Organized around NASAA’s strategic plan, this document highlights key accomplishments from NASAA’s 2019 membership year. Special activities addressing top priorities from our FY2019 Action Plan are noted throughout:

Politics and Policy

State Arts Agency Innovation

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

State Arts Agency Leadership Transitions

GOAL 1: ADVOCATE FOR STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

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

NASAA worked strategically to welcome new members of Congress after the midterm elections. We established positive working relationships with key House and Senate committees overseeing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) budget, many of which saw their composition change as the new 116th Congress got under way. NASAA’s outreach emphasized the impact of the NEA and the crucial role played by the 40% of NEA grant funds set aside for states and regions.

Despite repeated White House attempts to eliminate the agency—and a protracted government shutdown this winter—NASAA and coalition advocates worked with Congress to secure a $2.2 million increase in funding for the NEA, attaining our funding goal of $155 million for fiscal year 2019. This marks the fourth consecutive increase for the NEA. The efforts of NASAA members were pivotal to the House’s passage of legislation that would increase the NEA’s FY2020 funding to $167.5 million. (As of this writing, the Senate has yet to formulate its recommendation.)

To underscore the importance of the arts to federal and state policy audiences, NASAA convened its second annual Capitol Hill Briefing on May 2, 2019. The event, focusing on the arts and rural prosperity, was endorsed by the Congressional Arts Caucus. It shared new research and vivid examples demonstrating the power of creativity and
culture to help rural communities prosper. In addition to a full house on-site at the U.S. Capitol, the event was livestreamed to an audience of over 17,000 viewers across the nation.

NASAA's president and CEO testified in person to the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, which has jurisdiction over the budget for the NEA. She requested $167.5 million in funding for the agency for FY2020. She emphasized the agency's track record of achieving bipartisan support and the importance of Partnership Agreement flexibility, as well as the impact of the federal-state partnership on rural communities, military families and arts education.

Working in partnership with other advocates is a key strategy for success. NASAA was a core member of the Cultural Advocacy Group and cosponsored national Arts Advocacy Day, organized by Americans for the Arts, which engaged more than 500 cultural advocates from across the nation.

We issued timely action alerts about congressional activity affecting state arts agencies.

NASAA provided customized research tools to support federal advocacy efforts by state arts agencies and their allies. Our NEA Fact Sheets (customized for every member) illustrate the state/federal arts investment in each state and jurisdiction.

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

NASAA met regularly with senior NEA leadership and maintained positive working relationships with White House appointees to the agency. We presented to the National Council on the Arts on the importance of state arts agencies and the reach of federal-state partnership funds. We also urged—and ultimately applauded—Senate confirmation of Mary Anne Carter as the NEA chairman.

NASAA secured funding from ArtPlace America to help the arts field tap federal resources for community development and creative placemaking. A new guide, slated for development next fiscal year, will help state arts agencies to access funds from federal agencies including the U.S. departments of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development, the Economic Development Administration, and others.

C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

NASAA communicated frequently with state arts advocacy organizations. We distributed funding data, policy alerts and advocacy tools to the State Arts Action Network (SAAN). We conducted a

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**2019 PRIORITY: POLITICS AND POLICY**

Following midterm elections for 36 governors, 6,070 state legislative races and 470 contested seats in Congress, NASAA helped state arts agencies to build influence across a complex and contentious political spectrum. Highlights include:

- Testifying in person to the U.S. House of Representatives
- Advising states on work with gubernatorial transition teams and inaugural activities
- Convening a Capitol Hill Briefing on the arts and rural prosperity
- Completing a rural prosperity partnership with the National Governors Association
- Issuing advocacy guidance on establishing relationships with state legislators and conducting successful meetings with elected officials
- Training state arts agency staff and advocacy groups on political depolarization strategies
special briefing for SAAN members on the results of our 2018 public opinion poll of conservative voters, pointing out messaging strategies that resonate most strongly with this constituent group.

We issued three fresh editions in our Practical Advocate series. Advocacy vs. Lobbying: An Arts Primer tackles common myths and misconceptions about barriers to nonprofit advocacy. Meetings Matter offers sage advice for conducting productive meetings with elected officials or legislative staff. We also updated Three Simple Ways to Advocate for the Arts, a perennial favorite that illuminates advocacy actions every state arts agency grantees can take.

NASAA's state legislative tracking system pinpoints bills affecting state arts agencies, their resources and their constituents. In 2019, NASAA monitored 129 arts bills to assess their impact on state arts agencies. We'll synthesize the most relevant in the next edition of NASAA's State Legislative Roundup.

NASAA provides customized support to states facing advocacy crises—or opportunities. We provided in-depth advocacy support to the Alaska State Council on the Arts during its elimination threat. We also advised two agencies seeking to engineer significant funding increases, and two agencies facing potential relocations within the structure of state government. We briefed agency leaders on issues, provided tactical advice, supplied return-on-investment data and helped prepare legislative talking points. NASAA is strictly guided by our members in this work, avoiding the imposition of a D.C. agenda on state politics.

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

To help state officials recognize the arts as an economic asset, NASAA partnered with the National Governors Association (NGA) and the NEA to release Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States. NASAA promoted the guide to state and national policy networks in the rural, economic and community development fields. We also collaborated with the NGA on the development of a project website containing video testimonials from Utah and Colorado, a Medium blog post, an editorial that appeared in Governing, and an extensive social media campaign.

NASAA commenced a new partnership with the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA). NACEDA and NASAA coauthored an article for the Community Development Innovation Review, a journal published by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco to promote cross-sector scholarship on economic resilience and mobility for low-income communities. The article illuminates state policy innovations that hold the potential to support more—and more equitable—placemaking activity across the nation.

NASAA meets regularly with Americans for the Arts (AFTA) to exchange information, discuss advocacy strategies and coordinate collaborative activities. NASAA participated in AFTA's Equitable Investments Advisory Group, which developed guidance to encourage equitable grant-making policies among local arts agencies.
NASAA consults with Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) on strategies to encourage policy and advocacy engagement among private foundations supporting the arts. NASAA authored an article on public funding trends for the GIA Reader journal presented during a GIA webinar on public and private arts grant making.

NASAA continues its work as an advisory member of the Rural Generation Summit Working Group. Sixteen state arts agencies attended the group’s May convening. Partners included Art of the Rural, ArtPlace America, the Center for Rural Strategies, First Peoples Fund, the Mississippi Center for Cultural Production, the Rural Policy Research Institute and Springboard for the Arts.

NASAA represented state arts agencies at the ArtPlace America Summit, a national gathering of creative placemaking practitioners. NASAA and the other participants reflected on placemaking trends and harvested effective practices from placemaking sites across the country.

NASAA plays a leadership role in the Arts Education Partnership (AEP), operated by the Education Commission of the States. NASAA leads AEP's Equity Working Group, facilitating its work to better understand arts education equity practices.

Adaptations of NASAA’s American Ingenuity and Student Success advocacy videos were aired by the Ovation media network during a 24-hour blitz of commercial-free artistic programming. NASAA’s advocacy message got exposure across all of Ovation’s platforms: Ovation TV (reaching 50 million households nationwide), Ovation NOW and its social media pages.

NASAA supplied state arts agency data to cultural research efforts under way by other national organizations, including the NEA, Chorus America, the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, the DeVos Institute, and Southern Methodist University/DataArts. NASAA’s senior director of research chairs the steering committee of the Cultural Research Network and is participating in the technical working group for the Statewide Data Infrastructure Project for Arts Education with the NEA and the Education Commission of the States. NASAA's research manager is participating in the NEA's Arts and Pain Management and Substance Use Disorder Technical Working Group.

NASAA consulted regularly with the six regional arts organizations, informing complementary work on advocacy, policy, planning and services to support state arts agencies.

NASAA represented state arts agencies in numerous forums convened by other allies, including the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, the National Association of Development Organizations, the National Consortium of Creative Placemaking, the Federation of State Humanities Councils, the American Educational Research Association, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Public Health in America Working Group.

**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 from states and jurisdictions, NASAA generated maps, statistical analyses and fact sheets showing the distribution and impact of more than 20,000 awards. Recent releases have included General Operating Support, Individual Artists, Local Arts Agencies, Arts Education and Rural Communities fact sheets.
A new round of state arts agency staff size and compensation data provided comparative information on salaries and staff structures. Members use this data when reviewing compensation schedules, answering questions from state personnel offices or making the case for new positions. The State Arts Agency Staffing Trends report includes new data on the demographics of the state arts agency field, including race, age, LGBTQA+, people with disabilities and veteran status.

NASAA’s State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2019 report provided a comprehensive analysis of state arts agency budgets including appropriations, state rankings, line items and trends over time. The FY2020 State Arts Agency Legislative Appropriations Preview gave a funding forecast for the year ahead. The on-line Raise Your Ranking tool and the Legislative Appropriations Explorer, Total Revenue Explorer and a Regional Appropriations and Revenue Explorer all provide comparative data in engaging formats.

We implemented a new generation of state level equity tools, Visualizing Equity in Grant Making. These dashboards—delivered through customized demonstrations—help state arts agency boards and staff members to understand which demographic cohorts their funds are reaching. The system now includes multiple years of data and can support state-specific program analysis.

NASAA released a new suite of national benchmarks: State Arts Agencies Advancing Equity. With infographics dedicated to race equity, economic equity and rural equity, these visuals provide a national baseline for gauging what populations state arts agencies are serving—and where greater progress toward equity is needed.

2019 PRIORITY: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

NASAA provided a robust suite of member services and practical tools to help state arts agencies advance DEI and to help NASAA lead by example. Highlights include:

- Convening an in-person meeting and quarterly conference calls of our affinity group for people of color in the state arts agency field
- Launching a mentorship program to support the professional growth of people of color in service to state arts agencies
- Expansion of our Visualizing Equity in Grant Making service suite
- Establishing national benchmarks for Rural Equity, Economic Equity and Race Equity
- Integrating DEI into the Assembly 2018 learning design through an intentionally diverse cadre of session leaders and speakers as well as sessions dedicated to negotiating cultural, economic and political differences. A workshop on Leading Inclusive Dialogue was the top-rated session of the Assembly.
- Collecting new demographic data on the state arts agency field
- Collaborating in equity work with numerous colleague organizations, including Americans for the Arts, national arts service organizations, the Arts Education Partnership and others

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

State to State, a monthly column in the NASAA Notes newsletter, profiled 28 innovative state arts agency initiatives. Examples of recently featured programs include Utah’s Social Impact Study, the Rising Leaders program of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Music & Memory Tennessee (now the Tennessee Person-Centered Music Program), and the Indigenous Arts

NASAA member-only content. For assistance, contact Sue Struve.
Initiative of the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission. More than 370 state program summaries are available on-line in the State to State archive.

We released three new resources to help state arts agencies integrate the arts and creative therapies into health care: Creative Aging, Arts and the Opioid Epidemic, and Arts in Clinical Settings. Based on an in-depth review of current research, these strategy samplers lift up model practices for using the arts to support older adults, people struggling with opioid addiction and patients in health care environments. Each Strategy Sampler showcases successful state arts agency initiatives as well as tips for designing new programs.

NASAA launched a collaboration with ArtPlace America. This multi-year initiative is designed to strengthen state arts agency capacities for community development and creative placemaking. Activities completed to date include facilitating a focus group with state arts agency community development directors and conducting a field assessment of the varied placemaking roles of state arts agencies.

NASAA started a new creative aging partnership with Aroha Philanthropies. Through a field survey and “design charrette,” NASAA is identifying what states are currently accomplishing with creative aging as well as gaps where additional resources might spark meaningful new efforts.

We expanded our program evaluation guidance for state arts agencies. Now included are examples of state arts agency program evaluations and recommended resources from the arts and philanthropic sectors. The research team convened an affinity group conversation about evaluation at Assembly 2018.

NASAA collaborated with the NEA and the National Coalition for Arts’ Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER) to support states and jurisdictions affected by disasters and to circulate best practices in readiness, recovery and resilience. NASAA 1st Vice Chair Suzanne Wise (ED-NE) serves as NASAA’s leadership liaison to the NCAPER network.

NASAA sits on an Indiana Arts Commission advisory group, helping the agency to develop strategies to foster greater diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.

NASAA serves as a national cochair of The Art of Community: Rural SC initiative, which is expanding opportunities for rural communities through the arts, culture and creative placemaking.
C. Facilitate members' use of information for planning, decision making and case making.

NASAA fulfilled an estimated 450 information requests in FY2019. We answered a high volume of questions about federal funding and the government shutdown this winter, as well as fielding inquiries about state arts agency staffing, funding, planning, programs and policies. Most inquiries come from members. Nonmembers (including the NEA, advocacy groups, consultants and academics) also request 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 on-line interactive dashboard draws on U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data to provide authoritative state-by-state information on arts jobs, the total value of cultural production, location quotients and more. In conjunction with this work, NASAA updated and maintained the Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies.

NASAA developed new interactive benchmarking reports that will allow more members to utilize NASAA's state level funding and grant-making data to see trends over time, regional comparisons, rural grant making and trends for key types of grant support.

NASAA provided in-depth technical assistance to 16 state, jurisdictional or regional arts agencies this year. We facilitated board and staff planning sessions, led conference workshops, conducted strategic planning surveys, delivered data collection training and offered customized mapping services. This included hosting a delegation from the American Samoa Council on Art, Culture and Humanities, which came to Washington, D.C., for three days of customized consultations with NASAA and the NEA.

Thoughtful curation of other research relevant to state arts agencies is one of NASAA's trademark services. We shared useful research on diversity, equity and inclusion; creative placemaking; arts education; creative aging and the evolving roles of museums, to name just a few topics of note.

NASAA helped states comply with federal reporting requirements, including the collection of details on activity locations and beneficiary groups.

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

NASAA Assembly 2018 was hosted by the Maryland State Arts Council in Baltimore. The agenda included a full complement of peer group gatherings, Flashes of Inspiration and "deep dives" into the topics of inclusive facilitation practices, equity in the panel room, media relations, new technologies and advocacy. Special events featured celebrations of NASAA's 50th anniversary and learning expeditions to Maryland Arts & Entertainment Districts.

The 2018 Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute (PDI) took place in conjunction with the Assembly. That agenda, supported through a cooperative agreement with the
NEA, continued the cohort's exploration of inclusion, diversity, equity and access with an emphasis on resilience and trauma-informed education practices. Planning for the 2019 PDI, taking place in Montana, is under way. The event will emphasize meaningful engagement with rural, remote and tribal populations.

The NEA expanded its folk and traditional arts cooperative agreement with NASAA to convene a national cohort of folklife professionals and their allies at an Assembly preconference. Close Listening: A National Case for the Value & Impact of Folk & Traditional Arts brought together diverse stakeholders to consider innovations, challenges and future priorities for the folklife field. NASAA supported a continuation of this conversation, the NEA's Folk & Traditional Arts National Strategy Meeting, held in June 2019 and hosted by the McKnight Foundation.

Web seminars in 2019 featured the Florida Arts & Wellbeing Indicators project, Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector, Attracting and Retaining a Younger Public Sector Work Force and DEI Profiles: California Arts Council.

The NASAA 2019 Leadership Institute, held in Providence, Rhode Island, is designed for the top tier of state arts agency decision makers—chairs, council members, executive directors and deputy directors. This year's agenda emphasizes grant-making equity, strategic partnerships and leadership skills. Hosted by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, the Leadership Institute offers a unique opportunity to network with peers; to connect with state, regional and federal colleagues; and to enjoy a taste of autumn in New England.

This summer's Boot Camp for new state arts agency executive directors was an immersive learning and networking experience for seven recently appointed agency leaders. The program, customized to the current interests of the 2019 Boot Camp cohort, examined the public purpose of state arts agencies as well as advocacy, partnerships, DEI, change leadership and more.

We completed the site selection process for NASAA Assembly 2020, to be held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The dates will be announced shortly.

**GOAL 3: CONNECT STATE ARTS AGENCIES.**

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

NASAA issued Report to Councils in December, March, April and July. Specifically designed for volunteer leaders, this report offers highlights of NASAA activities and serves as a handy insert in council meeting materials. The For Council Members web page gives appointed state arts agency leaders streamlined access to practical resources.
NASAA used Facebook to promote the good work of our members and share news with the state arts agency community. Our most popular post was about the Medium blog describing our rural prosperity partnership with the NGA. It reached 19,706 people. Widen our network by liking our page yourself.

We expanded the use of our Twitter feed to promote our conferences, our advocacy efforts, the NGA partnership, our new health care suite, the Creative Economy State Profiles and programmatic highlights from our membership. Follow us to learn more.

Monthly issues of the NASAA Notes newsletter shared current news and resource alerts useful to state arts agencies, state arts advocacy organizations and arts allies.

B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.

NASAA sustained our Affinity Group for People of Color and implemented our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mentorship Program. The mentorship program provides professional development for our members of color who are in (or entering) middle or executive management careers in state arts agencies. The first cohort of mentors/mentees has completed its work and an evaluation reveals strong support for continuation of the program. Together, the mentorship program and the affinity group empower people of color and increase professional advancement opportunities.

NASAA gathered a full complement of peer groups at Assembly 2018, providing networking opportunities for state arts agency council members, executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, public information officers, grants officers, arts education managers, community development managers, and folk and traditional arts managers. Executive directors, deputies and council members also convened at the 2019 Leadership Institute.

NASAA serves as the fiscal agent for the annual gathering of state arts agency community development managers. Their 2019 retreat in St. Paul, Minnesota included excursions to the Minnesota State Arts Board and to Springboard for the Arts.

NASAA maintained listservs for state arts agency executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, public information officers, grants officers, arts education managers, community development managers, folk and traditional arts managers, and the People of Color Affinity Group. Our members use these listservs to share news and ask colleagues for advice.

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

NASAA introduced 12 new or interim state and regional executive directors to our network. Each new state arts agency leader receives a one-on-one onboarding consultation with NASAA,
customized follow-up support on priority issues, a welcome packet and an introduction to the field in NASAA Notes.

NASAA conducted a virtual **NASAA orientation** for council members of the Hawai‘i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. Convened via video conference, the session reviewed NASAA's services, with a specific focus on information of interest to council members. Any member state can request a virtual orientation by contacting Sue Struve.

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

- **Member participation** in NASAA’s work has been extensive: all 56 member states and jurisdictions were active as board or committee volunteers, conference participants, donors and information users.

- The Nominating Committee completed **phone interviews** with 98 executive directors, chairs or council members. This comprehensive outreach process not only helped the committee develop our 2020 board of directors slate, it also harvested **crucial planning information** about the services members want NASAA to prioritize and how we can be of greatest assistance to state arts agencies in the areas of DEI and advocacy.

**GOAL 4: BUILD NASAA’S CAPACITY.**

**A. Develop and diversify NASAA’s revenues.**

- NASAA continued our **earned income business planning effort**. With the assistance of McKinley Advisors, a firm specializing in services to professional associations, we completed a market assessment of opportunities for serving constituents beyond NASAA’s core membership base.

- NASAA has increased our emphasis on **cultivating foundation support**. In FY2019 we submitted proposals totaling $1,641,178 requesting funding to expand our advocacy efforts; advance diversity, equity and inclusion work with states; develop new creative placemaking resources for states; and launch a creative aging initiative. We successfully secured commitments for more than $500,000 in new foundation funds, to be realized over multiple fiscal years.

- NASAA raised $100,000 in FY2019, including $50,000 in gifts from 149 individuals during our **50 Years, 50 Ways NASAA Makes a Difference campaign**. As part of the campaign, we raised $6,466 from 71 individuals at NASAA Assembly 2018—the highest amount raised at any NASAA convening.

- We secured $159,500 in corporate, foundation, individual and public support for **NASAA Assembly 2018** in Baltimore, Maryland. Fundraising—and friendraising!—for the **2019 Leadership Institute** in Providence, Rhode Island, yielded $74,100 in public and private support, as well as sponsorships.
B. Develop NASAA's human resources.

- NASAA conducted our annual employee satisfaction survey and we're using the results to inform our management strategies.
- NASAA implemented a new telework program to provide staff with valued flexibility.
- We continue to fund professional development opportunities, so that every staff member gets training specific to his/her job responsibilities at least every other year. A new membership in LinkedIn Learning makes on-line course offerings available to staff 365 days a year.

C. Improve NASAA's operations and technology.

- We completed the first tier of technology upgrades, which included installation of a new server and security protocols, replacement of some staff workstations/monitors, implementation of a new video conferencing system and adoption of an instant messaging work space. Additional hardware and software upgrades will be phased in over the coming year.
- NASAA developed an information security plan.
- We completed an assessment process to inform our upgrade to a more effective, robust membership database. A new platform has been selected and we'll begin configuration and data migration in the fall.

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

- NASAA monitors a robust suite of operational performance metrics. The targets are informed by best practices among professional associations. We also track a set of strategic indicators of state arts agency strength and capacity. These State Arts Agency Vital Statistics help state arts agencies and NASAA to track progress toward our long-term goals.
- NASAA conducted evaluations of Assembly 2018, the 2018 Professional Development Institute, our web seminars and the Boot Camp. Those findings inform our future learning programs.
- We analyzed communications metrics relating to our website, e-mail open rates and Facebook engagement. We draw on these resources to inform content delivery and make real-time adjustments to our communications tactics.
- Under the oversight of the Audit Committee, NASAA completed a successful independent audit of our finances and internal controls.