

FY2024-2025

PRIORITIES AND ACTION PLAN



NASAA's **strategic plan** charts NASAA's long-term course. It asserts why state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) matter to America, the goals we'll pursue, and the enduring values that govern our decisions. **Action plans** articulate the specific steps NASAA will take to fulfill our mission—to *strengthen state arts agencies*—and respond to the continually evolving needs of our membership. Action plans are a mixture of:

- **Key issues:** Certain action items respond to emerging issues and immediate state needs. These products and services are specifically attuned to current events and fluctuate from time to time.
- **Core services:** In addition to short-term or situational activities, strengthening state arts agencies requires continuity of effort. To this end, NASAA maintains a portfolio of core services upon which our member agencies can rely over time.

Additionally, certain activities—a blend of key issues and core services—are designated as **priorities**. Even if resources and circumstances shift unexpectedly during the course of the upcoming year, NASAA will ensure that this shorter list of activities receives attention.

Action plans are organized around the goals and objectives of NASAA's [strategic plan](#). This architecture ensures that NASAA's day-to-day activities align with our strategic directions and that we don't get drawn off course.

Action plans, in turn, are supported by internal work plans that help individual staff members, teams and committees to organize their activities throughout the year.

KEY ISSUES



Advocacy

NASAA's policy work (which combines issue analysis, advocacy, lobbying and partnerships) will help state arts agencies to strategically navigate an environment in which resources are unpredictable and politics are polarized. We'll equip state arts agencies and cultural advocates to make an evidence based case for support with broad appeal to policymakers. We also will illuminate the power of the arts to work in concert with many different sectors to promote community vitality and well-being. NASAA's advocacy at the federal level and propagation of advocacy best practices at the state level will demonstrate our nonpartisan values and help members cultivate supporters across the political spectrum.



Equity

The public sector has an obligation to ensure that everyone has access to the arts and that arts resources are available to all. Recognizing that there is no single way to attain these goals, NASAA will provide models and guidance to help state arts agencies address equity issues in a variety of political and demographic settings. We will elevate strategies that states can use to remove funding barriers and continually improve the fairness, transparency and responsiveness of their services. In addition, NASAA will implement recommendations originating from our own organizational equity audit.



Public Service

Along with the rest of government, state arts agencies are affected by accelerated staff and leadership turnover as well as workforce shortages. NASAA must proactively engage new members and help both newcomers and veterans to succeed in the state arts agency field. We also can help our members to prevent the burnout and isolation that can all too often arise in public agencies doing tough work with limited resources. To these ends, NASAA will provide a welcoming professional community that offers meaningful connections, fosters resilience and fortifies state arts agencies to serve the public.

ACTION PLAN KEY




 New or expanded activity  Priority activity




Activities associated with key issues. Activities without a topical tag are core/ongoing services.

GOAL I. ADVOCATE FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES.




A. Advocate for a robust and well-funded National Endowment for the Arts.

	1	Advocate for the House and Senate appropriations committees, and Congress as a whole, to grow National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding.
	2	Maintain the federal policy language reserving 40% of NEA grant funds for state and regional Partnership Agreements.
	3	Sustain effective working partnerships with NEA leadership.
	4	Represent the interests of SAAs to the NEA on programmatic and policy issues, particularly around equity work and preserving the flexibility of Partnership Agreement funds for SAAs.
	5	Issue timely advocacy alerts and mobilize members around calls to action.
	6	Help advocates illustrate the reach of federal arts funding and the federal-state partnership by equipping them with maps of NEA and SAA grants by congressional district.
	7	Participate in inclusive federal coalition advocacy efforts with diverse networks advancing federal cultural policy.
	8	Facilitate targeted contacts that deepen advocacy relationships with key appropriators. Collaborate with SAAs to identify persuasive messengers and coordinate their meetings with members of Congress and Capitol Hill staff. Equip advocates to articulate current arts priorities.

B. Develop other federal resources and relationships beneficial to state arts agencies.




	1	Following the 2024 elections, cultivate relationships with key individuals in the administration and in Congress who are positioned to influence cultural policy. Communicate the policy interests of NASAA and state arts agencies to those individuals and educate them about the public value of the arts.
	2	Seek windows of opportunity with Congress to advance the arts and the creative economy as integral parts of federal policy, across multiple sectors.

C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

	1	Provide confidential, customized guidance to individual SAAs facing policy challenges/opportunities or legislative crises.
	2	Advise SAAs on how to navigate arts controversies and political wedge issues that may erupt in a highly polarized political environment.
	3	Monitor state legislation relevant to the arts and equity issues. Alert members to policy trends affecting SAAs.
	4	Exemplify advocacy messaging strategies that are evidence based and designed to resonate across the political spectrum. This will include a major revision of Why Should Government Support the Arts?
	5	Promote new mapping and reporting tools that illustrate SAA and NEA grants by state legislative district.





	6	Propagate advocacy best practices through NASAA's The Practical Advocate series and through advocacy briefings conducted at the request of citizen advocacy groups and SAA councils.
	7	Communicate regularly with state arts advocacy organizations to share research and data relevant to state level advocacy.
	8	Encourage consultation between SAAs and state advocacy groups.
	9	Participate in national and regional networks of state level cultural advocates. Represent the interests of SAAs and the importance of bipartisan advocacy approaches in those forums.


D. Foster cross-sector support and strategic partnerships to benefit state arts agencies.

	1	Promote partnerships that infuse the arts into multiple domains of state policy. Identify SAA initiatives that exemplify cross-sector collaborations and illustrate how the arts contribute to community vitality and well-being.
	2	Encourage the NEA's work to foster collaborations between the arts and other sectors. Participate in interagency dialogues and other activities that create opportunities to embed the arts into multiple federal policy domains.
	3	Communicate with policy organizations in the economic development, community development and health sectors. Craft targeted communications that promote NASAA or SAA resources relating to cross-sector impacts or the community, economic or health benefits of the arts.
	4	Through the Education Commission of the States and the Arts Education Partnership , encourage the adoption of state policies and practices that strengthen arts learning.
	5	Participate in the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response steering committee and circulate related resources on the topics of emergency readiness and resilience for the arts sector.
	6	Represent SAAs with Grantmakers in the Arts and its Cultural Policy Action Lab . Participate in equity and learning activities informative to the public sector.




GOAL II. HONE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

A. Supply authoritative facts about state arts agencies.



	1	Produce timely and comprehensive information about SAA budget trends, revenue sources and dedicated/supplemental revenue streams.
	2	Furnish information on the structure of SAAs and the effects of shifts on SAA placement within state government.
	3	Disseminate data on SAA compensation and staffing.
	4	Provide data on SAA and regional arts organization (RAO) grant-making outlays. Secure Final Descriptive Reports of grant activities from all SAAs and RAOs. Summarize the distribution of grants made with state and federal funds as well as the guidelines and grant-making policies that shape state grant investments.



	5	Maintain clearinghouses of seminal SAA policy documents, such as strategic plans, authorizing statutes and the Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies .
	6	Contribute expertise and information about state arts agencies to arts research initiatives. This includes NEA research initiatives focusing on local arts agencies and historically Black colleges and universities.

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










	1	Fulfill member information requests , providing prompt and customized responses to SAA inquiries.
	2	Promote maps, data visualizations and interactive tools that facilitate SAA benchmarking and help members understand and communicate information.
	3	Expand state arts agency understanding of current issues and trends affecting state arts agency operations. Priority topics for 2024 and 2025 include the below. Share examples of ways that state arts agency strategic planning practices are changing following the COVID-19 pandemic. Incorporate examples of SAA equity plans into NASAA's online planning resource page.
		Brief state arts agencies on the proliferation of automated artificial intelligence and its potential effects on the arts and state government.
		Collect and disseminate information on state arts agency grant panels. In addition to sharing practical nuts-and-bolts information about panel composition, compensation and documentation, provide opportunities for SAA discussions of changes they are making to panel practices.
	4	Collaborate with the NEA to visualize and disseminate state level employment and GDP data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis's Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.
	5	Conduct a fresh quantitative analysis of NASAA's Arts and Economic Recovery Research to understand postpandemic trends.
	6	Provide research consulting services to support individual members' strategic planning, data analysis and evaluation efforts. [This is a fee-based custom service.]
	7	In cooperation with the NEA, provide technical assistance and documentation to help SAAs and RAOs fulfill federal reporting requirements. Support SAA understanding of NEA federal compliance requirements.


C. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, improvement and change.

	1	Encourage SAAs' program and policy ingenuity by showcasing exemplary practices in State to State articles and topical reports (e.g., strategy samplers and policy briefs).
	2	Harness the power of research to advance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) among SAAs: Continue to promote lessons learned from the Equitable Grant Making Assessment Pilot Project, demonstrating ways that SAAs can assess and continually improve their funding practices.
		In cooperation with the NEA, produce geospatial analyses of state and regional grant-making data, to deepen understanding of how public funds reach underserved communities.

		Facilitate members' use of enhanced demographic analysis and mapping tools that show communities reached through SAA grants. Provide customized state level dashboards that help members examine investments made in historically underserved and vulnerable areas.
		Using the Final Report and Application Database as a resource, identify SAAs that are collecting grants data pertaining to applicant demographics or DEI activities. Determine whether and how those data are being used to measure progress toward funding equity and share insights gained.
		Expand the Strengthening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities initiative. Provide guidance and examples SAAs can use to collaborate with tribes, Native organizations and Indigenous artists. Identify strategies that NASAA and SAAs can adopt to improve arts services to Native communities over time.
		Circulate models of DEI programs, tools and research adopted by SAAs and other networks.
	3	Advance SAA creative aging practices through the States Leading Creative Aging initiative. Provide ongoing support for NASAA's grantee cohort and catalyze their development of new strategies for engaging older adults from underserved communities.
	4	Curate and circulate emerging research from SAAs and other sources to inform members and the NEA about trends, data and evaluation methods relevant to the work of SAAs.





D. Deliver educational programs that boost members' knowledge, leadership skills and resilience.

 	1	Convene SAA executive and deputy directors at the inaugural Executive Forum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Develop an agenda that addresses top leadership issues of SAAs while encouraging peer learning and relationship building. Convene a gathering for new executive directors prior to the forum, to support leadership orientation and cohort development. Building on feedback from the 2023 effort, plan and produce the 2025 Executive Forum.
	2	Plan and produce Assembly 2024 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Provide a program that speaks to the current needs of state arts agencies while also showcasing the unique roles played by our host agency, the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, and the creative assets of the San Juan community.
	3	Deliver year-round online professional development sessions. Offerings will prioritize topics relating to key issues and will be pertinent to all SAA staff groups as well as to council/board members. Allied networks (RAOs, state advocacy groups, SAA partners, etc.) will be encouraged to attend relevant sessions.
  	4	Convene new SAA directors to support their learning and foster peer connections. Starting in 2025, convene biennial Boot Camps for new appointees. In even years, convene new executives through Assembly pre-conferences.
	5	Cooperate with the NEA to present annual State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institutes. Provide orientations for new arts education managers and facilitate exchange between veteran managers and newcomers to the arts education field.
	6	Cooperate with the NEA to present annual professional development institutes for staff administering folk and traditional arts partnership programs. Facilitate and expand mentorship and networking opportunities to support all Folk Arts Partnership program managers.





	7	Convene two virtual Creative Aging Institutes for all SAAs and their creative aging partners. With the support of E.A. Michelson Philanthropy, use this professional development event to grow the creative aging knowledge and skills of SAAs and other providers serving older adults.
	8	Provide informal learning and networking opportunities to support mindfulness and workplace well-being for SAA staff and council members.


GOAL III. CONNECT STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

A. Keep state arts agencies informed through timely, relevant and accessible communications.


	1	Distribute systematic communications to members through timely email messages, our newsletter, Reports to Councils, Legislative Alerts and NASAA's social media channels.
	2	Incorporate resiliency resources into each edition of NASAA's newsletter.
	3	Maintain the currency of the NASAA website. Implement structure and navigation enhancements to improve the accessibility of NASAA information and align the design with NASAA's brand guidelines. Refresh the website and related systems used to communicate about NASAA Assemblies.
	4	Update the Inclusive Language Guide and incorporate key concepts into editorial guidance for NASAA publications and communications.
	5	Maintain media monitoring systems to track coverage of SAAs, NASAA and the NEA.

B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.



	1	Continue to coordinate year-round peer group conversations and networking for job-alike groups, including SAA executive directors, deputy directors, council members, accessibility coordinators, arts education managers, community arts managers, folk and traditional arts program managers, gallery managers, grants officers, individual artist coordinators, public art managers and public information officers. Provide virtual meeting platforms, coordinate logistics, and recruit volunteers and presenters to lead discussions.
		
	2	Maintain listservs to facilitate rapid information sharing within peer groups.
	3	Cultivate an SAA community of practice around DEI:
		Sustain an affinity group for SAA staff and council members of color through regular virtual meetings, a listserv and an online resource hub.
		Sustain the mentorship program for SAA staff and council members of color.
		Support the Arts Education Working Group's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion + Access Committee and its linkages to the arts education peer group as a whole.
		Infuse discussions about DEI into dialogues among all SAA peer groups.
	Update NASAA's referral directory of facilitators and consultants offering DEI expertise.	

	4	Convene "jam sessions" for SAA leaders on time-sensitive topics. These informal, small-group conversations will provide opportunities to share strategies for addressing sensitive issues, including arts controversies and political polarization.
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C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.




	1	Produce member benefits summaries that articulate NASAA's work and help members make the case for annual dues.
	2	Engage newly appointed executive directors:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct onboarding calls to provide orientations to NASAA. Tailor follow-up resources to new directors' near-term priorities. Maintain continuity of contact through regular check-in communications.
	3	Help new public information officers learn about NASAA roles and resources through onboarding meetings tailored to communications staff.
	4	Offer video conference briefings/presentations about NASAA services for SAA council meetings, on an invitation basis.
	5	Utilize NASAA's board orientation program to expand participants' understanding of state arts agencies and NASAA.

D. Engage members in the governance, planning and advocacy work of the Assembly.



	1	Sustain a member-driven governance model, reaching out to every member state and jurisdiction through NASAA's annual nominations process to recruit leadership for NASAA's board.
	2	Cultivate a robust pipeline of SAA candidates for future NASAA leadership roles, with an emphasis on geographic, racial, ethnic, age, gender and political diversity.
		Engage SAAs in action planning through the Planning & Budget Committee and ongoing member feedback loops.
	4	Engage the membership in NASAA's fund development through the involvement of the board, the Development Committee and donors.
	5	Involve the board and membership in NASAA's financial oversight through participation in the Audit Committee.
	6	Promote governance transparency by encouraging members to observe NASAA board meetings and communicating regularly with the membership about the board's work.
	7	Celebrate field leadership through the Luminary Award for Transformative Executive Service, the Distinguished Public Service Award, and two Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Awards. Coordinate an Awards Committee to adjudicate nominations.
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GOAL IV. BUILD NASAA'S CAPACITY.


A. Develop and diversify NASAA's revenues.


	1	Manage NASAA's financial assets and cash flow for short- and long-term stability.
	2	Sustain NEA Partnership grant and cooperative agreement support for NASAA.
	3	Implement the first two years of NASAA's FY2024-2027 dues plan.
	4	Develop new foundation funding for NASAA's work, with special attention to opportunities for equity work, operating support and leadership development programs.
	5	Encourage and sustain individual giving to NASAA.
	6	Realize earned income through consulting contracts or partnerships that align with NASAA's core mission and services. Update NASAA's business practices for promoting and delivering these services.

B. Develop NASAA's human resources.

	1	Embody NASAA's diversity, equity and inclusion principles across our organizational culture.	
		Complete a comprehensive equity audit of NASAA's policies and practices, governance, communications, and member support services.	
		Develop an equity action plan to implement recommendations from the equity audit.	
		Begin implementing the equity action plan and tracking measures of progress.	
		Revise human resources policies and practices to address the findings of the audit.	
		2	Provide staff professional development that supports service delivery and staff growth and productivity.
		3	Adopt policies and management practices that intentionally foster staff morale, cohesion and well-being.
		4	Conduct personnel evaluations in alignment with NASAA's annual work plans and employee performance standards.

C. Improve NASAA's operations and technology.

	1	Continue to support an efficient and productive hybrid workplace.
	2	Maintain the currency of NASAA's membership contact data in our Salesforce association management system. Maximize use of Salesforce for communications, billing, events and other management functions. Identify and implement a strategy for integrating event attendance data into Salesforce.
	3	Continually improve NASAA's technology to support organizational operations and member services.
		Upgrade the Internet connection to NASAA's server to achieve better upload speeds and improve remote access.

		Keep NASAA hardware current. Manage upgrades strategically through a staggered schedule for purchasing and depreciating equipment.
		Identify and implement an online community networking platform for members, to provide connectivity beyond the NASAA listservs.
		Assess functional needs and possible solutions for upgrading NASAA's research database systems. In addition to analytic capabilities, assess cloud compatibility and possible linkages with member systems.
		Drawing on the results of the research database needs assessment, develop a timetable and expense plan for migrating NASAA's network to the cloud.
		Investigate solutions and costs for upgrading NASAA's voicemail and telephone systems to improve call quality and reliability.
	4	Manage NASAA's administrative systems and physical office to support staff productivity and effective service delivery to members.
	5	Maintain NASAA's accountability standards, internal controls, and federal reporting and risk management procedures.

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

	1	Track and report on performance metrics that monitor NASAA's organizational strength as a professional association. Update our metrics as need based on recommendations from the equity audit.
	2	Conduct interviews (in conjunction with the Nominating Committee process) of every state and jurisdiction to collect feedback on member satisfaction and member needs. Use the information to shape NASAA's action planning.
	3	Starting in 2025, institute a biennial membership opinion poll to invite broad feedback about NASAA programs and services.
	4	Track information requests and mine the data to inform NASAA's research services and technical assistance.
	5	Conduct program evaluations to inform continual program and service improvements. This will include evaluation of professional development offerings (the Executive Forum, Assembly, and Professional Development Institutes for arts education and folk and traditional arts managers).
	6	Report to the membership through Action Plan Highlights and DEI action reports that summarize NASAA's progress and recent accomplishments. Publish evaluation findings and the results of member feedback loops via the NASAA website and communicate transparently about them to the membership.
	7	Use website analytics, social media metrics and bulk-email data to guide NASAA's communications.
	8	Conduct an annual financial and compliance audit to maintain high standards of accountability.
	9	Conduct an annual employee survey to monitor staff satisfaction and working conditions. Adopt management practices that respond to staff concerns.