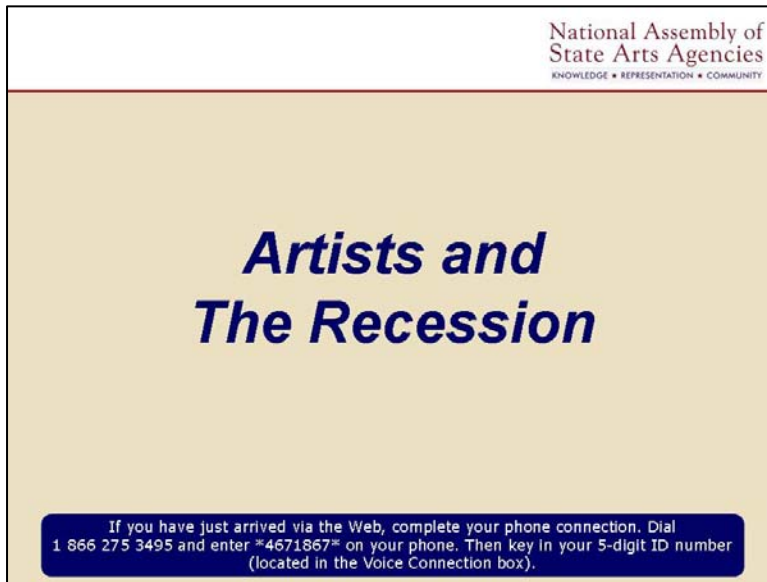


# Artists and the Recession

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Web Seminar  
January 22, 2010  
Abridged Transcript

*These transcripts contain remarks from the session's final two presenters. For information from the session's lead speaker – Judilee Reed from Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) – please see the [Artists and the Recession survey results](#).*



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Kelly Barsdate, Chief Program and Planning Officer, NASAA	

## State Arts Agency Grants

**Kelly:** We are going to spend the next few minutes looking at the kinds of support state arts agencies offer to artists. We're going to approach this issue in kind of a yin-yang way by addressing two complementary parts of the support equation – *grants* and *services*.

Angela Han, our Director of Research here at NASAA, will address grant making. She'll report on how states fund artists and share some data about how those trends look over time.

Then Jesse Rye, NASAA's Policy and Program Associate, will talk about different kinds of services – beyond grants - that states provide and some trends and questions that are percolating on that front.

Angela, can you start us off?

**Angela:** A vast majority of respondents to the LINC survey indicated grants and fellowships as a useful resource. I'm going to focus on this for a few minutes, then hand things off to Jesse to talk about some of the other services that state arts agencies offer.

First, a very broad summary of grants to individual artists. These figures are drawn from the final descriptive reports that are submitted to the NEA and NASAA each year. The most recent year that we have comprehensive data is from fiscal year 2008. In that year \$8.3 million were given out to individual artists through nearly 2,800 grants. This activity constitutes a fraction of total grant making – 12% of awards and 3% of dollars. Median grant awards are fairly modest, at \$1,500. Fellowship awards tend to be larger, with the median award at \$5,000.

<b>SAA Grants</b>	National Assembly of State Arts Agencies <small>KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY</small>
<b>State Arts Agency Grants to Artists FY 2008</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2,767 grants (12% of all grants)</li><li>• \$8.3 million (3% of grant dollars)</li><li>• \$1,500 median grant</li><li>• \$5,000 median fellowship</li></ul>	

Fellowships are probably what come to mind when you think about support for artists, and those types of awards are the most common, making up about a quarter of individual artist grants and about a third of grant dollars. However, state arts agencies also provide grants for commissions as well as project support for performances, exhibits, professional development, instruction and residencies.

Visual artists receive the largest portion of grants and grant dollars, but grants are given out in all disciplines. I want to note that the grant distribution for artists looks different than for organizations. Support for Folk and Traditional Arts and Literature are much more represented in artist grants and than in organization grants.

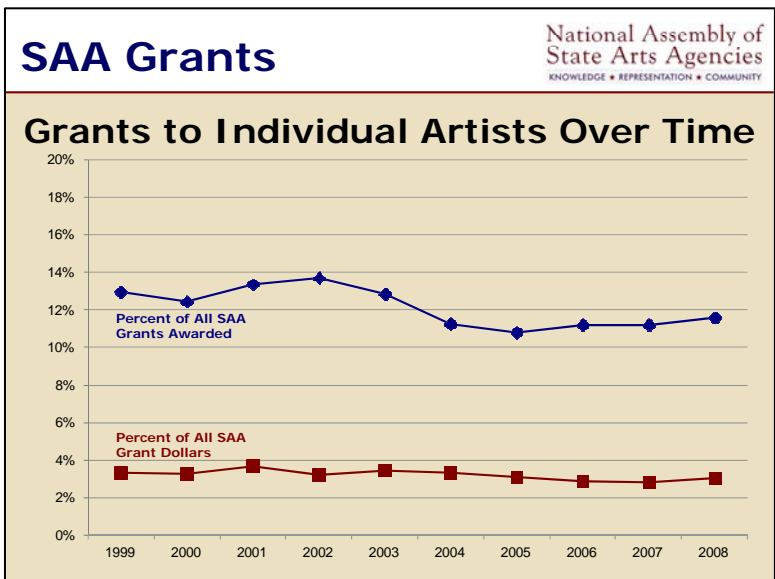
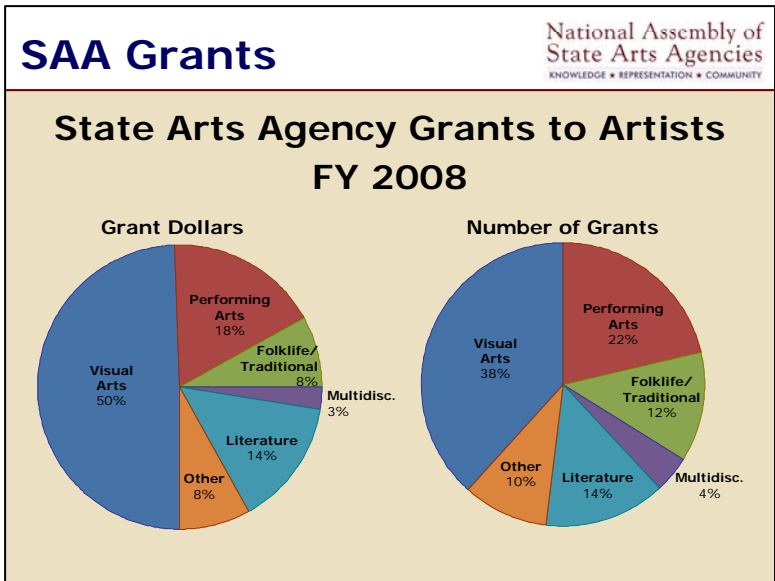
These grant statistics are from 2008, right before state arts agencies began feeling the impact of the recession. If you look at grant funding historically, actual dollars and number of grants do decrease during recessions. However, individual artist grants as a portion of all SAA grants has held steady. Over the last ten years, these grants have made up between 11 and 14 percent of all grants, and about 3 percent of all grant dollars.

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## SAA Grants

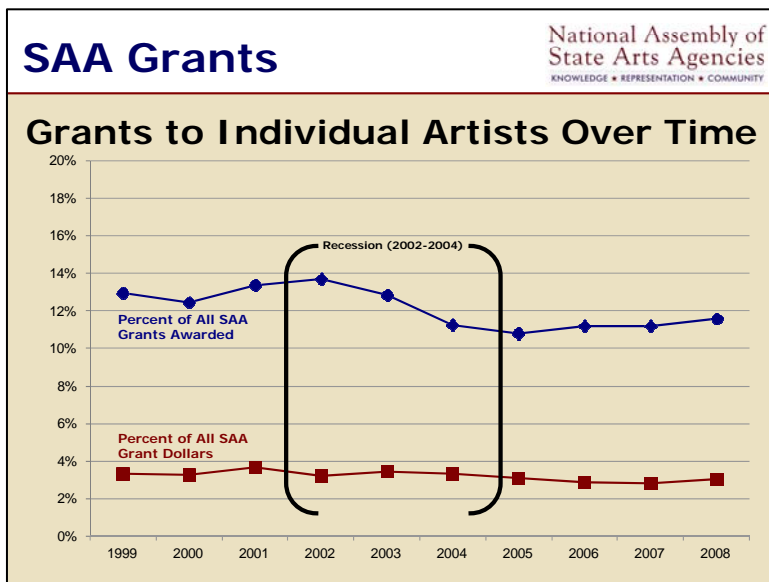
### State Arts Agency Grants to Artists FY 2008

Grant Activity	# of Awards to Artists	% of Awards to Artists	Dollars Awarded to Artists	% of Dollars to Artists
Fellowships	759	27%	\$3,060,064	37%
Artwork Creation	298	11%	\$2,132,311	25%
Performances/Readings/Exhibitions	390	14%	\$597,043	7%
Professional Development	284	10%	\$237,618	3%
Arts Instruction	145	5%	\$419,318	5%
Residencies	118	4%	\$511,845	6%



The last recession impacted SAAs from 2002 to 2004, but you can see that the portion of individual artist support still held steady.

Although we don't have comprehensive grant statistics for 2009 and 2010, the most recent recession years, we do have information about overall funding and changes that some agencies have made to their grant making that we can share.



For the current fiscal year, state arts agencies have reported a loss of \$32.8 million dollars in appropriations, amounting to 10% compared to 2009. 37 states have reported decreases this year. The median decrease for those states is 19%. For more details about appropriations across the country, please go to the NASAA website and consult the press release that we put out just last week.

To complement our appropriations survey this year, we conducted interviews with most of the states receiving decreases to better understand how they are dealing with their budget reductions. The following comments pertain to what is occurring this year to this set of states.

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**Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriations**

- Loss of \$32.8 million 2009-10
- 37 states reported decreases
- 19% median decrease
- For more information: *Legislative Appropriations Annual Survey* report

Generally speaking, state arts agencies receiving budget reductions have adopted a variety of techniques to use a limited amount of funds. Not surprisingly, almost all agencies we spoke to have reduced grant amounts and put programs on hiatus, or eliminated them altogether. Reductions are affecting grants across the board, though there has been a concerted effort to protect operating support and other programs focused on sustaining nonprofit arts organizations.

Of the states spoke to us specifically about their individual artist support, several have chosen to put their fellowship programs on hold in order to revise and revamp them. Some have chosen to streamline their grants process – for example, by rotating eligible disciplines each year. Grant awards are typically modest in size. I mentioned in the beginning that the median award is \$1,500. Because of this, many states making funding reductions have chosen to reduce the number of awards, rather than the award amount.

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Fiscal Year 2010 Grants

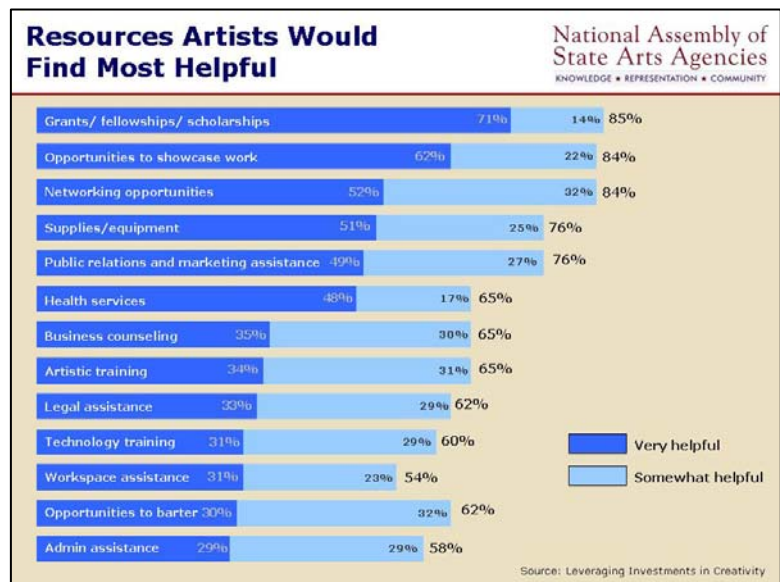
- Grant reductions
- Program suspensions
- Reduced number of awards
- Program revisions
- Effects on artist awards

Many states have been working to increase their services and technical assistance, which Jesse will talk about more in depth. Jesse?

## State Arts Agency Services

**Jesse:** Thanks Angela. Today I am going to discuss the service side of the equation by looking at additional information from the LINC survey.

On your screen is a chart with more detail from the “Selected Findings” part of the LINC report. It lists different kinds of help for artists and shows how they were rated by respondents of survey. Judilee shared the top six items, so the initial part of the list will look familiar. And Angela has already spoken about the top line - grants to artists. The LINC survey identified a dozen other services – beyond grants – that artists value, too. I’ve put the whole list up so that you can see how artists ranked each item.



I know this is a lot to take in on one slide, but this data makes several interesting points. One point you’ll immediately notice is the variety of services that artists say they find helpful. Artists

are looking for help not only in producing their art, but in sharing it and developing strong networks and good business practices to support it.

Another thing that sticks out about these results is the popularity rankings for non-grant services. Grant money is always going to be the top item on any list! What's striking are the other totals. Several non-grant services are rated just as highly as grants and numerous other services were considered helpful by more than two thirds of respondents. We expected the gap between grants and other things to be a lot larger. The numbers suggest that artists don't just value money – they value information and opportunities that help them learn and prosper in many different ways.

This data really resonates with what NASAA is hearing from state arts agencies. With limited resources available for the direct financial support of artists SAAs are placing a heightened emphasis on services. While this started some years ago, recent cuts to grant budgets have accentuated it as a trend. These LINC results provide an outside affirmation of the importance of these states diversifying their services. That certainly seems to line up with what artists, themselves, have told LINC is important during tough times.

Another thing potentially helpful about this part of the LINC survey is that the list itself – apart from the numbers – might be very useful to states. States could use this list as a checklist to organize a review of its services. It also might be useful in pointing out some issues to explore the next time you're doing planning or needs assessment. We'll include this information in the slides and resource list we'll send out right after this seminar.

In the meantime, I'm going to move on and talk about how states address a few things on this list. There isn't time to go through all 12 items, so I'm just going to pick a few and note some trends we're hearing about from our member states.

“Opportunities to showcase work” is a top-ranked item. State arts agencies address this in a variety ways:

- Artist registries, rosters and directories promote the work of artists and encourage their booking for residencies and touring engagements
- Exhibits showcase artists' work. Some states have physical galleries; others do this on line or in collaboration

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**Opportunities to Showcase Work**

- Registries, Rosters and Directories
- Exhibitions
- Statewide Art Collections
- Public Art Programs
- Awards and Designations



- Statewide art collections display artists work in public buildings
- Public art programs coordinate calls for commissions of new installations
- Awards and designations recognize artists' achievements

We've heard from some states that funding reductions have limited the growth or scope of some of these activities in the last year or so. For example, some states have had to limit new entries into their rosters. As far as we can tell, though, activities like this do remain a "staple" for state arts agencies.

We also see more state arts agencies taking advantage of technology – offering exhibits on line, digitizing their collections, or integrating more multimedia work samples into their registries. This isn't necessarily driven by the recession; it certainly is added advantage to artists looking to maximize their exposure during hard times.

Creating Networking Opportunities for artists is another prominent state arts agency role.

- States often organize peer-to-peer events that help artists gather to exchange ideas with each other.
- State arts agencies also facilitate relationships between artists and experts in various fields. This helps artists learn new skills and meet individuals outside their normal networks. This is a big part of what happens at conference sessions, Web seminars or special workshops designed exclusively for artists.
- State arts agencies can also broker relationships between artists and the marketplace by bringing artists closer to buyers. Examples of this are developing Internet systems that sell products on line, participating in "made in our state" branding efforts, or even hosting events designed to attract retailers and individual consumers.

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Creating Networking Opportunities

- Peer to Peer
- Artist to Expert
- Artist to Marketplace



In terms of trends here, we're hearing anecdotally from many states that convening is extremely important right now. People always like to get together, but many states are finding

networking events and conferences to be even more popular and well attended in the last year.

The content of technical assistance and networking activities are also responding to the economic landscape. In perusing state workshop and conference agendas, NASAA has spotted many events that revolve around the theme of what to do during difficult times. We have seen SAAs stress the importance of business skills and money management in their sessions for artists. States also seem to be very deliberate in designing agendas that offer both highly structured “how to” sessions with more informal timeslots that allow for networking and personal connections.

Another trend I’d add here would be the growing importance of social media and on-line learning for making these kinds of connections. Faced with the stark reality of travel restrictions and smaller budgets, SAAs have found alternative technological methods to stay connected to their constituents. Offering Web seminars, and using blogs or social networking sites are becoming more popular. Sometimes it’s tricky to find good techniques for applying social networking technologies to the goals of public agencies, but as our tactics and tools improve, this could be an area where we can provide even more help to artists and to reach out over even greater distances.

Another area I want to mention is information resources. SAAs can serve a helpful role as a hub and curator of information on many important topics for artists.

- Online resource centers are especially valuable in states that assist artists over large geographic areas. The information is also accessible 24 hours a day.


- Newsletters or bulletins are another vehicle for sharing news, alerting artists to potential funding opportunities or providing other information. Some states incorporate this into a general newsletter, while others release separate newsletters to artists. We’re also seeing the shift from paper to electronic delivery of these things continue, and even become mandated in some states that have had their print budgets eliminated. This is not only economical for SAAs budgets but also gets information out more quickly and efficiently.

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**Information Resources**

- Online Resource Centers
- Newsletters
- Blogs





In addition to the trends I've already mentioned, I want to close by putting out three other items as food for thought:

One is a renewed focus on OPM – When I use the term “OPM” I am referring to the concept of other people’s money and/or other people’s meetings. Despite the trend of increasing and diversifying services that I talked about earlier, there are some practical limits to this strategy. In addition to budget cuts, some state arts agencies are also facing limitations on staffing, which can make it difficult to be a direct services provider. So SAAs may not have the capacity to provide artists with all of the essential information or training they need. However, state arts agencies might be able to point artists to other providers. Sometimes this is a formal collaboration. But other times it’s just opening a door that artists might not have known about – like alerting artists to free entrepreneurship workshops conducted by the state’s small business assistance office.

Another current synergy is the “Buy Local” Movement. Over the past decade independent business owners have been encouraging consumers to spend their time and dollars closer to home. By investing in local businesses, communities can build vibrant local

economies that are more insulated from the effects of a shrinking national or state economy. The rise of this movement is also being fueled by environmental awareness, the increased popularity of the local foods movement and the desire of consumers to reduce their carbon footprints by not buying products that must travel long distances to reach them. As this movement continues to build momentum, it offers some interesting challenges and opportunities for states. Local artists and arts organizations have a lot to offer to “buy local” consumers. Is there a way that state arts agencies can help make those connections? How can state arts agencies promote authentically produced in-state cultural goods? Are there opportunities to participate in “staycation” marketing efforts that encourage cultural tourism among residents? NASAA is on the lookout for questions like these to emerge, so if this is on your mind, too, please let me know.

The final point I'd like to make is about advocacy. Although advocating for artists and the arts wasn't an item included on the LINC survey, it's certainly essential. Not only does public awareness need to be raised about the value of artists to society, no resources to support the activities we've been discussing for the last hour would be possible without advocacy. But we all know, too, that support for individuals isn't always the easiest case to make in the public

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**Food for Thought**

- Renewed Focus on OPM
- Importance of “Buy Local” movement
- Advocacy

sector. So we see states trying to meet this challenge in several ways. We see a lot of states making the case that individual artists are essential to the creative economy, producing the cultural goods and creative capital that every state needs to thrive, and comprising an active part of the state's small business sector. We also see state arts agencies promoting the roles that artists play in civic life and arts education. Different arguments and advocacy strategies are going to resonate in each state. To talk about what might work in your situation, contact Tom Birch at the NASAA office for more advocacy ideas.

If anyone would like specific examples of state arts agency services to artists, please feel free to contact me. I am always interested to discuss what states are doing in this area. I am now going to turn the session back over to Kelly.

## Q&A

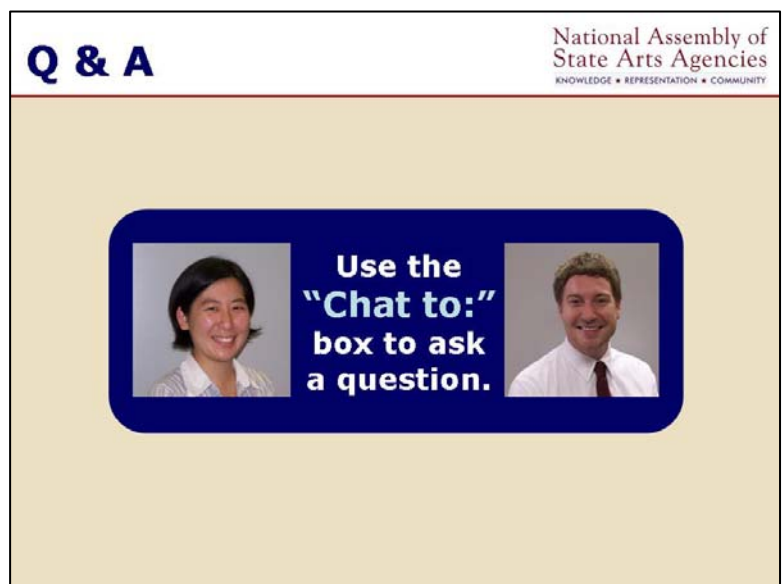
**Kelly:** Thanks, Jesse. I especially appreciate your last point about advocacy. I know a lot of states have been working hard to make the case about arts jobs and are trying to spread the message that keeping artists employed is just as important to economic recovery as preserving any other kind of job. Hopefully the awareness raising that's happening about that issue now, during the recession, will be beneficial to artists over the long term, too. Now, let's sneak in a couple more questions.

Angela, why don't we start with you again. Do all states give grants to individual artists?

**Angela:** In 2008 all but six states gave out grants to individual artists. We actually have grant statistics for all state arts agencies going back to the early 1980s, so if you are interested in comparing artist grants among a certain set of states, or over a specific period of time, please contact us.

**Kelly:** Thank you, Angela. Jesse, on the service side you mentioned a lot of different state arts agency services, but I know that's just the tip of the iceberg – that states are doing a ton of different technical assistance, information and marketing programs. Where can folks listening in learn more details about different strategies?

**Jesse:** Thanks, Kelly. That is a great question. This is indeed the tip of the iceberg. I have been working over the past few months to collect this sort of information. If anyone has any



questions please give me a call or send me an email and I will be glad to help you find what you are looking for. Another great place to look is the *State to State* column each month in NASAA Notes. In that column we highlight innovative practices, programs and policies that help states to learn from each other.

## Resources

**Kelly:** Before we move on, I'd like to thank both of you - Angie and Jesse - for being on line today.

I also want to give everyone a heads up about some places you can go to learn more about this topic. You don't have to scramble to write this all down, because we'll send you an e-mail with contact information and URLs you can use to access the material presented today.

Meanwhile, if you haven't visited the [LINC Web site](#) yet, be sure to do that.

Check out the NASAA Web site, too, where you can get all kinds of good data on state arts agency funding and grant making. We'll also be posting the transcript of this seminar on the NASAA Web site. On the members section of our site, there's a whole page dedicated to Web seminars. You'll be able to download slides and transcripts of this session, as well as materials from prior seminars. These have become a popular resource for states long after each event ends, so I encourage you to check them out.

Also, as Jesse mentioned, keep an eye on the *State to State* column that appears in every edition of *NOTES*, NASAA's monthly newsletter. As new programs and services come up, we'll highlight them there. And if your agency has any great artist programs to share, let Jesse know. And finally, our [follow up e-mail](#) will also have links to additional material, beyond what we had time to share today.

## More Resources

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### [www.lincnet.net](http://www.lincnet.net)

Report of survey findings. Additional information on LINC resources and initiatives.

### [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)

Research on SAA grants. Conference and Web seminar materials.

### State to State

Monthly NOTES column featuring creative SAA programs, including many for artists.

### Post-seminar e-mail

Additional links, contact information and state arts agency examples.

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## Thanks for participating!

Questions or comments about this session? Contact Eric Giles,  
Learning Services Manager ([eric.giles@nasaa-arts.org](mailto:eric.giles@nasaa-arts.org)).

Many thanks to NASAA's member states and today's guests for making this session possible. The work of NASAA and of state arts agencies is also supported and strengthened in many ways through funding and programming partnerships with the National Endowment for the Arts.

