

FISCAL YEAR 2019

# ACTION PLAN

National Assembly of  
State Arts Agencies

NASAA's newly minted [Strategic Plan](#) charts NASAA's long-term course. It asserts why state arts agencies (SAAs) matter to America, the goals we'll attain and the values that govern our decisions. Annual action plans zoom in on the specific steps NASAA will take each year to strengthen state arts agencies. We begin by highlighting four key priorities for NASAA in 2019. Complete details on these priority actions—and all core/ongoing services—are available starting on the next page.



## Politics and Policy

Thirty-six gubernatorial elections + 6,070 state legislative races + 470 contested seats in Congress = thousands of new relationships to cultivate across a complex and contentious political spectrum. Lawmakers need to receive a crisp and compelling case for public support of the arts. We're doubling down on advocacy and messaging in this action plan.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

State arts agencies are doing meaningful work to promote DEI—and are committed to doing much more. This action plan includes increased member support and practical tools to help our members advance DEI at the state level, and to help NASAA lead by example. These activities are integrated into all four of NASAA's goals, consistent with our [DEI values and policy goals](#).

## Leadership Transitions

We're seeing record levels of executive turnover among state arts agencies, and newly elected governors will be making appointments to boards and commissions, too. NASAA will welcome these new leaders, orient them to public service and equip them to succeed in meeting the unique demands of our field.

## State Arts Agency Innovation

State arts agencies are finding fresh ways to serve the public, but many still are grappling with limited human and financial resources. Members need NASAA's help to innovate within the confines of state government and to adjust their grants, services and operations to new realities. This action plan emphasizes cross-sector work, collaborations beyond the 501(c)(3) business model and citizen-driven decision making.

## ORIGINS OF THE ACTION PLAN

NASAA's action plans, built around the architecture of our strategic plan, itemize the near-term steps needed each year to achieve our long-term goals. This approach—combined with ongoing evaluation and performance measurement—ensures that NASAA's day-to-day priorities align with our strategic vision. It also gives us the agility to adjust to emerging needs, new opportunities and unforeseen constraints.

A member-driven process guides the development of NASAA action plans. For fiscal year 2019, we mined [questions members and advocates are asking](#), [invited e-mail input](#) from every state and jurisdiction, secured feedback from 95 executive directors and council chairs during Nominating Committee interviews, and examined the results of our [Performance Metrics Dashboard](#) and [State Arts Agency Vital Statistics](#) poll. Taking this input into account, the [Planning & Budget Committee](#) develops the action plan for the [NASAA board of directors](#) (representing 20 states and jurisdictions) before the full membership votes to ratify it.



## ACTION PLAN KEY

- + New activity for FY2019
- ↔ Expanded activity for FY2019
- ★ Activity related to a thematic priority for FY2019

- ◆ Supplemental service offered on a fee basis  
All other member services are included in annual dues.
- ◆+\$ Activity contingent on securing supplemental funds.

## GOAL I. ADVOCATE FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

### A. Advocate for a robust and well-funded National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

	1	Following the midterm elections, educate new members of Congress about the public value of the arts and the NEA.
	2	Encourage the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, and Congress as a whole, to sustain NEA funding.
	3	Maintain the federal policy language reserving 40% of NEA grant funds for Partnership Agreements.
	4	Protect the flexibility of Partnership Agreement funds for state arts agencies in the NEA's implementation of the 40% set-aside.
	5	Maintain regular communications and positive working relationships between NASAA and NEA leaders. Provide continuity of contact and support during potential leadership transitions.
	6	Represent the interests of state arts agencies to the NEA on programmatic and policy issues, particularly around collaborative initiatives and federal expectations of states.
	7	Monitor federal policy activity and keep members apprised of new developments affecting the arts.
	8	Issue timely advocacy alerts and mobilize members around calls to action.
	9	Produce talking points, fact sheets and visual materials promoting the impact of federal arts funding.
	10	Participate in coalition arts advocacy efforts through the Cultural Advocacy Group (CAG).
 	11	Conduct fresh message framing research on the value proposition for federal and state arts funding, to appeal across the political spectrum.
 	12	Broaden coalitions of influential advocates and messengers to build a long-term consensus around public support for the arts. Develop strategies to follow up on recommendations from NASAA's 2018 policy think tank, adjusting strategies as needed following the midterm elections.

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

	1	Identify resources for the arts within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) following Congress's restructuring of the policy priorities and funding streams.
	2	Establish information exchanges with the U.S. Small Business Administration to highlight resources of value to state arts agency constituents.
	3	Liaise with the Department of the Interior to provide resources, relationships and information advantageous to the unique needs of NASAA's territory/jurisdiction members.

### C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

	1	Monitor state legislation relating to the arts and alert members to key trends affecting state arts agencies.
	2	Produce talking points, fact sheets and visual materials promoting the impact of state arts funding.
★	3	Propagate advocacy best practices among state arts agency council members, state arts agency grantees and citizen advocacy groups by:
★	↔	Growing the Practical Advocate series, which offers quick, accessible advocacy tips.
★	+	Issuing guidance on specific advocacy strategies, especially developing legislative caucuses and engaging council members in advocacy efforts.
★	↔	Modeling effective advocacy messages and package them (via videos, infographics and/or social media content) for easy distribution by advocates.
★	⬢+\$	Expanding and promote the whiteboard animation video series launched in FY2018.
★	+	Convening state arts agencies seeking to start or rejuvenate citizen advocacy groups.
	4	Communicate regularly with members of the State Arts Action Network (SAAN) and collaborate with Americans for the Arts on shared priorities and joint meetings between SAAN and state arts agencies.
	5	Promote advocacy tools and the public value of state arts agencies through NASAA's website and social media channels. Encourage public participation in state arts advocacy through NASAA's Act Now! page.
★	6	Provide confidential, customized guidance to individual state arts agencies to develop new advocacy strategies or manage legislative crises.
◆	7	Provide advocacy workshops/keynotes to state arts agency constituents.
+	8	Provide media/communications training to state arts agencies to help them propagate positive messages about the impact of public arts funding.

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

★	1	Partner with the National Governors Association (NGA) and the NEA to promote the value of the arts as a rural development asset to governors and their chief economic advisors.
	2	Collaborate with the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) to promote the arts as an integral part of rural economic development policy.
★ ⬢+\$	3	Reconnect with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to identify mutually beneficial policy or research collaborations focusing on the arts.
★ ↔	4	Communicate the value and visibility of the arts and state arts agencies through Capitol Hill briefings and other strategic communications outlets influential to policymakers.

	5	Cultivate new partnerships around creative economic development and creative placemaking, toward the goal of building a partnership ready and eligible to apply for Our Town Knowledge Building funds from the NEA.
	6	Through the Arts Education Partnership and the Education Commission of the States, encourage the adoption of state policies and practices that strengthen arts learning.
	7	Expand dialogues with private foundations and corporate partners who share policy, advocacy and leadership development interests with NASAA.
	8	Represent state arts agencies at selected meetings of arts and/or government leaders.

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

### A. Supply authoritative facts about state arts agencies.

	1	Supply timely and comprehensive information about state arts agency budget trends and revenue sources.
	2	Supply authoritative information on the structure and operations of state arts agencies, including staffing, compensation and agency placement.
	3	Provide data on state arts agency grant-making outlays as well as the agency policies and guidelines that shape those investments.
	4	Maintain public clearinghouses of seminal state arts agency policy documents, such as strategic plans, authorizing statutes and the Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies.
	5	In cooperation with the NEA, supply data about state arts agencies and provide information support services that assist the NEA State & Regional Office and other NEA divisions.
	6	Contribute expertise and information to arts research initiatives (such as the National Center for Arts Research, the Cultural Research Steering Committee and projects led by the NEA, regional arts organizations, Americans for the Arts, Grantmakers in the Arts, etc.) around topics of importance to state arts agencies.

### B. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, improvement and change.

	1	Harness the power of research to advance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies and practices among state arts agencies by:
		Promoting case studies of program or policy changes being tackled by state arts agencies.
		Expanding the Visualizing Grant Diversity Dashboards for all state arts agencies, providing grants analytics linked to state demographics and populations served. Add components that show benchmarking and trends over time. Promote the use of this data within and beyond the state arts agency field.
		Developing state arts agency self-assessment tools to help members reduce systemic bias in grant-making practices.

★	↔	Providing guidance to state arts agencies collecting underserved beneficiary data for Final Descriptive Reports (FDRs).
	2	Showcase state arts agencies' program and policy innovations through the State to State column (and its online database), research reports, social media and other communications channels.
★ ↔	3	Promote models of state level arts legislation and successful policy entrepreneurship efforts.
★	4	Highlight best practices around timely topics of interest to state arts agencies, such as:
		dedicated/supplemental revenue streams for state arts agencies
★	+	strategies used in state government for attracting/retaining a young work force for the public sector
★	+	models for supporting arts activity that falls outside the traditional 501(c)(3) business model
	+	freedom of expression policies
★	+	policies and practices that engage the public in citizen-driven decision making
★ ↔	5	Curate and circulate research resources that inform members about trends relevant to the work of state arts agencies, with particular attention to DEI resources; political polling and public opinion data; and emerging art-making and cultural participation trends. Develop the communications vehicle(s) needed to share this information efficiently with the field.
	6	Collaborate with national networks (such as the National Center for Creative Aging, Grantmakers in the Arts, Americans for the Arts, the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response, and GrantCraft) to share resources relevant to state arts agency program design.

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

★	1	Fulfill member information requests, providing prompt and customized responses to state arts agency inquiries.
	2	Develop and promote on-line maps, data visualizations and interactive tools that facilitate the understanding and communication of information about state arts agencies.
★	3	Collaborate with the NEA Office of Research and Analysis to visualize state level employment and GDP data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis's Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.
◆+\$	4	Promote exemplary state arts agency performance measurement and program evaluation practices.
◆	5	Provide research and facilitation consulting services to support individual members' strategic planning and evaluation efforts.
↔	6	Offer enhanced benchmarking reports that provide multistate comparisons of key agency metrics.
	7	In cooperation with the NEA, provide technical assistance and documentation to help states and regions fulfill federal reporting requirements.

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

★	1	Execute the Assembly 2018 program (in Baltimore, Maryland), to engage a full complement of state arts agency staff and volunteer leaders in meaningful learning experiences. Attune the program to SAAs' DEI goals and the needs of newcomers as well as veterans.
★	2	Cooperate with the NEA to convene a 2018 State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute that advances state and federal arts learning goals around inclusion, equity and trauma-informed schooling.
★	3	Convene a State Arts Agency Executive Directors Boot Camp for newly appointed directors, with an agenda tailored to the needs of the 2019 cohort. (See Goal III, Objective C for additional services targeted to agencies undergoing leadership transitions.)
★	4	Offer learning and leadership development opportunities for state arts agency executive staff and council members at the NASAA 2019 Leadership Institute (in Providence, Rhode Island). Attune the program to SAAs' DEI goals and the needs of newcomers as well as veterans.
	5	Cooperate with the NEA to convene a 2019 State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute.
	6	Complete site selection for Assembly 2020 and begin preliminary agenda development for that convening.
	7	Conduct site selection for the 2021 Leadership Institute.

**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 targeted e-mail messaging and NASAA's social media channels.
	2	Maintain the dynamic currency and accessibility of the NASAA website.
↔	3	Implement strategies for boosting NASAA's social media following, with a premium on audiences useful for advocacy.
↔	4	Assess the structure, delivery and effectiveness of the NASAA Notes newsletter and related communications vehicles. Retool vehicles as needed to optimize the timely delivery of information to members.
	5	Conduct quarterly webinars to brief members on timely issues or research.
	6	Maintain media monitoring systems to track press coverage of state arts agencies, NASAA and the NEA.

**B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.**

	1	Maintain listservs to facilitate rapid information sharing for state arts agency executive directors, deputy directors, arts education managers, grants officers, public information officers, community arts managers, traditional arts managers, accessibility coordinators, public art managers and other interest groups.
	2	Increase member interaction through NASAA's social media channels by promoting Facebook discussion and using event/issue Twitter hashtags.
	3	Coordinate volunteers from the field to lead job-alike peer sessions at upcoming conferences.
	4	Develop a pilot program for using virtual networking/convening to support year-round cohesion among peer groups.
	5	Sustain an affinity group for state arts agency staff and council members of color.
	6	Launch a pilot program for mentoring state arts agency staff members of color.
	7	In cooperation with the NEA, maintain orientation and mentorship systems for new arts education managers.
	8	Participate in the annual Community Development Managers retreat and serve as the fiscal agent for that gathering.
	9	In cooperation with the NEA, coordinate planning for the first-of-its-kind national gathering of leaders in the folk and traditional arts.
	10	Continue to cultivate an arts research affinity group.

**C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.**

	1	Initiate outreach to all 56 member agencies throughout the year, with an emphasis on states that use NASAA services less frequently.
	2	Initiate outreach to state arts agencies undergoing leadership changes, to provide information and advice relevant to transition and succession management.
	3	Expand targeted outreach to newly appointed executive directors by:
		Conducting onboarding phone calls.
		Distributing advocacy tools and guidance on how to access NASAA resources.
		Tailoring NASAA's resources to new directors' near-term priorities.
		Maintaining continuity of contact through follow-up communications and virtual convenings.
	4	Expand targeted outreach to newly appointed state arts agency chairs and council members by:
		Issuing regular editions of Report to Councils.
		Promoting the For Council Members section of NASAA's website.
		Distributing welcome materials to new chairs and council members.

★		Initiating onboarding calls with new chairs.
★		Offering Skype/video conferencing briefings/presentations for state arts agency council meetings.
	◆	Providing on-site briefings/presentations orienting councils to state arts agency issues and trends.
↔	5	Offer outreach to new state arts agency staff members, sending digital welcome packets and guidance on how to access NASAA resources.
★	6	Supply guidance for state arts agencies in achieving greater diversity in council and board appointments made by governors and legislatures.
	7	Develop new materials, to harmonize with NASAA's new strategic plan, succinctly summarizing the benefits of NASAA membership and the services available from NASAA.

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

	1	Engage members in NASAA's policy work through advocacy calls to action, one-on-one consultations and issue based work teams.
	2	Sustain a member-driven governance model, reaching out to every member state and jurisdiction through NASAA's annual nominations process to recruit high-caliber, representative leadership for NASAA's board.
★	3	Cultivate a robust pipeline of state arts agency candidates for future NASAA board and committee leadership roles, with an emphasis on racial/ethnic, geographic, age and political diversity.
	4	Strategically utilize at-large appointments to the NASAA board to broaden its influence and help NASAA fulfill its goals.
	5	Recognize outstanding executive directors and volunteer leaders through awards at Assembly 2018.
	6	Engage the membership in NASAA's annual action planning through the Planning & Budget Committee and ongoing feedback loops.
	7	Engage the membership in NASAA's fund development through the involvement of the board, the Development Committee and donors.
	8	Assertively market NASAA's convenings and seek participation of 100% of NASAA member agencies in conferences.
	9	Monitor member engagement in NASAA by tracking volunteer service, event attendance, use of information services, donations and in-kind contributions.

**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.
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	2	Sustain NEA Partnership grant and cooperative agreement support for NASAA.
	3	Implement the second year of NASAA's FY2018-2022 dues plan (approved by the membership in 2016).
	4	Secure contributed support for NASAA's 2019 Leadership Institute and Assembly 2020. Expand strategies for securing paid sponsorships, in addition to raising grant funds and individual contributions.
	5	Expand foundation and corporate funding for NASAA's work, with special attention to opportunities for support of NASAA's advocacy, diversity and leadership development programs.
	6	Grow individual giving to NASAA by expanding the donor base and increasing major gifts. Implement new individual giving messaging approaches (formulated in FY2018) and incorporate them into NASAA's FY2019 Annual Fund campaign plan.
	7	Market existing services available on a fee basis, to support near-term revenue growth and ensure that members and partners understand what NASAA offers.
	8	Identify promising earned income strategies for the future. Develop a business plan to pursue the most profitable opportunities that align with NASAA's mission.

### **B. Develop NASAA's human resources.**

	1	Continually adjust staff responsibilities and workflows for optimal productivity and alignment with NASAA's strategic plan.
	2	Dedicate time and resources to staff professional development that supports staff growth and productivity, strengthening the delivery of services to members.
	3	Embody NASAA's diversity, equity and inclusion principles in our recruitment practices and organizational culture.
	4	Convene regular supervisors' meetings to support consistent implementation of personnel policies and develop new strategies for promoting staff productivity and well-being.
	5	Conduct personnel evaluation in harmony with NASAA's annual work plans and performance standards.
	6	Systematize planning and promotion for NASAA's research fellowship/internship program.

### **C. Improve NASAA's operations and technology.**

	1	Improve the currency and usage of NASAA's contacts database to support NASAA's communications, advocacy, governance and fundraising functions. Determine whether a database platform change will be needed in 2020.
	2	Complete upgrades (begun in 2018) of NASAA's core information technology systems: hardware, software, network, phones, technical support providers, etc.
	3	Implement new technology platforms (and related training) to support visual content creation across NASAA staff teams.
	4	Train staff in using the WordPress web content management system to better distribute the workload of website updates.

+	5	Adopt a social media management/monitoring system to support the coordination of NASAA's social communications.
	6	Manage NASAA's administrative systems and physical plant to support staff productivity and effective service delivery to members.
	7	Maintain NASAA's accountability standards, federal reporting, internal controls and risk management procedures.
	8	Update NASAA's emergency readiness and disaster response plan.
+	9	Develop an information security plan.

**D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.**

	1	Report to the membership twice yearly through Action Plan Highlights that summarize NASAA's progress and recent accomplishments.
	2	Maintain NASAA's performance metrics and State Arts Agency Vital Statistics dashboards. Report the results to NASAA's Planning & Budget Committee and the membership, and use the findings to inform action planning.
	3	Use website analytics, social media metrics and e-mail delivery data to guide NASAA's communications decisions. Make Google Analytics information more accessible to content managers.
	4	Monitor information requests and mine the data to inform NASAA's research services and technical assistance.
	5	Use formal evaluation and reflective practice to drive continual improvement of NASAA's programs and services.
	6	Conduct an annual employee survey to monitor issues relating to staff satisfaction, well-being and office culture.