Organized around NASAA’s strategic plan, this report highlights key accomplishments from the first half of NASAA’s 2023 membership year (October 1, 2022, through April 30, 2023). Activities addressing top priorities from our Fiscal Year 2023 Action Plan are noted throughout.

GOAL 1: ADVOCATE FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

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

- NASAA advocated with key U.S. House and Senate committees overseeing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) budget. Strategic bipartisan advocacy from NASAA and the states helped to secure $207 million for the NEA for FY2023, an increase of $27 million. This appropriation marks the eighth consecutive year of enacted increases for the agency and boosts the impact of the 40% of NEA grant funds administered by states and regions.

- As congressional committees changed following the midterm elections, NASAA continued targeted outreach to key appropriators who are poised to influence deliberations about future NEA funding. We identified connections to those individuals and organized contacts to reinforce NASAA’s key advocacy messages.

- NASAA works with numerous federal advocacy allies to grow resources for the NEA and participate in coalition advocacy efforts. We were active in the Cultural Advocacy Group, met regularly with Americans for the Arts, and served as a resource for the BIPOC.
(Black, Indigenous and/or people of color)-led Arts Advocacy Coalition. NASAA also served as a training partner for federal advocacy summits hosted by the Western States Arts Federation and the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures.

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

- NASAA convened state and regional executive directors and NEA leadership to discuss **synergies between the arts and other domains of federal policy**. Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson shared her vision of the NEA’s opportunity to work "horizontally" and "vertically" to develop relationships at both the state and federal levels, with early opportunities in the realms of health, human services, transportation and environmental protection.

- A partnership between the NEA, NASAA and Mellon Foundation is making it possible to support **cross-sector fellowships**. Fellows will work at the federal level and share information with state colleagues, to help identify new interagency partnership opportunities for the NEA and state arts agencies.

- A new sampler, **Arts in Transportation Strategies**, offers examples of creative collaborations that tap into federal and state **infrastructure opportunities**. The report features four state arts agencies that have worked with state transportation agencies to infuse the arts into transportation planning. Also included in the sampler are tips, resources and policy rationales to assist in building bridges between the two fields.

C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

- NASAA is a source of information and professional development for **state arts advocacy organizations**. We met regularly with the Creative States Coalition and responded to numerous requests from citizens’ groups seeking data or consultations.

- We empowered state case making with customized **research tools and reports** that help advocates to educate legislators and the public about the role of the arts and state arts agencies. These resources included comparative **funding data** and **economic impact information** as well as new **maps of federal and state arts investments** by state legislative district.

- NASAA helped advocates apply lessons learned from our **advocacy messaging** research. Making a **Strong Case for the Arts** shared how three state arts agencies have used Arts and Creativity Strengthen Our Nation to frame the value of public investment in the arts and inspire support across the political spectrum.
The Practical Advocate series provides how-to advice for organizations and individuals seeking to become more effective advocates. NASAA is renewing the series, which began with fresh editions of *Being an Arts Ambassador* and *Communicating about Arts Controversies*. The latter is especially timely given the escalation in community controversies surrounding the arts, libraries and education.

Our state legislative tracking system pinpointed bills affecting state arts agencies and their constituents. NASAA monitored emerging legislation and synthesized the trends in the 2022 edition of our *State Legislative Roundup*.

NASAA was invited to provide briefings for state-level advocates in California, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee. NASAA provided a national context, shared relevant research and offered perspective on effective approaches to consultation and collaboration among state partners.

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

NASAA plays a leadership role in the Arts Education Partnership (AEP), operated by the Education Commission of the States (ECS). We collaborated with AEP and ECS on *Remediating Pandemic Learning Loss and the Arts*, a webinar on how the arts can help to ameliorate learning disruptions caused by COVID-19.

NASAA intersects with Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) in multiple ways. Our president and CEO, Pam Breaux, serves on GIA’s board. We participated in GIA webinars on *Puerto Rico – The Diaspora, The Island* and *Support for Arts and Culture*. And the research team published a *Public Funding for the Arts in 2022* article for the GIA Reader magazine. We also advised GIA on its Cultural Policy Action Lab.

NASAA participated in the National Coalition for Arts’ Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER) steering committee to support states and jurisdictions affected by disasters and to circulate best practices in readiness, recovery and resilience.

NASAA met with the staff and board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils. We exchanged strategies for federal advocacy, advancing equity, tribal relations, member relations and other topics of mutual interest.

NASAA participated in the National Arts Statistics and Evidence-based Research Center technical working group led by the NEA in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research.

Along with the NEA, NASAA presented at the Cities Summit of the Americas, an international gathering of civic and business leaders from across the Western Hemisphere. NASAA’s presentation focused on the creative economy and the role of state arts agencies in supporting the arts.
GOAL 2: HONE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

A. Supply authoritative facts about state arts agencies.

- NASAA maintains comprehensive information on state arts agency grant making. Using the latest Final Descriptive Report data, NASAA generated maps and statistical analyses showing the reach and impact of more than 20,000 awards.
- NASAA supplied information on state arts agency staffing and compensation to assist members with agency restructuring, professional advancement and leadership transitions.
- NASAA's State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2023 report summarized state arts agency budgets, highlighting funding that attained an all-time high. Our interactive Raise Your Ranking tool and the Legislative Appropriations Explorer, Total Agency Revenue Explorer and a Regional Appropriations and Revenue Explorer contain comparative data in engaging formats.

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

- State to State, a monthly column in the NASAA Notes newsletter, profiled 23 innovative initiatives from state arts agencies. We showcased unique programs such as capitol exhibits, veterans partnerships, artist support strategies, folklife programs and culturally responsive youth programs. Numerous equity initiatives also were featured. More than 480 exciting models from all 56 states and jurisdictions are now available in the searchable State to State Article Archive.
- Our creative aging partnership with E.A. Michelson Philanthropy continues. This multiyear initiative helps state arts agencies improve well-being, lifelong learning and social engagement for older adults. We completed the evaluation and reporting for the Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging phase, which invested $1.46 million in grants to 36 state arts agencies. NASAA now is adjudicating a new round of grants for a targeted States Leading Creative Aging phase. Two more Creative Aging Institute professional development programs are planned for 2023 and 2024.
- Building off of the success of the Equity GAP Project piloted with the Ohio Arts Council, NASAA continued to support state arts agency efforts to assess their general operating support investments through an equity lens. NASA is embarking on a similar project customized for the Illinois Arts Council Agency. The Equitable Grantmaking Assessment Initiative will include a robust combination of policy review, constituent outreach, staff consultation, data analysis and benchmarking.
Strengthening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities is a new initiative in its formative stages. It aspires to help state arts agencies develop intentional, respectful and responsive relationships with Indigenous artists, Native organizations and tribal governments. An Indigenous Circle of Advisors is being formed to lead the work. The advisors—and numerous interviews with Native stakeholders—will guide NASAA’s recommendations and action steps.

NASAA provided technical assistance to eight member agencies and RAOs. We administered a strategic planning survey for Indiana; created data collection guidance for the California Arts Council’s Creative Corps program; conducted facilitation training for Utah; led staff and council professional development programs for Connecticut; advised the Western States Arts Federation on the launch of a new innovation fund; welcomed Puerto Rico to the ranks of Mid Atlantic Arts; and provided advocacy briefings for California, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee.

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

NASAA fulfilled 170 information requests thus far in FY2023. Popular topics included advocacy, federal reporting, and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Most inquiries came from members. Nonmembers (including the NEA, advocacy groups, consultants and scholars) also requested information. Popular topics included equitable grant making, strategic planning, advocacy and federal reporting.

The Creative Economy State Profiles put the latest data on the economic impact of the creative sector at members’ fingertips. Produced in cooperation with the NEA, this interactive dashboard offers U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data on arts jobs and the size of the sector in 2021. Updates to the Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies provide more information on individual states’ creative industries.

NASAA is upgrading the technical accessibility of our equity analysis tools: Visualizing Equity in Grant Making. These dashboards—delivered through customized demonstrations—help state arts agencies understand which geographic and demographic cohorts their funds are reaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2023 Priority Equity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Launched a multiyear Equity Audit engaging NASAA staff, board and membership</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Conducted a board demographics survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Convened regular conference calls with our People of Color Affinity Group and our accessibility network</td>
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<td>✓ Managed the second cohort of our DEI Mentorship Program for state arts agency people of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Promoted our Visualizing Equity in Grant Making service suite as well as our Rural Equity, Economic Equity and Race Equity benchmarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Launched the Deepening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Launched the Equitable Grantmaking Assessment Initiative in Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Conducted an accessibility audit of the NASAA website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Promoted DEI models and equity resources in every issue of NASAA Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ DEI activities and achievements are reported annually to the board and membership.</td>
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In cooperation with the NEA, NASAA conducted a survey of state and regional uses of NEA American Rescue Plan funds, compiling available information on job creation/retention, facilities spending and the impact of funds for subgrantees.

Thoughtful curation of new research relevant to state arts agencies is one of NASAA's trademark services. We shared useful research on equity, the creative economy, arts education and public policy, to name a few topics of note. The monthly Research Digest column in NASAA Notes synthesizes NASAA information and a select mixture of material harvested from other organizations within and beyond the arts field.

NASAA began tracking state arts agency program evaluation and research initiatives, compiling a log that can serve as a knowledge building resource for state arts agencies, the NEA and NASAA. The log contains information on 36 studies completed or underway in 29 states.

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

An ambitious suite of virtual professional development programs supported state arts agencies this year. The NASAA 2023 Learning Series has offered sessions on programming for older adults, advocacy, arts education and burnout, reaching more than 190 attendees. Sessions on rural resilience, postpandemic planning, equity assessments and staff retention are on tap for the remainder of the year. All state arts agency and regional arts organization staff and council members can access these professional development programs for free. NASAA also invites allied audiences (humanities colleagues, state level advocates and other state arts agency partners) to selected sessions.

Planning is underway for the 2023 Executive Forum. This new convening, which will be held in odd-numbered years, focuses on the needs of executive and deputy directors. It's an opportunity for in-depth, professionally facilitated dialogue about the most pressing issues facing state arts agencies. The 2023 Executive Forum will be held December 4-6 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Planning is underway for the 2023 Arts Education Professional Development Institute, taking place this autumn in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Planning is ongoing for the virtual 2023 Folk and Traditional Arts Professional Development Institute series, to take place in May, July and September.
GOAL 3: CONNECT STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

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

- Monthly issues of the NASAA Notes newsletter shared updates and resource alerts useful to state arts agencies, state arts advocacy organizations and allies.
- NASAA issued Report to Councils in December and March. This publication highlights recent NASAA activities and serves as a handy insert in council meeting materials. Our For Council Members web page gives appointed state arts agency leaders streamlined access to NASAA resources.
- NASAA’s social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) promote the good work of our members and share news within—and beyond—the state arts agency community.
- Our website serves as a hub of information for and about state arts agencies. We conducted an accessibility scan of our website to make interacting with NASAA information easier for people with disabilities. Site upgrades are underway to add alt text to images, make content processing more efficient for screen readers and add language translation capabilities.
- NASAA continued to implement our new logo and visual identity across our digital, social and print communications.
- We moved to a new bulk email system that offers more communication capabilities and better integration with our Salesforce membership database.

B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.

- Most job-alike peer groups met quarterly in 2023. We initiated a new series of virtual meetings of the chairs and council members peer group, to facilitate connections among volunteer leaders and share information relevant to their advocacy and governance roles. We also helped public art managers self-organize to start a peer cohort.
- NASAA sustained our People of Color Affinity Group to provide a supportive and empowering forum for people of color in the state arts agency staff and council network.
- We launched the second cohort of NASAA’s DEI Mentorship Program. This leadership development effort supports individual members of color as they enter, sustain and advance their careers in state arts agencies.
- NASA maintained listservs to facilitate networking for executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, public information officers, grants officers, arts education managers, community development managers, folk and traditional arts program managers, gallery managers and the People of Color Affinity Group. We launched a new listserv for public art managers, as well.
NASAA hosts mindfulness meditation sessions virtually. These sessions bring members together informally to develop a shared practice that supports leadership, connectedness and well-being.

We gathered former state arts agency executive directors for virtual fellowship. These informal sessions offer an opportunity for alumni leaders to stay connected with NASAA and with each other.

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

Five new executive directors have been appointed to date this year, with transitions pending in another five states. Each newcomer receives a one-on-one onboarding consultation, customized follow-up on priority issues, and an introduction to the field in NASAA Notes. Because our usual Boot Camp plans were disrupted by the pandemic, NASAA will convene new executive directors in a special cohort meeting in conjunction with the 2023 Executive Forum in Santa Fe.

NASAA also helped to organize new staff onboarding sessions for arts education managers, community development managers and public information officers.

NASAA produced member benefit summaries for all state arts agencies undergoing leadership transitions. Each sheet is tailored to describe the knowledge, representation and networking benefits the state arts agency receives through its NASAA membership.

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

The Audit Committee supervised NASAA’s annual audit and IRS Form 990 reporting.

The Development Committee helped plan NASAA’s successful 2022 year-end campaign. The committee is now revisiting its charge and seeking input from the NASAA board about fundraising opportunities, challenges, and the focus and direction of future efforts.

NASAA completed its first board demographic survey, designed to give NASAA deeper insight into the backgrounds of current leadership. The Governance Committee reviewed the aggregated results and used them to inform board development guidance for NASAA’s Nominating Committee.

Nominating Committee and Planning & Budget Committee activities will commence this spring. All executive directors and chairs should be on the lookout for our annual interview outreach process.

The board and membership were engaged in NASAA’s equity audit in multiple ways. Board members were interviewed about governance topics by our equity advisors, Team Dynamics. Board members also participated in the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment process. More than a dozen focus groups were conducted with member peer groups to invite feedback and gain insights into equity issues and challenges facing our association.

For inclusion and transparency, NASAA board meetings are open to guest observers who are voting members of our Assembly. Monitor the NASAA events calendar for dates and times.

GOAL 4: BUILD NASAA’S CAPACITY.

A. Develop and diversify NASAA’s revenues.

NASAA continues to cultivate foundation partnerships. We received $1.4 million from E.A. Michelson Philanthropy to support a new stage of our creative aging collaboration (see page 4 for details).
NASAA received $150,000 from Mellon Foundation to launch a collaborative effort with the NEA to develop and empower more interagency opportunities for the arts at the federal and state levels (see page 2 for details).

- In 2022 (January 1 – December 31), NASAA raised $157,162 from individual donors, thanks in part to a highly successful year-end matching campaign and the opportunity to raise funds in person at NASAA Assembly 2022. Gifts ranged from $5 to $25,000. Two hundred seventy-five people made a gift to NASAA in 2022. NASAA’s spring campaign kicks off in May.

- NASAA received a Partnership grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. We finished drawing down our NEA American Rescue Plan grant and secured an increase in cooperative agreement funding for research services and for professional development services for arts education and folk and traditional arts program managers.

- NASAA supplements our budget through earned income from consulting fees for custom research.

B. Develop NASAA’s human resources.

- In addition to group trainings, NASAA continued to encourage individual professional development opportunities. Resources allowing, our goal is for every staff member to receive training specific to their job responsibilities at least once every other year.

C. Improve NASAA’s operations and technology.

- NASAA relocated and downsized our physical office space. The reconfigured offices provide an efficient "home base" for a staff that spends the majority of its time working remotely. Cost savings from reduced rent and repurposed furniture are beneficial to NASAA’s bottom line.

- NASAA’s IT support firm is conducting a thorough assessment of technology needs. The findings will help NASAA anticipate and address future hardware, software, systems and training needs.

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

- Our organizational equity audit got underway this winter. This multiyear effort will include staff interviews and a thorough review of all NASAA salary structures, policies, operations, programs, governance and communications. The process also includes individual interviews, completion of the Intercultural Development Inventory, and facilitated group sessions with Team Dynamics. The audit will result in an action plan to advance equity at NASAA and will help us develop organizational practices that embody NASAA’s DEI values.

- We completed an independent program evaluation of the Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging initiative. The study yielded actionable insights to assist both state arts agencies and NASAA in our future creative aging endeavors.

- We completed an independent financial audit for FY2022. It was a clean audit, with no findings relating to NASAA’s internal controls or key processes.
NASAA conducted our annual **staff satisfaction survey**. The results inform management strategies.

NASAA evaluated **Assembly 2022**. The ratings and comments help us plan future meetings.

NASAA analyzed **communications data** relating to our website usage, social media engagement and bulk email messaging. We draw on these resources to inform content delivery and adjust our communications approaches.

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