

NASAA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY of STATE ARTS AGENCIES

Knowledge ▲ Representation ▲ Community

Fiscal Year 2024 | Midyear Report Action Plan Highlights

Organized around NASAA's [strategic plan](#), this report highlights key accomplishments from the first half of NASAA's fiscal year (October 2023 through April 2024). Top priorities from the [Fiscal Year 2024-2025 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 **level funding (\$207 million) for the NEA** for fiscal year 2024. In an environment marked by many budget battles, level funding is a positive outcome.
- ▶ NASAA works with numerous **federal advocacy allies** to secure resources for the NEA and participate in coalition advocacy efforts. We were active in the Cultural Advocacy Group and met regularly with Americans for the Arts. We served as a resource for the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or people of color)-led Arts Advocacy Coalition and as a training partner for the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures advocacy cohort. We also cohosted a Capitol Hill briefing, in partnership with the National Humanities Alliance and the Federation of State Humanities Councils, to educate members of Congress and their staffs about the impact of federal funding from the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

NEW!



2024 Priority Advocacy

- ✓ Secured level funding for the NEA for FY2024
- ✓ Facilitated extensive work to catalyze cross-sector policy collaborations at the federal and state levels
- ✓ Analyzed and reported on [state legislation](#) affecting the arts
- ✓ Led briefings at federal and state advocacy events
- ✓ Participated in advocacy coalitions
- ✓ Issued timely [alerts on federal arts policy](#) developments
- ✓ Refreshed [The Practical Advocate](#) series and [The Federal-State Partnership in the Arts](#)
- ✓ Published [Creative Caucuses in State Legislatures](#)

- ▶ A new edition of [The Federal- State Partnership in the Arts](#) highlights how the NEA, state arts agencies and regional arts organizations all work together to support the arts in America.

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

- NEW! ▶ In collaboration with the NEA, the White House Domestic Policy Council and a team of foundation partners, NASAA served as the fiscal agent for [Healing, Bridging, Thriving: A Summit on Arts and Culture in Our Communities](#). Reaching nearly 3,500 people in person and online in January, the summit featured [remarks from NASAA President and CEO Pam Breaux](#) as well as a notable lineup of representatives from federal agencies, including the U.S. Surgeon General, the General Services Administration, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and others. The goal of the summit was to elevate the power of the arts to promote healthy communities and empower the work of government agencies across all policy domains.



NASAA's Pam Breaux highlighted the importance of cross-sector partnerships in all 56 states and jurisdictions during the Healing, Bridging, Thriving summit.

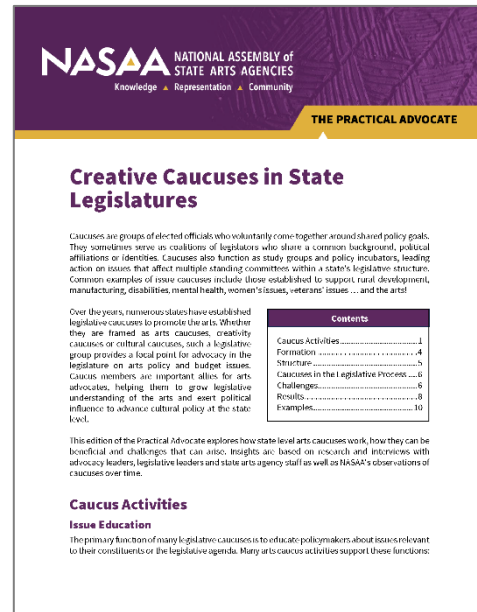
- NEW! ▶ In conjunction with the summit, NASAA published three papers prepared by the CAIR (Cross-Sector Artists in Residence) Lab in collaboration with the Mellon Foundation: [Arts + Infrastructure](#), [Arts + Health for Social Cohesion](#), and [Arts + Transportation](#).
- NEW! ▶ To extend opportunities for cross-sector collaborations, in March NASAA convened state arts agency and regional arts organization (RAO) executive directors with the NEA and representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Department of Transportation and HHS. The group discussed strategies for connecting with partners at the federal and state levels.

C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

- ▶ NASAA is a source of information and professional development for **state arts advocates**. We met regularly with the **Creative States Coalition** and responded to numerous requests from citizens' groups seeking data or consultations.
- NEW! ▶ At the invitation of our member states, NASAA **submitted testimony** to the Hawai'i State Legislature and the governor of Arizona. NASAA urged state lawmakers to preserve investments in public art and to reinstate a general fund appropriation for the arts. NASAA collaborated with both state arts agencies to ensure that our messages aligned with their state cases for support.
- NEW! ▶ We promoted **advocacy tools that encourage best practices** for cultural advocates. We updated and refreshed our [Practical Advocate](#) series, which explores advocacy tactics in a concise format. NASAA also researched and published [Creative Caucuses in State Legislatures](#). Based on interviews

with state arts agencies, state arts advocates and elected officials, this guide covers strategies for creating an arts caucus and engaging state legislators in its work.

- ▶ Our **state legislative tracking system** pinpointed bills affecting state arts agencies and their constituents. NASAA monitored emerging legislation and synthesized the trends in the 2023 edition of our [State Legislative Roundup](#).
- ▶ NASAA was invited to provide **briefings for state level advocates** in Tennessee and Colorado. We also participated in **regional advocacy gatherings** hosted by South Arts and Arts Midwest. 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!** ▶ In January, NASAA conducted a **policy briefing for private foundations**. The virtual event, attended by 70 foundation representatives, addressed advocacy strategies for positioning the arts for success in a highly polarized political environment and raised awareness about the roles of state arts agencies. Featured speakers included political strategists Reuben Alvarez, Isaac Brown and Mary Anne Carter as well as arts leaders from two swing states: Karl Blischke from Pennsylvania and George Tzougros from Wisconsin.
- ▶ NASAA intersects with **Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA)** in multiple ways. CEO Pam Breaux serves on GIA's board and GIA's Cultural Policy Committee. The NASAA research team was featured in GIA's [Annual Research on Support for Arts and Culture](#) webinar and published [Public Funding for the Arts 2023](#) in the [GIA Reader](#).
- NEW!** ▶ In collaboration with The Ella Project and Arts Carolina, NASAA joined a national gathering of **Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA) groups**. We presented on opportunities for VLA networks to amplify advocacy and policy work at the state level and to collaborate with state arts agencies.
- NEW!** ▶ 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 **emergency readiness, recovery and resilience**. NASAA promoted NCAPER's Crisis Analysis and Mitigation coaches and State/Local Activation Teams. NCAPER collaborated closely with FEMA to [streamline assistance](#) for artists and arts organizations.
- NEW!** ▶ NASAA participated in the **National Arts Statistics and Evidence-Based Research Center** technical working group led by the NEA and the American Institutes for Research. The Center launched the [Arts Indicators Project](#), a new online research tool to make it easier for policymakers, practitioners, researchers and the public to access research about the role of artists and the arts in community life.
- ▶ NASAA met regularly with the **Federation of State Humanities Councils**. We shared strategies for federal advocacy, work with Congress, advancing equity, member relations and other topics of mutual interest.

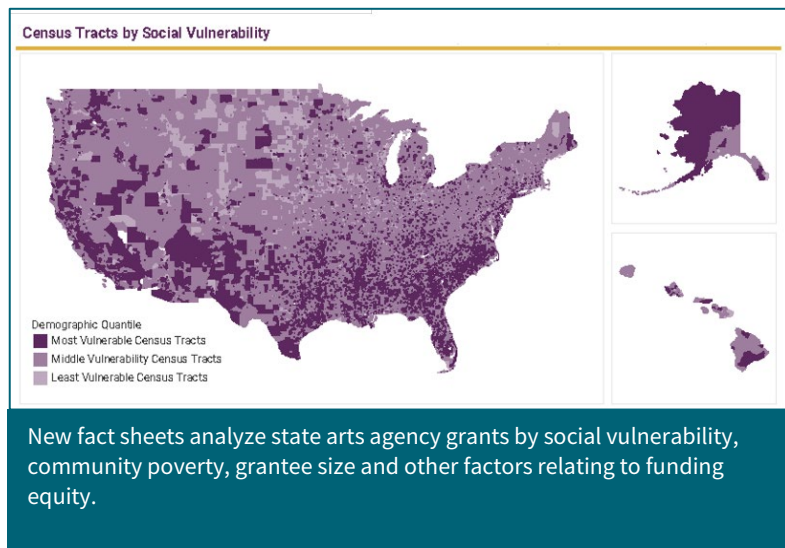
- ▶ NASAA plays a leadership role in the **Arts Education Partnership**, operated by the [Education Commission of the States](#).
- ▶ **Intermediary organizations** exist at both the national and state levels. To better understand their roles and needs, NASAA participates in a cohort advising the [Understanding Arts Service Organizations in a Changing Arts Ecosystem](#) initiative. Funded by the Mellon Foundation, this project is studying the networking, advocacy, grant-making and research roles of arts service organizations and how they add capacity to the arts field.

NEW!

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, 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](#). We also added new analyses of [Social Vulnerability](#), [Percentage below Poverty](#), [Grants by Organizational Size](#) and [Public-Sector Grant Making](#).



NEW!

- ▶ NASAA completed a [fresh inventory](#) of our **Grant Programs Database**—a resource that catalogs more than 500 state arts agency grant programs. This qualitative database facilitates comparisons of program goals, eligibility requirements, adjudication criteria and other grant-making policies for funding streams that serve artists as well as organizational grantees.
- ▶ NASAA supplied information on **staffing and compensation**. We answered numerous requests for data on staff size and comparative salaries as well as sample job descriptions. This information is useful for state arts agencies that are advocating for staff advancement, to fill vacant positions or to address leadership transitions.

NEW!

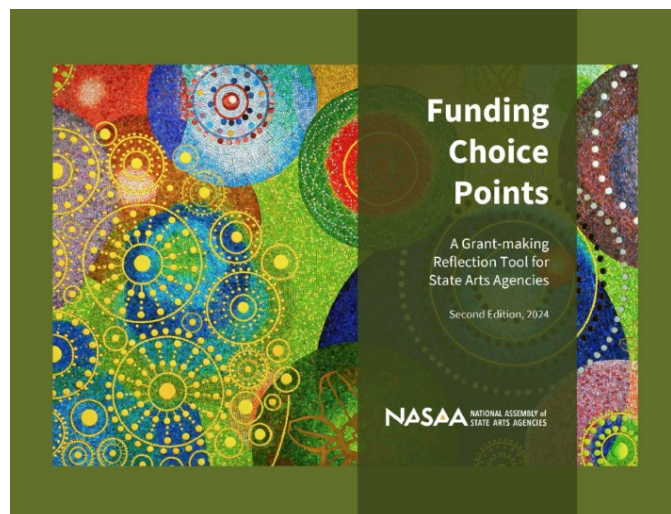
NASAA's [State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2024](#) report summarized **state arts agency budgets**. An interactive [Raise Your Ranking](#) tool and the [Legislative Appropriations Explorer](#), [Total Agency Revenue Explorer](#) and [Regional Appropriations and Revenue Explorer](#) contain comparative data in engaging formats.

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

- ▶ NASAA has fulfilled 251 **information requests** to date this fiscal year. [Popular topics](#) include advocacy, equity, grant guidelines and strategic planning. Most inquiries came from state arts agencies. 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 2022. NASAA updated the dashboards to improve accessibility and design and published a [Creative Economy Research Policy Brief](#) to address common questions and issues. Updates to the [Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies](#) provide more information on individual states' creative industries.
- ▶ **NEW!** NASAA commissioned new research on the **arts and economic recovery**. The 2024 edition of [Arts and Creativity Drive Economies and Build Resilience](#) shows that the creative industries drive business growth and offer a powerful strategy for states seeking to diversify and stimulate their economies. The study was conducted by economist Douglas S. Noonan at Indiana University Indianapolis.
- ▶ Thoughtful **curation of new research relevant to state arts agencies** is one of NASAA's trademark services. We shared useful research on equity, arts engagement trends, the creative workforce and state policy forecasts, to name a few subjects of note. The monthly Research Digest column in [NASAA Notes](#) synthesizes NASAA information and a select mixture of helpful material harvested from other organizations within and beyond the arts field.

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

- ▶ State to State, a monthly column in the NASAA Notes newsletter, profiled **25 innovative initiatives from state arts agencies**. We showcased unique programs for [artists with disabilities](#), [tribal communities](#), [cultural tourism](#), [creative aging](#), [youth engagement](#) and [folklife](#). Numerous [equity initiatives](#) also were featured. **More than 500 exciting program models from all 56 states and jurisdictions** are 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. The [States Leading Creative Aging](#) initiative supported a nine-state cohort of SAAs leading extensive efforts emphasizing program accessibility for underserved populations. The [2023 Creative Aging Institute](#) focused on intergenerational programs and arts and creativity as an antidote to isolation.
- ▶ **NEW!** To support state arts agency efforts in the realm of **equitable grant making**, a fresh edition of [Funding Choice Points](#) was released early in the new year. This self-assessment tool critiques common grant-making strategies and offers



questions for reflection, along with current policy and practice examples from more than 20 states. [Facilitating Access to Arts Funds](#) is another new companion resource. It's a top-line synopsis of grant shifts especially crafted for agencies that must comply with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) restrictions and avoid DEI terminology.

NEW!

- ▶ Building on the success of the [Equity GAP Project](#) piloted with the Ohio Arts Council, NASAA continued to support state arts agency efforts to assess their grant investments through an equity lens. A similar project customized for the Illinois Arts Council (IAC), the [Equitable Grant Making Assessment Initiative](#), included a robust combination of policy review, constituent outreach, staff consultation, data analysis and benchmarking. The results are informing [substantial policy shifts](#) by IAC to broaden the distribution and increase the accessibility of public arts dollars statewide.

NEW!

- ▶ To help state arts agencies maximize the impact of their **investments in individual artists**, NASAA issued a new edition of the [State Arts Agency Artist Fellowships Strategy Sampler](#). It provides details on 32 state arts agency fellowship programs, noting the variety of strategies adopted by states to make fellowship awards more inclusive. The State to State database catalogs numerous other [artist services programs](#) provided by state arts agencies.
- ▶ An Indigenous Circle of Advisors and NASAA staff continue work on the [Strengthening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities](#) initiative. This program aspires to help state arts agencies develop intentional, respectful and responsive relationships with **Indigenous artists, Native organizations and tribal governments**. Key learnings are being harvested from the advisors as well as interviews with more than 60 Native arts experts. NASAA is drafting recommendations and descriptions of successful Native arts programs developed by state arts agencies.



2024 Priority Equity

- ✓ Released new analyses of state arts agency grants by [social vulnerability](#), [poverty](#), [rurality](#) and [organizational size](#)
- ✓ Published [Funding Choice Points](#) and [Facilitating Access to Arts Funds](#)
- ✓ Completed the [Equitable Grant Making Assessment Initiative](#) for Illinois
- ✓ Facilitated an equitable grant-making workshop for folk and traditional arts managers
- ✓ Added a new section on equity considerations in NASAA's [State Arts Agency Artist Fellowships Strategy Sampler](#)
- ✓ Advanced the [Strengthening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities](#) initiative
- ✓ Conducted three customized demographic data demonstrations for state arts agencies
- ✓ Supported the People of Color Affinity Group and mentorship program
- ✓ Promoted [DEI models](#) and equity resources in every issue of [NASAA Notes](#)
- ✓ Completed a comprehensive equity audit
- ✓ Added language translation and enhanced accessibility features to the NASAA website

- ▶ To date in this fiscal year, NASAA provided **technical assistance** to 10 state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. We conducted a data collection and evaluation workshop for Arkansas; administered a strategic planning survey for Montana; led a council training session for Massachusetts; briefed Pennsylvania constituents on creative economy data; completed an equitable grant-making analysis for Illinois; participated in special events in Mississippi and Wisconsin; conducted advocacy briefings for Tennessee, South Arts and Arts Midwest; and launched a custom data analysis for Arts Midwest.

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

- ▶ **NEW!** NASAA's [2023 Executive Forum](#) was a new **leadership convening model** focused on the needs of executive and deputy directors. It provided opportunities for in-depth, professionally facilitated dialogue about the most pressing leadership issues facing state arts agencies. The inaugural forum was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and featured a highly participatory and member-directed agenda.
- ▶ The [2024 Learning Series](#) offers **year-round virtual professional development** sessions for the entire state arts agency field. The series began with a session on artificial intelligence and its effects on the arts sector. Future sessions will focus on the creative economy, accessibility and audience trends, and a variety of other topics.
- ▶ Thirteen **new executive directors** were appointed in 2023. NASAA facilitated a day-long New Executive Directors Roundtable for them in conjunction with the Executive Forum. Two more new executive directors have been appointed so far this fiscal year, with transitions underway in another three 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.
- ▶ **NEW!** [About State arts Agencies: Citizen Councils](#) is a new resource providing a succinct orientation and introduction to the important work that **council members** do. It clarifies the differences between public commissions and nonprofit boards and helps new council members learn what to expect during their term of service.
- ▶ The [2023 State Arts Agency Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute](#) took place in Salt Lake City, Utah. The agenda featured sessions on teaching artistry, wellness, strategies for inclusion and model state arts agency programs. Numerous Utah cultural organizations contributed to discussions designed to help state arts agencies support robust arts education programming that is accessible to everyone. Regular arts education networking and learning sessions take place throughout the year, supported by an NEA cooperative agreement.
- ▶ The virtual 2024 **Folk and Traditional Arts Professional Development Institute** kicked off with a webinar in January focusing on equitable grant-making strategies in the folk and traditional arts field. Regular networking and learning sessions take place throughout the year, supported by an NEA


2024 Priority

Public Service

- ✓ Provided onboarding and orientation services tailored to the unique public service roles of state arts agencies
- ✓ Facilitated peer networking forums to extend learning and foster supportive professional communities
- ✓ Nurtured members of color in the state arts agency field through the People of Color Mentorship Program
- ✓ Released a new resource on the unique roles of [citizen councils](#)
- ✓ Shared monthly resources on workplace well-being, curated for relevance to the public sector

cooperative agreement. A six-month pilot phase to expand a mentorship program wrapped up in March. Participating managers' evaluations will inform how to enrich the program going forward.

- ▶ Preparations are in full swing for [NASAA Assembly 2024](#), to take place October 23-26 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture will host arts delegates from around the nation at this premier arts event. The conference will offer peer networking as well as sessions on cross-sector partnerships, emergency management and resiliency, reaching underserved constituencies, and more. Participants will have ample opportunities to engage with the vibrant cultural community of San Juan. All state arts agency council members, staff and state cultural advocates are invited.



NASAA Assembly 2024 will take place in San Juan, Puerto Rico—the birthplace of bomba.

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 [April](#). This publication highlights recent NASAA activities and serves as a handy insert in council meeting materials. The [For Council Members](#) web page gives council members 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 completed an **accessibility assessment** of our website and made technical adjustments to make content easier to process for individuals with disabilities. We also added language translation capabilities and improved navigation links across the site. We made visual and usability improvements to frequently accessed pages.

NEW!

B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.

- ▶ NASAA supports virtual meetings of **job-alike peer groups**, most of which meet quarterly. We facilitate these gatherings for executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, chairs and council members, grants officers, arts education managers, community development managers, folk and traditional arts program managers, gallery managers, public art managers and public information officers.

- ▶ Our **People of Color Affinity Group** provides a supportive and empowering forum for people of color in the state arts agency staff and council network. The [DEI Mentorship Program](#) supports members of color as they enter, sustain and advance their careers with state arts agencies.
- ▶ NASAA maintained **listservs** to facilitate peer networking.
- ▶ NASAA hosts regular **mindfulness and meditation** sessions. The 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 each other.

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

- ▶ 2024 marks NASAA's 56th year of service to state arts agencies. To celebrate the occasion—and raise awareness about NASAA's role—we launched the **56 Years, 56 Strong** campaign. Through December 2024, NASAA will use the campaign to shine a spotlight on the impact that state arts agencies and NASAA have on communities and the nation. The campaign also will serve as a challenge to attract new donors.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ We shared information about NASAA services during **orientations** for new executive directors, arts education managers, community development coordinators and public information officers.

NEW!



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** began planning for ways to raise awareness about NASAA and promote the 56 Years, 56 Strong campaign and to develop relationships with foundations.
- ▶ The **Governance Committee** met to discuss board representation needs and develop guidance for NASAA's Nominating Committee.
- ▶ NASAA **board meetings** are open to guest observers who are voting members of our Assembly. See the [Upcoming 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**. In addition to the creative aging work with E.A. Michelson Philanthropies, NASAA is in dialogue with the Ford Foundation, Good Chaos, Heinz

Endowments, Mellon Foundation and Surdna Foundation to explore opportunities for supporting cross-sector collaborations as well as our advocacy and equity work.

- ▶ In 2023 (January 1 – December 31), NASAA raised \$127,355 from **individual donors**. [Gifts](#) ranged from \$5 to \$25,000. 167 people made a gift to NASAA in 2023.
- ▶ NASAA received three-year approval for partnership support from the **National Endowment for the Arts**. We also enter into annual cooperative agreements with the NEA to provide information services and manage professional development activities for state arts agency arts education managers and folk and traditional arts program managers.
- ▶ NASAA supplements our revenues 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.

- ▶ NASAA completed a number of technical upgrades. We upgraded our office **Internet connection** to improve remote access speeds and network management. NASAA has put **office hardware** on a systematic upgrade and depreciation cycle. Upgrades for staff using the oldest equipment were completed in the first quarter of 2024. A **technology roadmap** for the remainder of 2024 is being developed in collaboration with our IT support firm.
- ▶ **Research databases** are a business-critical technology for NASAA. To plan for future service improvements and cloud based access, we launched a research database needs assessment to inform upgrades and plan for platform migration costs.

NEW!

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

- ▶ NASAA finished our **organizational equity audit**. With the active involvement of the board, staff and membership, this comprehensive process examined our organizational culture, governance, policies and operations. Team Dynamics briefed the staff on all findings and facilitated discussions to prioritize action items. Early action items will include revising our personnel policy manual and revisiting compensation benchmarks and salary ranges. NASAA staff meets twice monthly to reflect on key learnings and advance implementation action steps.
- ▶ NASAA **evaluated** the Executive Forum, the Creative Aging Institute and the 2023 arts education and folk arts managers' Professional Development Institutes. The results are being used by NASAA, the NEA and member steering committees to plan future professional development offerings.
- ▶ We completed an **independent financial audit** for FY2023. 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.