



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY of
STATE ARTS AGENCIES

Knowledge ▲ Representation ▲ Community

Fiscal Year 2023

Action Plan Highlights

Organized around NASAA's [strategic plan](#), this report highlights key accomplishments from October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023. 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. Bipartisan advocacy from NASAA and the states helped to secure \$207 million for the NEA for fiscal year 2023, an **increase of \$27 million**. This appropriation marked the eighth consecutive year of increases for the agency and boosted the impact of the [40% of NEA grant funds allocated to states and regions](#). As of this writing, the federal budget for FY2024 remains unresolved.
- ▶ 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 an advocacy training partner for the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures.



2023 Priority

Advocacy

- ✓ Secured increased funding for the NEA for FY2023
- ✓ Equipped arts advocates with [message frameworks](#) that resonate across the political spectrum
- ✓ [Mapped](#) public funding for the arts by both federal and state legislative districts
- ✓ Analyzed and reported on [state legislation](#) affecting the arts
- ✓ Led briefings/training sessions at federal and state advocacy events
- ✓ Participated in coalition advocacy efforts
- ✓ Issued timely [alerts on federal arts policy](#) developments

- ▶ NASAA presented a briefing for the **National Council on the Arts** on the federal-state partnership during a working session held in conjunction with the council's New Orleans, Louisiana, meeting.

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

- NEW!** ▶ NASAA convened state arts agency and regional arts organization (RAO) 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 opportunities in the realms of health, human services, transportation and environmental protection.
- NEW!** ▶ A partnership between the NEA, NASAA and the Mellon Foundation is making it possible to support **cross-sector research** to inform the integration of the arts across federal policy. Fellows will work with a number of federal agencies and share information with state colleagues, to help identify new interagency partnership opportunities for the NEA and state arts agencies.
- NEW!** ▶ A new sampler, [Arts in Transportation Strategies](#), offers examples of creative collaborations that tap into federal and state **infrastructure opportunities**. The report features state arts agencies that have worked with state transportation agencies to infuse the arts into infrastructure planning. Also included in the sampler are tips, resources and policy rationales to assist in building bridges between the two fields.



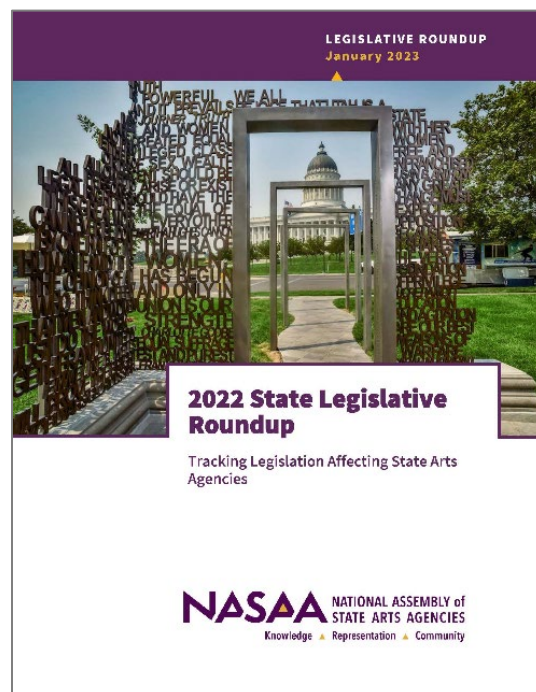
Pennsylvania's Sideling Hill Turnpike Plaza features a collage created through one of the partnerships featured in NASAA's Arts in Transportation Strategies report.

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.
- NEW!** ▶ 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.

NEW!

- ▶ 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. We also participated in **regional advocacy gatherings** hosted by the Western States Arts Federation and South Arts. 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.

NEW!

- ▶ 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 the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ 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](#). NASAA's research team authored a [Public Funding for the Arts in 2022](#) article for the GIA Reader magazine. We also advised GIA on its Cultural Policy Action Lab.
- ▶ We collaborated with GIA, **Grantmakers in Aging** and **Grantmakers in Health** on a September webinar exploring The Next Wave in Creative Aging. NASAA was a copresenter for this session, which addressed an emerging national agenda for improving the well-being of older adults through the arts.
- ▶ 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 **Civic Imagination Convening Project**, a summit of national leaders working to reimagine the role culture, the arts and creativity plays in building a healthy democracy.
- ▶ 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.

NEW!

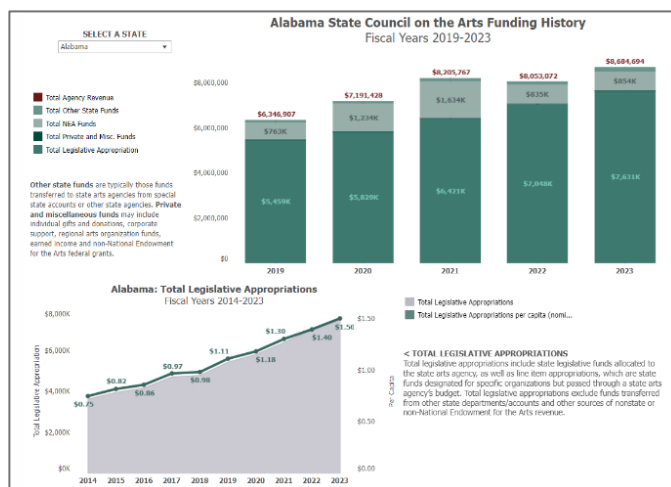
NEW!

- NEW!** 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.

- NEW!** NASAA maintains comprehensive information on **state arts agency grant making**. Using the latest Final Descriptive Report data, we illustrated the reach and impact of more than 20,000 awards. We published the 2023 editions of our popular fact sheets on [Arts Education](#), [Operating Support](#), [Individual Artists](#), [Local Arts Agencies](#) and [Rural Communities](#).
- NEW!** NASAA released the results of our 2023 **staff size and compensation** survey. [State arts Agency Staffing Trends](#) (member login required) provides the latest data on the state arts agency workforce, including demographic estimates and areas of reported staffing shortages. We also refreshed our repository of job descriptions and comparative salary data 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. The [FY2024 Legislative Appropriations Preview](#) offers a revenue forecast for the year ahead. An interactive [Raise Your Ranking](#) tool and the [Legislative Appropriations Explorer](#), [Total Agency Revenue Explorer](#) and [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 **34 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. **Nearly 500 exciting program 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. We also awarded a new

- NEW!** round of nine grants for the [States Leading Creative Aging](#) initiative. 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. A similar project customized for the Illinois Arts Council Agency, the **Equitable Grantmaking Assessment Initiative**, includes a robust combination of policy review, constituent outreach, staff consultation, data analysis and benchmarking.
 - NEW!** ▶ [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 was formed to lead the work. The advisors—and numerous interviews with Native stakeholders—are guiding NASAA's recommendations and action steps.
 - ▶ NASAA participated in the [National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response](#) steering committee to support states and jurisdictions affected by disasters and to circulate best practices in **emergency readiness, recovery and resilience**. We provided resources and council to individual states affected by crises and collaborated with our members in Kentucky, Texas, New Jersey and Louisiana on [Leading in the Face of Disaster](#), a session on readiness for all members.
 - NEW!** ▶ NASAA provided **technical assistance** to 14 member agencies and RAOs. We administered a strategic planning survey for Indiana; crafted 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; joined a meeting of the ArtsWA council; advised the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) on the launch of a new innovation fund; welcomed Puerto Rico to the ranks of Mid Atlantic Arts; began custom data analysis projects for Illinois; and provided advocacy briefings for California, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee as well as WESTAF and South Arts.



2023 Priority Equity

- ✓ Launched a comprehensive Equity Audit engaging the NASAA staff, board and membership
- ✓ Conducted a board demographics survey
- ✓ Convened regular conference calls with our People of Color Affinity Group and our accessibility network
- ✓ Managed the second cohort of our [DEI Mentorship Program](#) for state arts agency people of color
- ✓ Retooled our [Visualizing Equity in Grant Making](#) service suite, adding data reflecting the U.S. Census Department's Social Vulnerability Index
- ✓ Launched the [Deepening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities](#) initiative
- ✓ Launched the Equitable Grantmaking Assessment Initiative in Illinois
- ✓ Conducted an accessibility audit of the NASAA website
- ✓ Promoted [DEI models](#) and equity resources in every issue of [NASAA Notes](#)
- ✓ Reported [DEI activities and achievements](#) to the board and membership

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

- ▶ NASAA fulfilled more than 300 **information requests** in 2023. [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.
- ▶ 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 upgraded the our **equity analysis tools**, [Visualizing Equity in Grant Making](#). These dashboards—delivered online, through customized demonstrations—help state arts agencies understand which geographic and demographic cohorts their funds are reaching. This year we enhanced the analysis capabilities of the system by adding data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Social Vulnerability Index.
- ▶ 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 41 studies completed or underway in 30 states.

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

- ▶ Planning is underway for the [2023 Executive Forum](#). This new convening, to 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 inaugural forum will be held December 4-6 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- ▶ An ambitious suite of **virtual professional development programs** supported state arts agencies this year. The [NASAA 2023 Learning Series](#)



The Institute of American Indian Arts, headquartered in Santa Fe, operates the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts—the nation's leading museum celebrating contemporary works by Indigenous artists.

offered sessions on programming for older adults, advocacy, arts education, staff burnout, emergency readiness, rural development and more. All SAA and RAO staff and council members can access these professional development programs for free. NASAA also invites partners and allied groups (humanities colleagues, state level advocates and other state arts agency partners) to attend selected sessions.

- ▶ Planning is underway for the 2023 **Arts Education Professional Development Institute**, taking place this autumn in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- ▶ The virtual 2023 **Folk and Traditional Arts Professional Development Institute** kicked off with a webinar in May and offered frequent networking and learning sessions for agency program managers.
- ▶ Preliminary planning is underway for [NASAA Assembly 2024](#), to take place October 23 - 26 in San Jan, Puerto Rico.

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](#), [March](#) and [September](#). 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](#), [X](#) 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 implemented 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 at least 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 hosted the **Community Development Coordinators Virtual Retreat** and helped **public art managers** and **individual artist coordinators** to self-organize.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ NASAA 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 regular **mindfulness and meditation** sessions. 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.



2023 Priority

Resiliency

- ✓ Facilitated virtual gatherings around acute challenges, for mutual support and information sharing
- ✓ Added workplace well-being resources to several issues of NASAA Notes
- ✓ Provided professional development on the topic of employee burnout
- ✓ Led virtual mindfulness and meditation sessions for members

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

NEW!

- ▶ Thirteen **new executive directors** were appointed in 2023, with transitions underway 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. NASAA will convene new executive directors in a special cohort meeting in conjunction with the 2023 Executive Forum in Santa Fe.
- ▶ NASAA also organized **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.

NEW!

- ▶ The **Audit Committee** supervised NASAA's annual audit and IRS Form 990 reporting.
- ▶ The **Development Committee** helped plan NASAA's spring and year-end campaigns.
- ▶ 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 representation guidance for NASAA's Nominating Committee.
- ▶ The **Nominating Committee** conducted [81 field interviews](#). These peer consultations helped the committee to develop the slate for the 2024 board of directors and yielded feedback on NASAA programs and services.

NEW!

- ▶ The **Planning & Budget Committee** directed the revision of NASAA's performance metrics as well as the development of NASAA's FY2024-2025 action plan and FY2024 budget.
- ▶ The board and membership were engaged in NASAA's **equity audit** in multiple ways. Board members were interviewed by our equity advisors at 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.
- ▶ 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.

NEW!

- ▶ NASAA continues to cultivate **foundation partnerships**. We received nearly \$1.5 million from E.A. Michelson Philanthropy to support a new stage of our creative aging collaboration (see pages 4-5 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 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.

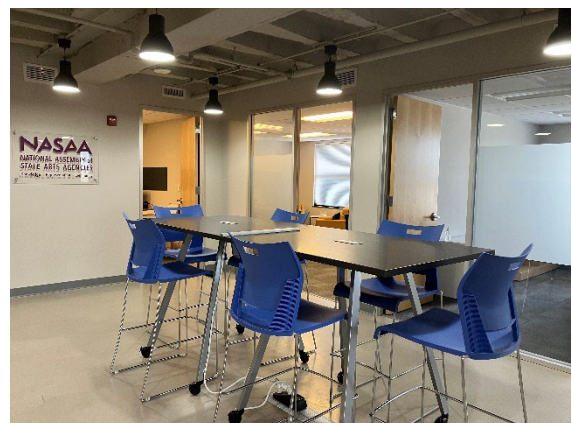
B. Develop NASAA's human resources.

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

C. Improve NASAA's operations and technology.

NEW!

- ▶ NASAA **relocated and downsized our physical office**. The reconfigured space provides an efficient "home base" for a staff that spends the majority of its time working remotely. Cost savings from



Team NASAA is excited about our new flexible and affordable workspace.

reduced rent and repurposed furniture are beneficial to NASAA's bottom line.

- ▶ **NASAA's IT support** firm conducted a thorough assessment of technology needs. The findings will help NASAA anticipate and address future hardware, software, systems and training solutions.

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

- ▶ Our **organizational equity audit** is a major multiyear effort. Our partners at Team Dynamics completed a thorough review of all NASAA salary structures, policies, operations, programs, governance and communications. The process also included staff and board surveys, staff and board interviews, member focus groups, completion of the Intercultural Development Inventory assessment, coaching sessions for NASAA's management team, and a facilitated process for developing equitable group norms for the organization. The audit ultimately will result in an action plan to advance equity at NASAA and will help us develop organizational practices that embody NASAA's DEI values.
- ▶ NASAA's Planning & Budget Committee revised our organizational [performance metrics](#) and adopted a new [framework](#) to guide our **measurement and evaluation** practices.
- ▶ We ran 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.
- ▶ In cooperation with the NEA, NASAA conducted a **focus group** to inform future upgrades to the [Creative Economy State Profiles](#) dashboards.
- ▶ NASAA **evaluated Assembly 2022**. The [ratings and comments](#) help us plan future meetings. Evaluations of the 2022 State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute and the 2022 Folk and Traditional Arts Preconference also were conducted. The results are being used by NASAA, the NEA and member steering committees.
- ▶ 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 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.

Photo Credits

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Page 2: "Our Life. Our Story," a sculptural photographic collage. Photo courtesy of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
Page 6: Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Native Arts. Photo by Marinainusa, Wikimedia Commons