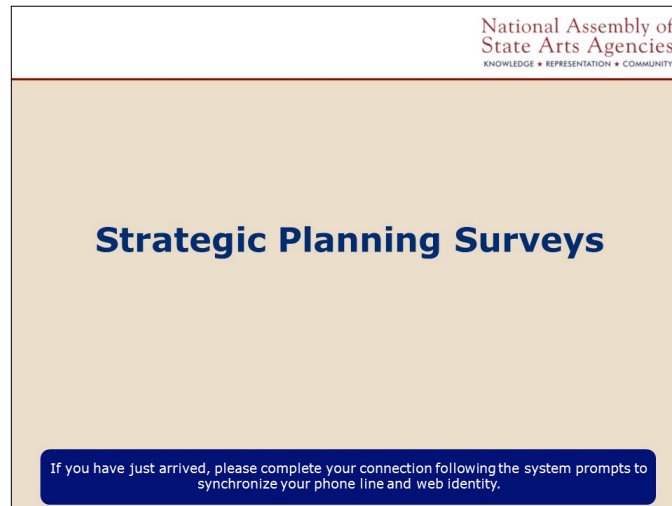


**Strategic Planning Surveys Web Seminar**

April 9, 2015

**Abridged Transcript**



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**Kelly Barsdate:** Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for tuning in today. We've got a great topic on tap: Strategic Planning Surveys.

Surveys aren't the only way that state arts agencies reach out to the public and seek feedback. Our field does a great job of using a lot of different methods to get input from the communities we serve, but surveys are a great and important part of that mix. They're a wonderful way to get structured and quantitative data, and on-line surveys have made it easier to reach more people, more quickly, to ask a whole passel of different kinds of questions and to do different kinds of analyses too.

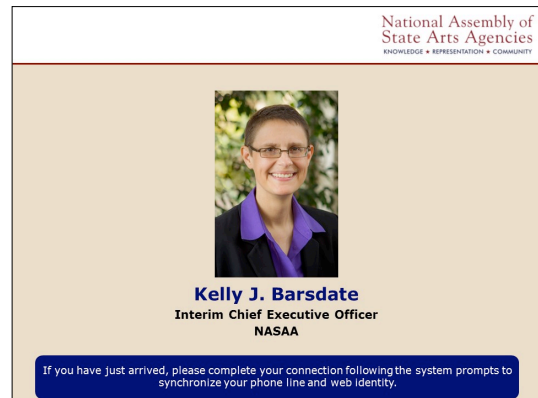
On-line survey tools also make it way easier to take a do-it-yourself approach, and it's great that surveys have been democratized in that way. More people can do them, and more cheaply, but the dark side of that is that it makes it easier to do a hurried survey or an inadvertently poor one. So envisioning how a survey can be used and knowing how to design it accordingly is no longer the sole province of consultants. It's really become a useful skill to many different state arts agency people—executive staff, program officers, administrative staff, planning committees and other stakeholders, like all of you who are logged on right now. Hopefully, today's session will offer everyone some good food for thought and will start your thinking about how you want to make the most of your own agency's next survey.

Now I am going to turn things over to NASAA Research Manager Paul Pietsch for some contextual framing.

## Strategic Planning Surveys, Overview

View [full-size slides](#).

**Paul Pietsch:** Thank you, and good afternoon to everyone on the phone today. Today we will be talking about surveying as an effective tool of strategic planning, one that helps arts agencies better understand constituents, their needs, and the perceptions of opportunities and challenges. The results of surveys, however, do not have to be limited to the planning process. In fact, survey results can be a rich renewable resource that informs and guides state arts agencies as they implement their strategic plans and work to realize agency goals.




It is this perennial value of strategic planning surveys that our guest experts will address this afternoon, explaining how their agency has leveraged the results of a single survey to multiple ends. While they will talk about using surveys in the creation of new plans, today's web seminar is not a tutorial on designing survey questions and deployment mechanics. Rather, it is about how state arts agencies can use survey results over the course of an entire strategic plan cycle. But first, I'll set the stage and review how surveys generally fit into the planning process.

All state arts agencies have strategic plans as a matter of compliance with National Endowment for the Arts Partnership Agreement Guidelines as well as a matter of good policy and organizational leadership. As a result, they all also undertake strategic planning on a routine basis.

Surveys are a popular method of planning outreach and engagement because they afford anonymity and encourage candidate feedback, among other things. In addition, surveys are versatile and have various planning objectives, such as understanding constituent needs, gauging customer service satisfaction, evaluating programs and establishing funding priorities.

**Perennial Value**

National Assembly of  
State Arts Agencies  
KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY



- Leverage results beyond planning
- Results applicable over life of strategic plan
- How to best harness results?

**Strategic Plans**

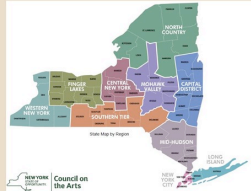
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- All SAAs have a plan and planning process:
  - Compliance with NEA Partnership funding
  - Sound policy
  - Good leadership



**A Popular Planning Tool**

National Assembly of  
State Arts Agencies  
KNOWLEDGE • REPRESENTATION • COMMUNITY



- Anonymous
- Candid feedback
- Versatile
  - Customer satisfaction
  - Program evaluation
  - Funding priorities
  - Opinion poll

This flexibility, however, also means that an effective survey is premised by a number of considerations. Before a state arts agency conducts a planning survey, for example, it may consider the optimal time to deploy it, the scope of the respondent pool, the net value of hiring the services of an independent expert, and the pros and cons of using on-line tools. Another additional question is, how can survey results be useful both within and beyond the planning process?

And this brings us back to the focus of our guest speakers today, who Ryan Stubbs, NASAA's research director, will now introduce.

**Ryan Stubbs:** Thank you for that overview, Paul. Now we'll hear from each of our three presenters, followed by a group discussion. First will be Ben Watters, the grants and operations coordinator for the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Next up will be Marty Skomal, director of programs at the Nebraska Arts Council, and last but not least will be Liz McAleer, assistant to the executive director at the New York State Council on the Arts. So without further ado, Ben, could you go ahead and get us started?

## Arizona Commission on the Arts: Satisfaction Survey


View [full-size slides](#).

**Ben Watters:** Thank you very much, and good afternoon to everyone. I'm going to be talking today about our Satisfaction Survey that we do here at the Arizona Commission on the Arts. This is a survey that we administer every year, and it's because we're required to report on constituent satisfaction ratings for our agency. And so we use this as a way to collect that data, but then we can also use it as a way to collect things that are relevant to us and can inform our programs and policies in much the way that you described earlier.

We've done our entire survey on-line through Form Central in the past, which is going away, but it's a platform similar to Survey Monkey, and we'll probably use something like that in the future.

### Planning the Planning Survey

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- Scope?
- When to deploy?
- Respondents?
- On-line tools?
- Consultants?
- Survey goals?

### Our Presenters

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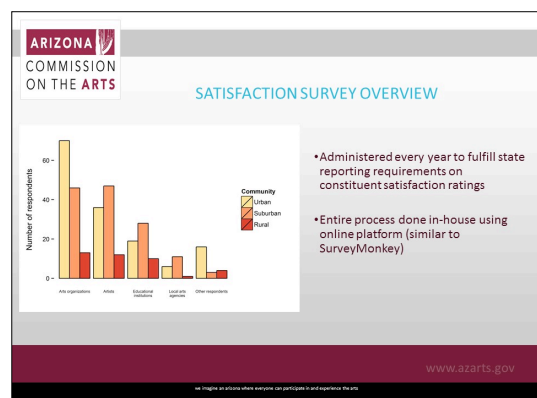
**Ben Watters**  
Grants and Operations Coordinator  
Arizona Commission on the Arts



**Marty Skomal**  
Director of Programs  
Nebraska Arts Council

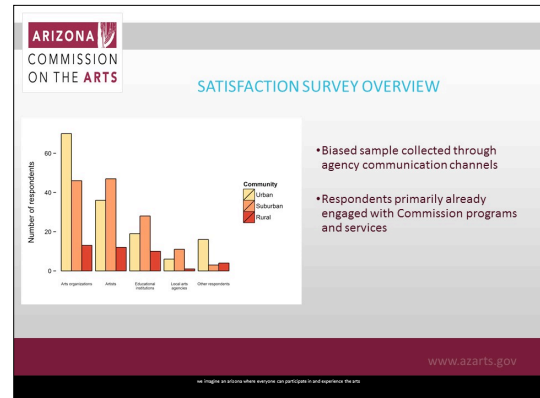


**Liz McAleer**  
Assistant to the Executive Director  
New York State Council on the Arts

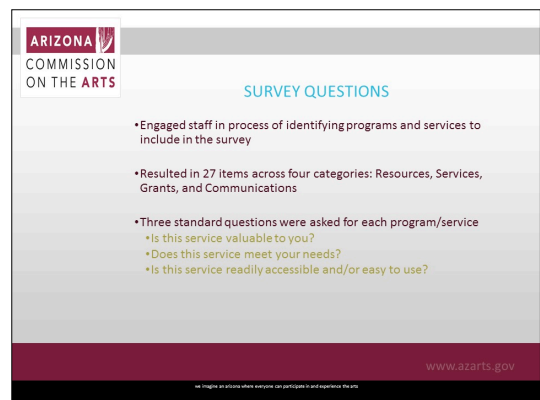




We essentially administer it ourselves. We collect our responses through our communication channels, send it out through our Facebook and social media pages along with our newsletters and pretty much every other way that we communicate with our constituents, and because of that, we have a biased sample that we're using. You can see here in the chart that the primary respondents are from our organizations and our artists, and that's to be expected. They are already primarily engaged with Commission programs and services, and so we're not really looking with this survey at the general public's feelings about arts services or their feelings about arts in general. This is really about how arts services are meeting the needs of our constituents, those organizations and artists.



In creating survey questions themselves, we engaged the staff in the process to identify the programs and services included in the survey. We came up with 27 items across four categories. These categories are resources, services, grants, and communications. For each of the 27 items, we standardized three questions: Is this service valuable to you? Does this service meet your needs? And is it readily accessible or easy to use? And we spent a lot of time thinking about these three questions and about the meaning that's behind them, and we did a lot of research into what other government agencies are using in their surveys of their constituents. So we weren't just looking at arts organizations, but government organizations from all walks of government life.



This, of course, leads to some issues. We anticipated having two big issues in collecting responses for this survey. The first was something that we had seen in previous years, that we had a lot of respondents with no experience about the program answering questions about them, and we might have a question like, What's your experience been with the teaching roster, the teaching artist roster? And then we'll get a response that says, "I've never used this program, but it sounds great," and then they'll rate it at the very highest. That type of information isn't very useful to us because it's going to skew those results provided by the people who are actually using those services.

The other problem that we anticipated happening was that, with 27 items and three questions on each, which comes out to 81 questions, and trying to get people to complete that was going to be a challenge. So we addressed this by using what's known as "branch logic": we started by asking the respondents which services they actually use, and then we only ask them the questions about those services, so that they were only rating ones that they were familiar with.

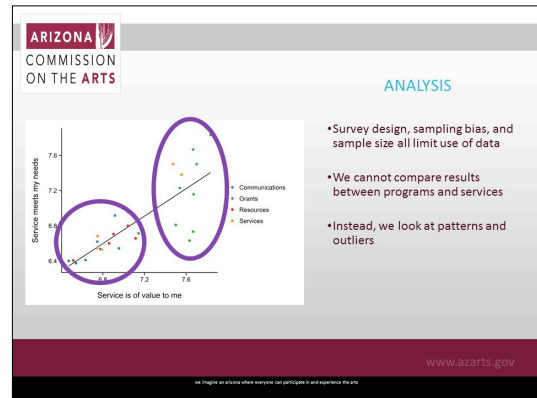
You can see here on the left, we start with the question, which of the following services have you used? The person, the respondent has clicked the agency website and Arts Opportunities Newsletter. So then when they go to the next page, they are going to get questions about our website and about our newsletter, but they are not going to get those questions about the Facebook page, and this means that they are going to see a lot less questions throughout the survey, which means that they are a lot less likely to exit out of it before they finish, which would dramatically decrease the number of respondents that we got.

Just doing a quick look at the analysis here of our results, obviously we had that sampling bias that I talked about earlier, and we requested about 250 responses, and because the design of the survey meant that not every respondent answered every question, we had some limitations to how we can use this data. More specifically, that we can't compare the results between our programs and services. So, in doing this analysis, we really didn't want to take an approach where we were saying, "This grant program is better than that program," because we didn't really feel that it was a fair comparison with our survey design.

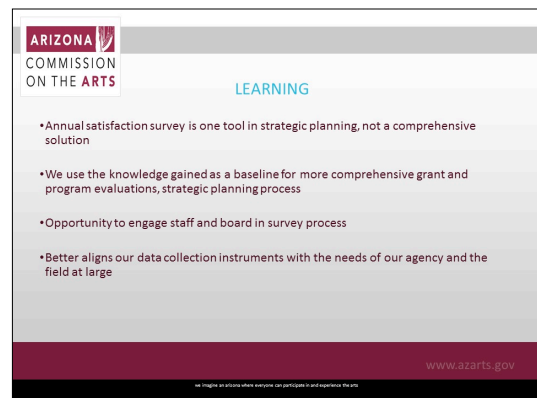
Instead, we're looking at patterns and outliers, and I just wanted to give you a couple quick examples of that. In the graph here on our left, we can see this is looking at how many people use services in fiscal year 2014 and then their anticipated usage in the next two years, and we see at the top, we've got those three communications dots, and those aren't really that useful to us because those are actually our newsletters that we used to get the survey respondent. And we can see that they meet that trend line there

really well. Instead, what's interesting here are three outliers that are circled on the left, and those are ones that all had much higher anticipated usage than current usage, and so those, we found, are much more interesting than just the large numbers, and that kind of pattern work was valuable.

We've got one more quick example here, and here we see these are the two questions, "Service is of value to me" on the X axis and then "Service meets my needs" on the Y axis. And we've got a time line here that doesn't really model our data whatsoever. We've sort of got points all over, but you can see that we've really got two different clusters of points here. Our grants, sort of all in that right line, sort of go up and down, and then our other services and resources sort of cluster at the bottom. So what this is telling us is that people are viewing and perceiving our grants as meeting their needs differently than the rest of our services, and so that is going to spark conversation about what's the difference between those two and also how we can adjust our grant programs and our services to sort of meet those needs better.



If you look at the next slide, these are just some takeaways about how we're using this survey. This is an annual survey. We use it as one tool in our strategic planning. It's not a comprehensive solution. So from the results of this and those last couple graphs I showed you, we're going to use that to continue our evaluative and survey work, going deep in some of these areas to really answer the questions that are generated through the analysis of this survey.



And it's also a great opportunity to engage our staff and board in this process. In presenting this to our commission, it really was sort of revelatory to them: "Oh, we can use this just beyond just recording this data to the state. It's actually meaningful to use as well, and here is why." And it also allows us to improve our data collection instruments, our evaluative tools to meet the needs of our agency and to meet the needs of the field at large.

Now, I will turn it over to Marty.

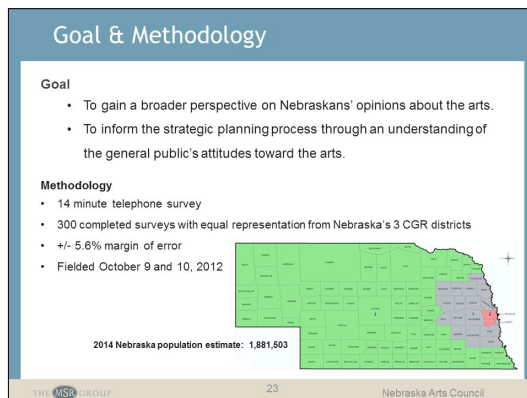
## Nebraska Arts Council: Brand Perception Study

View [full-size slides](#).

**Marty Skomal:** Thanks, Ben. In previous years, we conducted on-line surveys and focus groups but felt there was a perspective we were missing. How did Nebraskans at large perceive the arts, not just the arts community or our usual constituents? We wanted to know what's the wider view of how the arts are perceived—or even if they are perceived—by our state population. So we contracted with an independent group, The MSR Group, to help us design and conduct this survey.

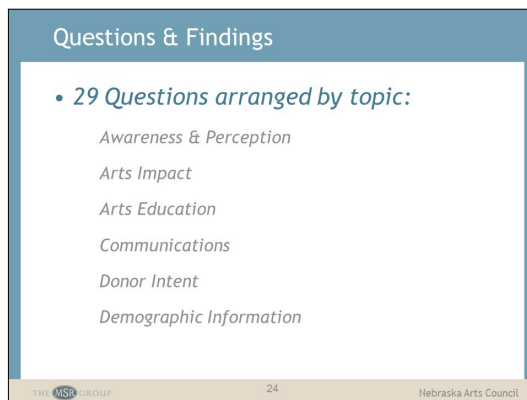


MSR helped us clarify our goals which were, as I said, to gain a broader perspective on Nebraskans' opinions about the arts, and then to incorporate those into our strategic planning process through an understanding of these. The methodology was a 14-minute telephone survey; 300 surveys were completed with equal representation from our three congressional districts. This was done in October of 2012. A full summary of all these results is available, but I am today only going to focus on a few.

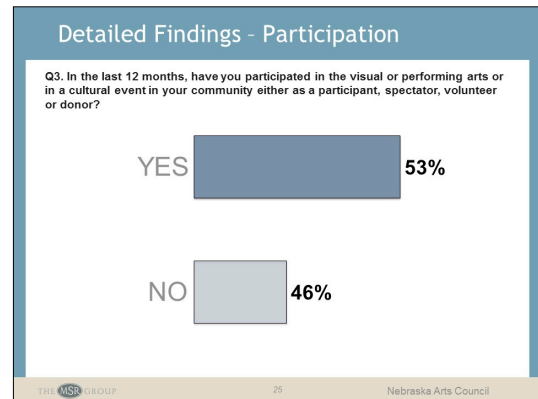


The stratified sample that The MSR Group used mirrored Nebraska's demographics, and as you can see from the map, we're a small population, 1.9 million, with most of our population in the eastern end of the state. So the little pink dot is Omaha, where I am. The First District is Lincoln, and as you can see, the rest of the state contains the other third of our population.

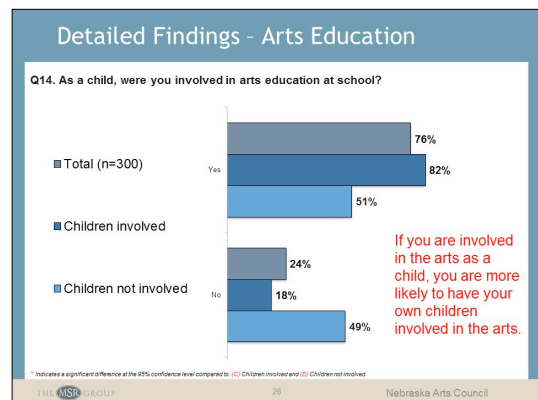
We had 29 questions, and we worked with MSR to come up with these areas and the questions which, as you can read here, were around awareness, impact, education, communications—how were folks finding out, how were they getting their communication about the arts—a little bit about donor intent, and then what the demographics were. In our strategic plan, we incorporated findings from our constituent survey as well, so we had a whole range of additional information.



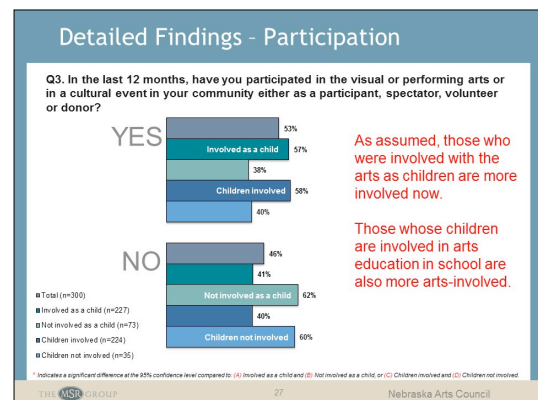
So based on participation, we found that 53% of Nebraskans attended a cultural event at least once a year—not bad. But we were able to dig deeper, because we wanted to see what some of the determining factors were that comprised this number.



The survey told us that the majority, or 76% of the respondents, had been involved in the arts as a child in school, and among those that have children, 82% currently have their children involved in the arts. The researchers told us that these results comprise a significant difference, and if you're involved in the arts as a child, not surprisingly you're more likely to have your own children involved in the arts.

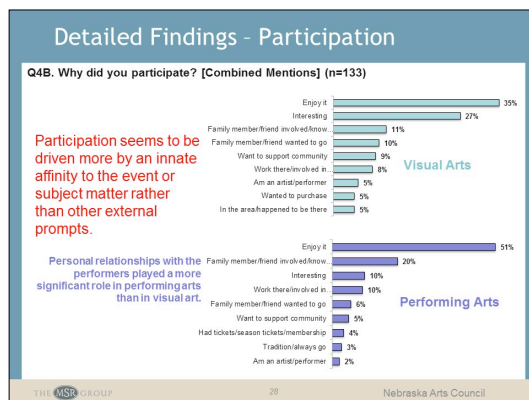


This becomes even more significant when we compare those childhood patterns to overall participation. So the first bar graph there by the word Yes takes that 53% that participate, and shows that those who were involved with the arts as children are more involved now. And those who were not involved, and do not have their children involved or themselves are not involved, are also nonparticipants. All of this data was used as fuel in our support for the Nebraska Department of Education in their development of Nebraska's first-ever fine arts standards that were passed in 2014. So even a good two years after the survey, we were able to continue to use this data.

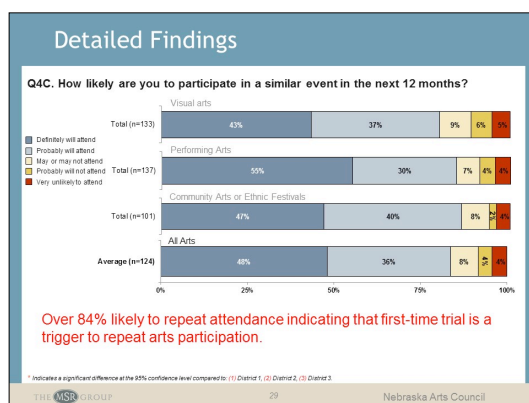




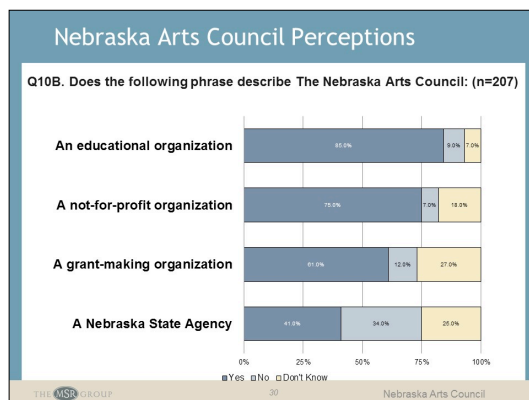
We also wanted to know what motivates participation. You can see that the top graph both for visual arts and performing arts shows that it's driven pretty much by pure enjoyment or people finding it interesting. Performing arts found that if you have family members or someone you know that's involved, you are a little more likely to attend. Our strategic plan actually places a priority on and recognizes creativity and artistry, which reinforces the importance of the arts as their own motivator.



One of our more significant take-aways was the fact that first-time attendance in the arts is a likely predictor to repeat arts attendance. The survey asked about future plans to participate in the arts. As you can see, in almost all of these examples, nearly 50% said they would definitely attend again, and another 35% or so reported that they would probably attend. The implication here is that first-time participation is key for repeat participation. We incorporated this finding into the way we actually do our grant making now, and we incorporate bonus funds in our grant scoring rubrics to award those applicants that reach new and underserved communities.

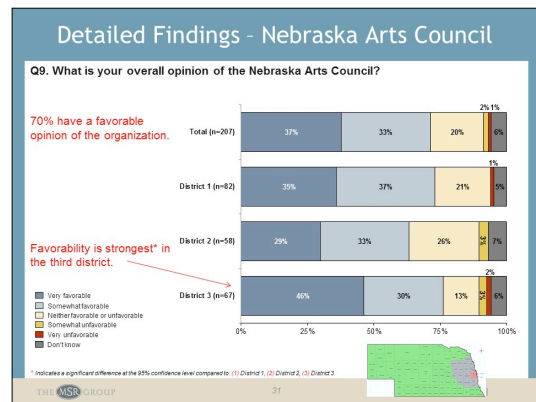


We also wanted to know how people perceive our agency, the Nebraska Arts Council. Interestingly, we found that, not surprisingly, most did not think of us as a state agency, but most did know us, as you can see in the third bar down, as a grant-making organization. This was not particularly alarming for us, but it did make us bolster our efforts to make sure that our grantees include our logo in all their marketing materials.

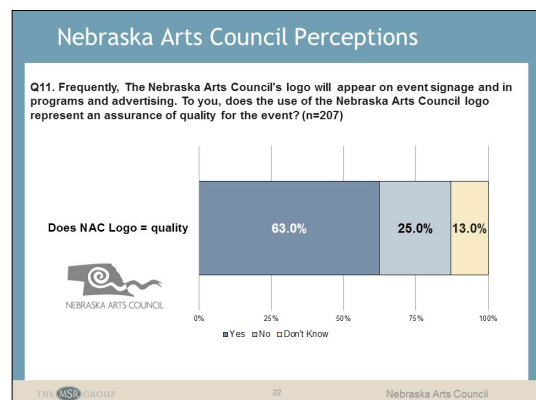




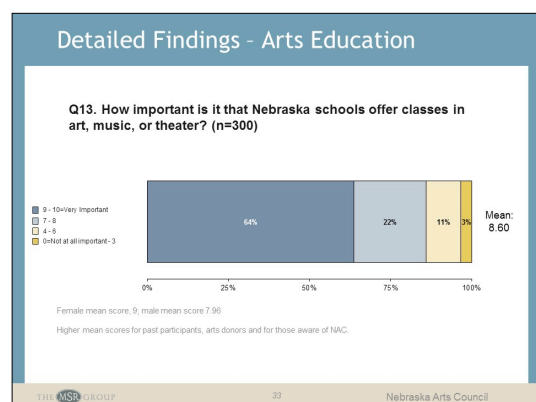
We found overall that we do enjoy a favorable opinion, with 70% having either a very favorable or somewhat favorable perception when our name was mentioned. The most rural part of the state, which is that vast green area on the map there, has the most favorable opinion of us. We suspect this is due to the fact that folks in this district, being that it's more rural, have fewer options, and our support is more evident for the organizations that we support. These findings emphasize the importance of geographic diversity in our grant distribution. Our staff devotes a lot of time and some resources to our summer Office on Wheels Program, where we continue to travel the state in the summer, making targeted visits to communities that have not used our programs and services recently.



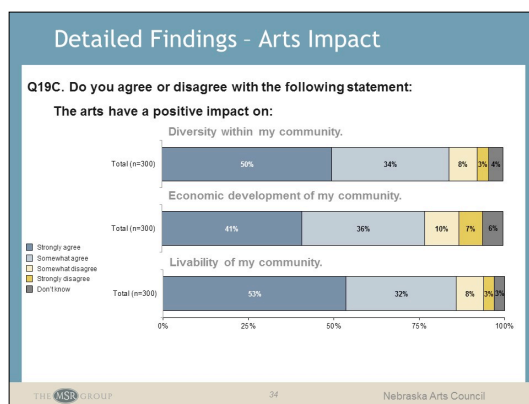
We asked about the perception of our logo, and most respondents felt that the NAC logo is an assurance of quality for the event, which was reassuring.



And [participants felt] that arts education in Nebraska is still very important. On a 10-point scale, 64% rated it as a 9 or a 10, and another 22% as very, very important.



We had a whole range of info about impact and asked what people thought the arts did with their community. It was clear that the majority felt that the arts have a positive impact on diversity, economy and livability within their community. This has encouraged us in our Emerging Creative Communities Initiative. Our statewide conference last summer and again this summer will provide opportunities for community teams together to use the arts as a vehicle for community development.



And this is an example of how we incorporate the findings literally into the [strategic] plan itself. This is one page from the plan, and as you can see, we've peppered statistics throughout that support our focus areas and results. There are also summary documents and key findings from both the public opinion survey and our constituent survey as well as the full plan that are available on our website.



Thank you. I'll turn things over to Liz now.

## New York State Council on the Arts: Public Survey

View [full-size slides](#).

**Liz McAleer:** Hello. Thank you for inviting me to present. Our survey that was fielded in the summer of 2014 was NYSCA's [the New York State Council on the Arts's] first on-line public survey, and I have to give a huge shout-out and thank-you to Kelly and Ryan and the whole team over at NASAA for helping with the design, launch and analysis of our survey. We could not have done it without them.



What we were trying to learn from our survey was both to understand the public enthusiasm and participation in the arts, culture and heritage statewide as well as what was NYSCA's reach in brand recognition across the entire state. And it was very important that we receive input and feedback from both the public and organizations that we serve or have yet to serve. So to that end, we decided to field an opt-in public survey so that we could receive as many responses as possible. Anyone who was interested in sharing their opinions, we wanted to hear from them.

So we mobilized our network of local grantees to help spread the word on the survey. We called on our arts centers to help get it out to the public and our service organizations to reach organizations that we might not have connections with yet. We also took advantage of our state's huge media network and a news release system to issue a media announcement around the news release, and that led to a lot of local coverage, regional coverage, as well as a shout-out from the *New York Times*, so we are very proud of that.


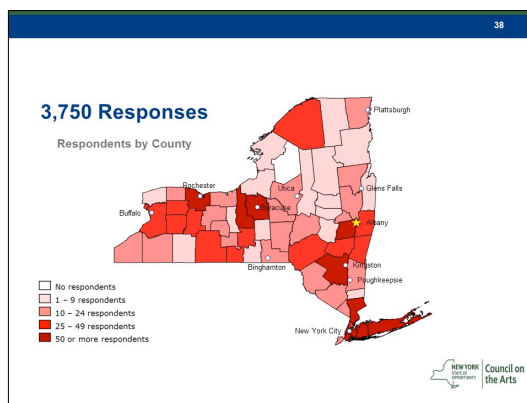
And we received about 3,700 responses over the course of about a month last summer, so we were thrilled. And it turns out about 40% of those responses came from individuals who were not affiliated with our organization. We had some concern that we might not get the general public with this survey, that it might turn out to only be our grantees and applicants, but we were happy to find out that the general public took up the call and responded to our survey. And luckily, not only did we have a large amount of responses, but the results were overwhelmingly positive. The passion for arts, culture and heritage across the state was extremely evident, and there was also strong support for NYSCA's role in serving the state citizens and visitors and stewarding tax dollars back to the organizations and artists that serve the citizens of New York State.

So now I'll just tell quickly how we used the survey outside of simply a requirement of the strategic planning process. So one example of the use of the survey at the policy level was to support the agency goal of integrating the

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### Introduction & Public Participation

- NYSCA's first public survey
- Goals:
  - Gauge public enthusiasm for and participation in arts, culture and heritage
  - Understand NYSCA's reach & brand recognition statewide
- Important to receive input from both public and organizations
- Called on grantees, press to help spread the word

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### Use as a Policy Tool


**Agency Goal:** Integrate the value of arts, culture & heritage into the work of other state agencies

- Launched conversations
- Incorporated questions to support other agencies' goals

**87.2%** traveled outside of their immediate communities to participate in arts, culture or heritage activities or events.

What role should NYSCA have in helping the state's citizens and visitors?

Response	Percentage
Expand arts, culture and heritage opportunities or funding by working with other NY State agencies	87.2%
Improve community identity and economic development	81.1%
Attract visitors to key community/regions	78.9%
Improve health and well-being in key community	76.8%



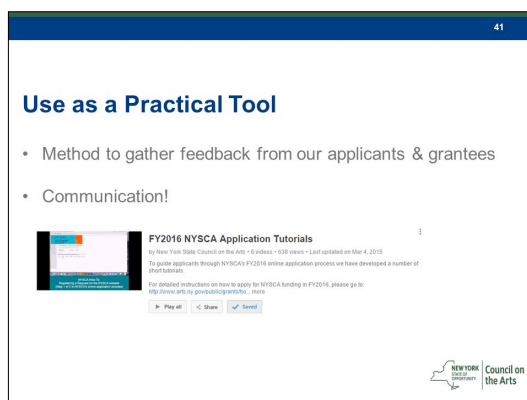
value of arts, culture and heritage into the work of other state agencies. So we used the planning process and the survey specifically to kick start this effort to start conversations with state agencies that we may not have interacted with in the past, and to really make sure that NYSCA was on the radar at a broader state level.

For the survey specifically, we worked most closely with tourism, economic development, and the executive chamber to identify the information that they were interested in learning from the arts, culture and heritage cohort and the general public. So primarily, in terms of what that resulted in the survey was the section titled "Arts, Culture and Heritage Travel," and in that section, which you can see on page 12 of our survey report, we ask questions basically to understand how arts, culture and heritage played into tourism. How far did you travel? Where did you travel? How long did you stay? Questions like that.

And we have really seen results already from not only the survey but the broader planning process in general in getting interest in arts, culture and heritage and NYSCA's work from other state agencies. Specifically, we just worked closely with I Love New York, which is the tourism link of the state, to compile information for their winter tourism campaign. They wanted to feature different things in New York State that you could do during the winter. So of course, they featured skiing and things like that, but they wanted to feature theaters as a perfect option for indoor play. So we compiled all the data and information that they needed to put together—as you'll see on this slide, this is a huge 12-by-12 banner, and they also put together a feature on their website and a few other marketing materials related to the theater opportunities in New York State.



In terms of the use of the survey at a practical level, internally within the agency and as we work with our grantees, we saw the survey most valuable as a method to receive formal feedback from our applicants and our grantees. In the past, the feedback came to us [primarily] through anecdotes, from meetings that our program would staff, phone calls they'd receive, et cetera. This survey really gave us a chance to solicit agencywide feedback from all of our grantees and applicants that were willing to share.



And one of the resounding messages that we heard was a call for better communication and more clarity, and that's especially during the application and contracting process. The results actually tie in very nicely with the opening of our

FY2016 application cycle, so we were able to incorporate those concerns and improve the resources that we provide to our applicants during the application process. We've put together a YouTube channel with a number of video tutorials to walk applicants through the process, and we stepped up our e-mail communication and the use of social media as a customer service tool, and that was in direct response to what we heard from the survey.

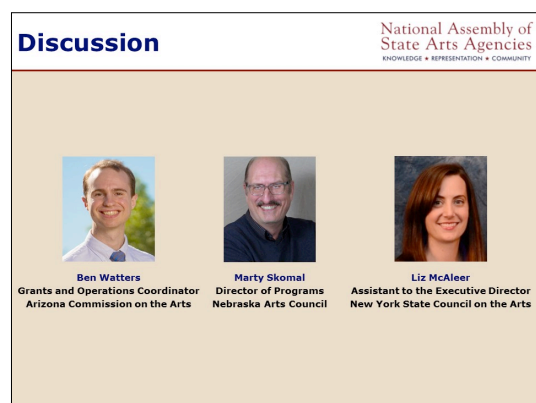
So that's just two examples of how NYSCA has used the survey and its results outside of the planning requirement, and since it was our first public survey, notably when we would use it, it was really just to understand how surveys work, what kind of information respondents are willing to share, and we've learned a lot about what we would do next time, what information we're interested in gathering that's difficult to gather through an open-ended survey, and when an open-ended survey is the best route to go.

So again, my big thanks to NASAA for all their help, and I'll pass it back to Ryan.

## Roundtable Discussion

**Ryan:** Thanks, Ben, Liz and Marty, for those excellent presentations. I think we've got a really great cross-section of the types of surveys that state arts agencies are doing. I know everyone is engaging in this work in different ways.

But now I'd like to ask a few questions before we open things up to the audience. So for those of you listening in, please feel free to type any questions or comments that you have into the Chat Box, and we'll get to those shortly.



For our first question, Ben, you mentioned that Arizona's Satisfaction Survey helped the Commission on the Arts meet a state requirement for constituent satisfaction ratings. This is a good reminder, especially for us here in Washington [D.C.], that strategic planning is not really about federal planning requirements but about state needs—so really a two-part question for you, Ben: I'm curious if constituent satisfaction reporting is required for other state agencies in Arizona, and also, are there any other state reporting requirements that your survey helps fulfill?

**Ben:** Yes, each state agency is required to report on constituent satisfaction. On our survey, we had a 1-through-8 scale, and some of this might be presented, but that wasn't by choice or by design. That was because that's the scale that the state uses, and we see that whenever we get the surveys from other state agencies who serve us. They all have a 1-through-8 scale as well, so that's pretty common here in Arizona.

As for the other state reporting requirements, we don't meet those needs through this survey because other reporting requirements have a lot more to do with constituent numbers and outputs rather than a rating, per se. So instead, we used this survey in other realms to inform our own programs and grant making instead of just for state requirements.

**Ryan:** Sure. That makes sense. Liz or Marty, a similar question for both of you. Do you have examples of ways in which your surveys were molded to meet any state government reporting requirements?

**Marty:** I can jump in first. We didn't have any specific requirements, per se, but we have used our strategic plan to our advantage in meetings with other public officials. We have a new governor in Nebraska, and Suzanne Wise, our executive director, just had a meeting with the new governor and our chairman a few weeks back and took our plan in, and I think—and from what I'm told, he was very impressed, the fact that we had done such an extensive plan and had incorporated data from constituents around the state. So we've tried to maximize it to that advantage.

**Liz:** And in New York, the survey, no, it did not meet or needed to be molded to any government requirements. We do have reporting requirements, but the survey wasn't a part of them. But we chose to integrate—"requirements" might not be the right word—but goals and ideas and questions that related to other state agencies, again, just to begin that conversation and to make the point that art, culture and heritage doesn't just serve the arts agency. It can also help with health and human services and transportation and housing and community renewal and all those variety of agencies. We wanted to make that point. So we willingly molded it to see whether it would help other agencies.

**Ryan:** Definitely interesting. Also, since most of us still are students who are engaging in this work, if those listening in have examples of how your strategic planning surveys help meet specific state requirements, we'd be interested in hearing them. If you would like, you can go ahead and type in brief examples in the chat, and we can share them during the audience Q&A or follow-up, if you so desire to share.

Moving on to our next question: of course, we all want to learn as much as we can about our stakeholders and constituents in these surveys, but we have these pesky restrictions of time and resources. Also, designing shorter surveys with fewer questions can help encourage better response rates. So first, a question for Marty. In doing your public opinion poll, were there any trade-offs or things that you wanted to learn but couldn't in the context of your survey?

**Marty:** You know, our survey largely was conducted to give us a view of where we fit in the larger schema of what was going on in Nebraska and particularly about values in Nebraska and where the arts stood in relation to value. I think the only restriction we have is that it was expensive, and we wish we had the resources to do it multiple times, so that we could develop a trend line.



We're at the end of one strategic planning cycle, and we're about to start another. We're actually engaged in that cycle already. I don't know that we'll be doing the same survey, but we will find a way to somehow incorporate public opinion into it. It may be focus groups. It may be a less intensive format to do it.

**Ryan:** Great. Thank you. Ben or Liz, any examples of things that you wanted to learn, if you would have had unlimited time and could have taken a deeper dive?

**Liz:** I think if we had had unlimited time and money, as Marty mentioned, we are certainly interested in doing a randomized statistically significant survey where we can really dig deep and understand the role of art, culture and heritage across the state, not just to those respondents that self-selected to participate in our survey.

**Ben:** Yeah. And just to pile on here to what Liz said, I think that we're interested in the same line of research as well about really looking at those constituents who aren't necessarily engaged with us or with our arts organizations and their perception of the arts in their communities. And then I really think that marrying that with some work about the artists and organizations is really where you can start to see where those synergies work. And we'll inform both lines of research in really important and meaningful ways.

**Ryan:** Definitely. So it sounds like we want to be able to get to the truth as best as we can and limiting that response bias, and that actually kind of goes into my next question. One thing that we like to do as researchers is to limit bias in our surveys, but this is easier said than done and can sometimes require a more complex survey design, such as Marty presented and things such as random sampling. But sometimes by limiting the reach of surveys through sampling, we don't get the auxiliary benefits of sending a communication to all of our constituents.

So, Liz, you touched on this in your presentation, but maybe you could elaborate a little bit. Did you experience PR, communications, or other benefits by trying to send the survey to as many people as possible, including the general public?

**Liz:** Oh, absolutely. I mentioned that the goal of the survey was to understand NYSCA's brand recognition, but an ancillary benefit was that we helped build brand recognition in the survey itself and in the publicity around it. So when we got the results back, about 80% to 85% of the people indicated that they were aware of NYSCA. So that means that there were 15% that weren't aware of NYSCA before the survey, and that turned out to be about 700 or so people. So the fact that through the survey, the media coverage that it got across the state, we were able to get our name in front of 700 or so more people, that was a huge benefit to us. But I'm not sure we necessarily realized until it happened, and we were happy to see it.

**Ryan:** Definitely. And then, Marty, maybe coming from the other perspective of the public opinion poll, what were some of the communications or benefits or challenges that you faced in your survey design?

**Marty:** I think one of the benefits was once the results were in, our contract with MSR included the fact that they would do a couple of public forums for us to present the results. We held one in Omaha and one in Lincoln, our state capital, which we invited most of our—in fact, all of our constituents to come to get a sense of what was happening with the survey. I know that we heard great feedback from that, that this gave them information that they could use in their marketing efforts.

We wrestled with the fact that 300 was a small sample, but we had to trust the researchers that that was a valid sample. It was also done via landline telephones, which we thought, "Hmm. Do we still have those even in 2012?" but they assured us that they could get a sample that was valid using that methodology. So those were just a couple things that we worked with.

**Ryan:** Great, thanks. Ben, given that your survey was a customer satisfaction survey, I imagine that there are some communication benefits to getting input from your constituents. Could you speak to that a little bit more?

**Ben:** Yes. Like I had mentioned, we went through our traditional communication channels to get our respondents, and we actually had a bit of a challenge this time getting respondents to actually fill it out, and we believe that it was probably for a few reasons: one, we do this survey every single year, so we think we're starting to get some repeat—not wanting to do it anymore—and two, on-line surveys have just become so ubiquitous these days that whenever you go to a website, the first thing that pops up is, "Do you have 5 seconds to talk about this?" and the answer is always "No." So trying to get around that was a bit of a challenge for us.

What we ended up doing was we actually provided some rewards for people to fill it out and then pushed back through Facebook and social media, and I think what we ended up doing was a random drive amongst people who volunteered their information, and there was some publicity at an art events that we were doing later on. So we used some incentives to get people to actually fill it out for us.

**Ryan:** Great. That sounds like an interesting way to get around some of that survey fatigue that we all experience.

I think we have time for one more question from me before we turn it over to questions from the audience. Just to dip into the mechanical weeds a little bit: in your experience, what was the hardest part about the survey process, in broad terms? For example, was it designing the questions, finding someone to help, getting internal buy-in, doing the analysis? What else comes to the top of your mind? Marty, we can start with you.

**Marty:** I think once we decided that we wanted to survey the state and we wanted this larger viewpoint, figuring it out was, "Okay, what do we want to know? How do you begin to get your arms around a question that big?" and in the slides I showed you, those categories of participation and awareness, we were really guided by MSR, and because we would pose questions. And they would say, "Well, you really

better ask this or that," and then they also made us aware of the questioning methodology used by their interviewers. So certain questions, they would ask a question, and there would be what they referred to as an "unaided response," and then if someone said, "Well, I don't know this," they would then say, "Well, what about this?" So they really kind of reduced that branching logic to us—how they could get to results that again were statistically valid. So getting our mind wrapped around that was really a learning experience for us.

**Ryan:** Sure. Ben or Liz, anything to add?

**Liz:** We had a similar experience to Marty. Since this was our first on-line public survey, just narrowing down the goals and understanding that one survey, you can't answer all the questions you want to know—accepting that and being able to kind of hone it down and turn it into a survey that could be completed in less than 10 minutes and not something that was 250 questions—because if we were allowed to, I'm sure we could have come up with that many to ask. So just kind of understanding, and that we can do another survey, let's keep it focused and maintaining that focus throughout the development was probably the most challenging.

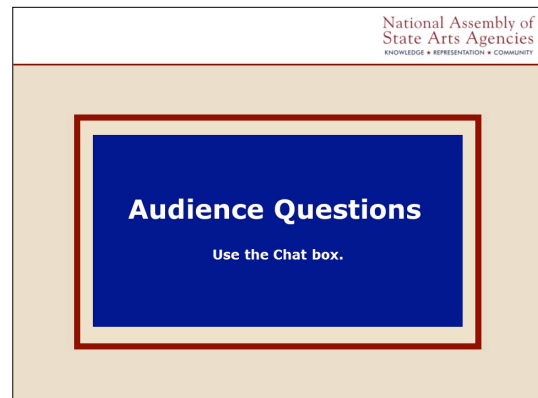
**Ben:** And I can talk a little bit about the challenges on the other side with doing the analysis; we did everything in-house, including the analysis. It was a bit of a challenge in how to interpret the data that we collected. Because of our biased sample, it would have been really easy for us to just rank all of these programs in terms of these ones are the highest and these are the lowest; but really getting beyond that and really thinking about the meaning of these values and needs and how we can interpret our results was really—it was challenging, but it was also very edifying in the fact that once we sort of figured it out, it really revealed like, "Oh, that's what this is saying, and this is how we can use it," and opened up some doors and avenues that we might not otherwise have gone down.

**Marty:** If I could just jump back in, one other thought I had is it made us realize, or made me realize, that surveys in general are a great tool for getting a wide breadth of respondents and being able to—we used the analogy, "a mile wide but an inch deep"—where our other planning methods such as focus groups or interviews really give you a chance to get deep into an issue.

**Ryan:** Sure. Well, great. Thanks to all three of you for that really good conversation, but I'm sure our audience has some even better questions for you. So let's see what they have.

## Audience Q&A

**Eric:** Thank you, Ryan. Yes, we had quite a flood of questions here at the last moment, but before we get to those, I also had a couple comments related to your Question 1 regarding specific requirements. Texas wrote in to say a percent of their customer satisfaction surveys is dictated by the state, and we had a comment from Minnesota, which is interesting: the university there does a statewide public opinion poll on policy related topics every year. Apparently, groups can buy space or questions on the survey to reach a statewide random sample, and so they pay by the number of seconds it takes to read and respond to the questions, which I thought was quite interesting. I'm going to jump into the questions now.



Liz, did your survey receive any criticisms, and if so, from what groups and what sort of criticisms?

**Liz:** Yes, it did, actually. We met with a group of demographers, and understandably, they weren't too keen on the idea of an open field without much random sampling. So that was probably the loudest criticism, but we assured them that we certainly were interested in following up with a randomized survey. But I would say that was frankly the only criticism that I can think of, and we knew that we were open to that kind of criticism, so we were prepared.

**Eric:** Marty, how about you?

**Marty:** You know, I don't think there was any real criticism we received. As I mentioned before, a lot of discussion about is a phone survey really valid, but we had to trust the best way to reach people. But we have to just kind of trust the research on that one, but nothing else that I can really think of.

**Eric:** And, Ben?

**Ben:** No, not much criticism, but we also haven't really done a lot of public push of our results either, so there wasn't a lot of opportunity for criticism. That being said, we did have plenty of internal critics who made their voices known while we designed it, and I think our process was probably better for it in the end.

**Eric:** Excellent. I have a question for Ben and Liz, so I'm going to start with Ben this time. This one is regarding the on-line surveys. How did you handle the nonrandom opt-in nature of responses to your surveys, either in designing the survey itself and reporting or in communicating about the findings to your stakeholders?

**Ben:** Yes, I can address the first part of that question since we didn't really report out. What we did is we just kind of leaned into it; we knew that we were not going to have a random sample. We knew that we were really only going to hit these arts organizations and artists, and so we designed the entire survey around that. And we didn't ask questions about arts participation, about perception. We really tried to hone the survey down to services that we were providing to specific groups, knowing that those were the groups that were going to be answering the survey.

**Liz:** And I'll take the second part of that since we did just release the results of our survey. We were just very up front with it and explained right from the beginning that this was not a randomized sample, this was opt-in. We received a variety of responses from across the state that aren't necessarily representative of the state, but with that being said, we didn't receive much pushback, aside from what I just mentioned. So we were just open and honest about it, and I think people were excited to see the level of responses and the type of information that people shared with us.

**Eric:** Excellent. This is another follow-up question regarding the on-line survey. It was someone who is interested and asking for age demographics from your respondents, so kind of wondering if whether on-line respondents are likely to be younger or not. Liz, you are already there.

**Liz:** Yeah. We actually—and this was one thing that we learned quickly from our survey results—we did not ask for age. So going forward, I would strongly recommend to everyone else to include that question in the survey. We did—whether or not it's descriptive of the age—we did ask questions about their on-line participation in arts, culture and heritage, and those numbers were quite high. And I think that was because, again, the self-selecting: if you're willing to participate and you find an on-line survey, you're likely also doing other things on-line, going to museum websites, looking at art, doing research on opportunities on-line as well.

**Eric:** And, Ben?

**Ben:** We didn't ask age questions either, and I think I agree with Liz that that's probably a good thing for us to do going forward. But one of the things we were thinking about with ours was about who from the organizations is actually filling out the survey. Is this survey hitting mostly the grant writers and the development staff, and are they filling it out, or are we getting the executive directors and the upper level administrators, and what's their perception? While it's not maybe an age thing completely, that was sort of a concern we had, is are we getting a good representation of different professions and different people and different organizations as well. And I'm not sure we've done a good job of addressing that either, but it's probably something we'll think about moving forward, too.

**Eric:** Excellent. And, Marty, you haven't spoken in a while, so I'm going to give you sort of a view for this next question. Do any [arts] advocacy organizations or other partners also survey the field, and if so, did you incorporate that data into your work and into your planning, and how did that relate to your own survey?

**Marty:** You know, we have an active Nebraska Citizens for the Arts. That is our advocacy organization. In 2012, I don't think they did any kind of survey. I know in previous years we have cosponsored a lot of advocacy events with them. Nebraskans for the Arts does a candidate survey before each major election, and the results of those are posted on the Nebraskans for the Arts website. We certainly take that into consideration, but because it is more in the political main, we certainly are aware of it, and in terms of our own strategic plan, it gives us a gauge of how many of our legislators or elected officials have—what their feelings are towards the arts, and they ask questions like, Should the Nebraska Art Council appropriations stay the same, be increased, be decreased? That certainly makes us aware of what kind of political environment we're in. So that's really the only one that comes to mind.

I know that the various professional arts education organizations in the state, the Nebraska Music Educators, Art Teachers Association, et cetera, do a lot of surveying of their members and work with our state department of education with the Nebraska Fine Arts Standards. We worked very closely with those groups and are currently working with the department of education to get better data on what the scope of arts classes are that are offered and a lot more data in there. We have partnerships that kind of give that information to us as we move along.

**Eric:** Ben or Liz, would either of you like to answer that question as well?

**Ben:** Sure. Our state advocacy organization doesn't do a lot of this type of survey work either, but we do a lot of sharing with them of our results in different ways, so that they can use it in their advocacy efforts. And we find that that's been a pretty good relationship with the flow of information going that way.

**Eric:** Liz, anything to add?

**Liz:** Well, New York does not have a formal [arts] advocacy group. A number of our grantees get together and advocate, but for some years now, we've been without a formal advocacy group. But we hope that now that the results are out in public for anyone who is interested in using them, that [someone] certainly will take on that goal and will be used for any kind of advocacy.

**Eric:** Ben, I've had a few questions come in directed at you regarding one particular topic. Have you thought of having [completing] the survey be a requirement for receiving a grant from your organization? And if not, would you consider doing that the next time around?

**Ben:** Oh. I don't think we've thought about that, but we do we do surveys after they submit the application, and they're still opt-in, but we do collect sort of a deeper set of questions and data points from the applicants at that point.

We try to keep our grant applications short and to the point because they're already ridiculously long as it is, so we probably wouldn't require it up front, but I think sort



of the strand behind that question, Can you collect it there? is important, and we do do that, just not through the application process itself.

**Eric:** Excellent. I think we have time for one more question for everyone. I'm going to start with Liz on this one. What was your biggest lesson learned or thing you'd like to do next time in surveying constituents or the general public?

**Liz:** I feel like I'm harping on this, but I think one of the biggest lessons learned is the value of comparing an open public survey with a randomized survey to understand the makeup of the entire state, as opposed to just the organizations and respondents that have self-selected to participate.

**Eric:** Ben?

**Ben:** That's a big question. I think probably our biggest take-away is that this survey is just one part, that for us, it's targeting the specific group that we need to be pairing with other groups, as Liz just mentioned, but also it needs to be paired with other types of data collection, whether that's qualitative or if it's individual surveys done after grant application. It's really about continuing to do the work and not just having the survey be a checked box, "Okay, I did my survey, I can move on to the next thing." When that was the model of how we did this annual survey, it really became much less meaningful than it is now, when we use it to inform our evaluative work year-round.

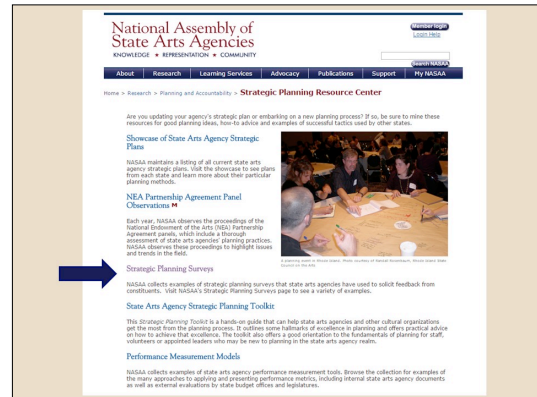
**Eric:** And we'll finish things off with Marty.

**Marty:** The thing that strikes me most is before we engage in our next survey, or our next process, to really determine as clear as we can what it is we really want to know. It's easy once you start designing questions to kind of go nuts with the questions, but is it really going to tell you what you want to know? And what do you want to do with the information once you have it? And what are the sort of branch points that you're going to use this information to move you forward?

Here in Nebraska, we're looking at the whole "creative communities" idea, and some shifting demographics around the state. So what is it that our data is telling us, and how can we design our surveys to give us information that is the most useful, so that we don't spend tons of time and energy and effort and get all this data back and sit there scratching our heads wondering what to do next.

**Eric:** Excellent. Well, thank you to all the questioners, to Ben, Marty, Liz, Ryan, Paul, everyone involved. We are out of time for Q&A, but if your question wasn't answered, don't worry. We will be sending out a resources e-mail that has everyone's e-mail address. I will send the questions that we did not get to to the participants as well, so you can start a conversation with them offline.

Speaking of resources, NASAA has some great strategic planning resources available on our website. Just click on the Research tab, following Planning and Accountability to the Strategic Planning Resource Center link, where you'll find some great ideas, including strategic planning survey examples from other state arts agencies. And all those links are going to be included in the resources e-mail that I mentioned a minute ago.



In addition to what you will find in the Strategic Planning Resource Center, NASAA also provides customized assistance to help agencies make the most of planning. Just contact Ryan Stubbs or Kelly Barsdate here at NASAA and find out what we can do for you. Thank you to all the presenters once again and everyone who joined us today. Have a great day.

