALUATION

Planning is an ongoing process at NASAA that does not end when the planning document is approved. Multiple assessment techniques help us continually improve our performance:

- Beginning in 2013, NASAA initiated a new **performance measurement system**. The NASAA staff and board developed a formal set of metrics and targets designed to monitor progress within each of the plan's three strategic goal areas. The measures were informed by multiple board discussions, a review of association best practices recommendations and a scan of existing state and federal measurement systems. Along with biannual reports of program accomplishments, these [measurement report cards](#) are monitored by the board's Planning & Budget Committee and published in the My NASAA section of the website.
- NASAA systematically tracks the [demand for and provision of services to members](#). We mine website analytics, track communications response rates and collect extensive details about information requests and members' volunteer roles. Such **active data monitoring** not only informs NASAA's annual planning cycle, it also provides dynamic, real-time intelligence that NASAA can use to adjust tactics, respond to member needs and address emerging issues.
- **Program evaluation** is another critical tool in NASAA's assessment portfolio. NASAA conducts regular evaluations of core programs and services to measure member satisfaction, ensure service relevance to member interests and inform program improvements. NASAA uses what we learn from our evaluation to guide decision making, and we make the most of our extensive database expertise and on-line surveying tools when conducting this work.
- NASAA periodically **benchmarks itself against other professional associations** drawing on data from a cohort of "organizations like us." This cohort of organizations includes a variety of national arts service organizations as well as other associations serving state government. We compare quantitative dimensions (staff size, employee compensation, membership metrics, budget trends and dues receipts) as well as qualitative factors (various policies and programmatic approaches).
- Less formal—but no less important—to NASAA's performance improvement are the **member outreach and committee feedback loops** that we continually employ. Our annual [nominating process](#) includes outreach to every member agency—both executive directors and council chairs. Nominating committee members gather qualitative information about member satisfaction with NASAA, most and least valuable services, unmet needs, and suggestions for the future. Combined with parallel discussions with our Planning & Budget Committee and the NASAA board, these feedback channels help us prioritize our resources and guide the formulation of annual action plans.

MEMBERS AS OWNERS

The ultimate success of NASAA as an association relies on the full engagement of our member agencies. Members are certainly NASAA's constituents—the association's clients and primary beneficiaries. Members are also NASAA's work force of volunteers, advisors and ambassadors. Most importantly, however, **state arts agencies are the owners of this Assembly, its creators, leaders and investors**. State arts agencies created NASAA more than 40 years ago, and continue to rely today on the Assembly they established to achieve a shared vision of the state arts agency field. As owners, members share an equal stake in the outcomes articulated in this plan—and share equal responsibility for building an Assembly that can achieve them.

For NASAA to realize its full potential, it must also be understood and nurtured as a community where members enjoy a sense of belonging, a shared history and a common purpose. Any strong association requires an engaged membership, but this is particularly true for NASAA's work as a

public-sector policy leader. Member participation in the NASAA community empowers policy-making through consensus. It manifests the value state arts agencies place on personal interactions with peers. Above all, member participation defines the credibility NASAA carries as a representative, influential and voluntary institution.

NASAA issues calls to action periodically throughout the year, and we urge your full engagement in that work. In addition, the [NASAA board of directors](#) (representing 22 member state arts agencies and elected by the full membership), member committees and special task forces engage nearly every member state on an annual basis and are powerful vehicles for the work of our Assembly. Members are encouraged to participate in these activities and to let your voice be heard in our annual nominations process, NASAA convenings, business meetings, evaluations and other dialogues. The board and staff also welcome your calls and e-mails at any time. Working together, our Assembly can succeed in fulfilling this plan and in advancing a meaningful role for the arts in the lives of individuals, communities and families across our nation.