

ACTION PLAN
HIGHLIGHTS

Organized around NASAA's [strategic plan](#), this document highlights key accomplishments from the first half (October 1, 2019 – April 1, 2020) of NASAA's membership year. Special activities addressing top priorities from our [FY2020 Action Plan](#) are noted throughout:



Advocacy



State Arts Agency Innovation [and COVID-19]



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 in collaboration with key **House and Senate** committees overseeing the National Endowment for the Arts (Arts Endowment) budget, many of which saw their composition change with the 116th Congress. NASAA's outreach—especially our outreach to new staff members—emphasized the impact of the Arts Endowment and the crucial role played by the 40% of Arts Endowment grant funds set aside for states and regions.
- Strong state relationships helped Congress approve legislation appropriating \$162.5 million to the Arts Endowment for fiscal year 2020. This figure is an [increase of \\$7.25 million](#) over last year and represents **the greatest one-year bump in funding for the agency in a decade**.
- Despite a White House recommendation (for the fourth consecutive time) for [elimination](#) of federal arts funding next year, NASAA made positive initial **inroads toward another increase in support for the Arts Endowment for FY2021**. Along with our Cultural Advocacy Group partners, we established a consensus goal for a \$170 million appropriations request. NASAA President and CEO Pam Breau [testified](#) to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, underscoring the relevance of the Arts Endowment to residents of every state and jurisdiction.
- To help the nation address the dire economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress enacted the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act**. NASAA worked with a coalition of cultural advocates, key appropriators and members of the Congressional Arts Caucus to ensure that the needs of the arts field were included in the formulation of this landmark legislation. The CARES Act [included \\$75 million for the Arts Endowment](#), 40% of which was designated for state and regional arts agencies.

NEW!

- NASAA meets regularly with senior **Arts Endowment leadership**. We consult on agency policy, the state-federal partnership and ways that we can collaborate to address the needs of the arts across all 56 states and jurisdictions.
- NASAA meets regularly with **Americans for the Arts** (AFTA) to exchange information, discuss advocacy strategies and coordinate collaborative activities.
- **NEW!** NASAA initiated work on a new **advocacy messaging** project with support from Ford Foundation. Building on preliminary polling and a Think Tank conducted in 2018, NASAA is examining how other causes and sectors have garnered positive gains in federal funding and grown support in Congress, across the political spectrum. Using what is learned from this research, the next phase of work will focus on values-driven messaging and practical communications guidance for arts advocates.

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

- **NEW!** The **benefits of the CARES Act** extend well beyond the federal cultural agencies, and NASAA is helping state arts councils understand and harness those resources. A new **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program** will provide unemployment benefits to gig workers and part-time workers. Nonprofits are eligible for a variety of new and expanded relief programs, too, including **U.S. Small Business Administration loans**, Employee Retention Credits and deferral of payroll taxes. As of this writing, work is beginning on subsequent COVID-19 relief legislation and NASAA is representing the arts and state arts agencies in preparatory strategy conversations.
- **NEW!** Thanks to our partnership with ArtPlace America, NASAA is investigating **federal resources for community development and creative placemaking**. A new guide will help the arts field access funds from multiple federal agencies including the U.S. departments of Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development, the Economic Development Administration, and others. **Metris Arts Consulting** is NASAA's research collaborator on this effort.

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.
- NASAA's **state legislative tracking system** pinpoints bills affecting state arts agencies, their resources and their constituents. We are monitoring emerging legislation and will synthesize the most relevant trends in the next edition of NASAA's **State Legislative Roundup**.
- NASAA provides **customized support to states facing advocacy crises—or opportunities**. We briefed agency leaders on issues, provided tactical advice, supplied return-on-investment data and

2020 PRIORITY: ADVOCACY



NASAA is helping state arts agencies to navigate an increasingly complex policy environment, marked by political friction, upcoming elections, and the effects of COVID-19 on state and federal policy. Recent activity highlights include:

- collaborating with advocates and Congress to secure a [significant increase in funding](#) for the National Endowment for the Arts
- securing dedicated resources for state arts agencies and regional arts organizations in the [CARES Act](#)
- initiating cross-sector research on advocacy message framing
- issuing balanced and timely [alerts](#) on federal policy developments

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.

- NASAA conducted a **special briefing for regional arts organizations** on the results of our 2018 public opinion poll of conservative voters, pointing out messaging strategies that resonate most strongly with this constituent group.

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

- NEW! ➤ NASAA's partnership with the **National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations** (NACEDA) bore fruit in November with a [joint article in the *Community Development Innovation Review*](#), a journal published by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. [State Policy Innovations to Support Creative Placemaking](#) points to the potential to support more—and more equitable—placemaking activity across the nation. NASAA and NACEDA also are beginning to introduce state arts agencies to their counterparts in the community development field.
- NEW! ➤ NASAA consults with **Grantmakers in the Arts** (GIA) on strategies to encourage advocacy engagement and equitable grant making among public agencies and private foundations. NASAA joined several state and regional arts agencies at one of GIA's "Racial Equity in Grantmaking" workshops. NASAA also participated in GIA's "Arts at the Intersection" dialogue, exploring how the arts can pursue racial equity goals in concert with other fields such as affordable housing, social justice, environmental justice and health care.
- **Rural development** continues to be an important focus for NASAA's policy work. A "[Rural](#)" [Done Right](#) session at GIA's November conference considered principles to guide the use of arts and culture for community based change. Pam Breau [keynoted](#) the Rural Arts and Culture Summit, where hundreds of arts and rural leaders pooled ideas. These activities amplify our 2019 partnership with the [National Governors Association](#) (NGA), which continues to resonate with policy, arts and business audiences. A December article in *Forbes*—[Sponsoring the Arts Builds Business](#)—cited the NGA's recommendations about the arts as proven assets for economic development.
- 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 efforts to better understand arts education equity practices.
- NEW! ➤ NASAA joined **Grantmakers for Effective Organizations** (GEO), a cross-sector network of more than 6,000 philanthropic organizations working to address nonprofit needs and strengthen racial equity in grant making. President and CEO Pam Breau joined GEO's CEO Roundtable this winter
- NASAA consulted regularly with the **six regional arts organizations**, informing complementary work on advocacy, policy, planning and services to support state arts agencies.

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 updated information on [rural places](#), [local arts agencies](#), [general operational support](#), [individual artists](#) and [arts education](#). The [State Arts Agency Funding and Grant Making](#) report provides a national perspective.

- NASAA's [State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2020](#) report provided a comprehensive analysis of **state arts agency budgets** including appropriations, state rankings, line items and trends over time. The online [Raise Your Ranking](#) tool and the [Legislative Appropriations Explorer](#), [Total Agency Revenue Explorer](#) and a [Regional Appropriations and Revenue Explorer](#) all provide comparative data in engaging formats.

- We promoted a robust suite of **equitable investment tools**: [Visualizing Equity in Grant Making](#). These dashboards—delivered through customized demonstrations—help state arts agencies understand which demographic cohorts their funds are reaching.

- The **State Arts Agencies Advancing Equity** series offers 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.

- NASAA provided comprehensive information on state arts agency **staffing and compensation** to assist with agency restructuring, professional advancement and leadership transitions.

2020 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:

- foregrounding equity strategies in state arts agency [COVID-19 responses](#), especially their [grant programs](#)
- focusing on equity in a [new article](#) published by the *Community Development Innovation Review*
- convening quarterly conference calls of our affinity group for people of color in the state arts agency field
- evaluating our 2019 mentorship program to support the professional growth of people of color in service to state arts agencies
- promoting our [Visualizing Equity in Grant Making](#) service suite as well as our [Rural Equity](#), [Economic Equity](#) and [Race Equity](#) benchmarks
- participating in the Native Arts & Culture: Resilience, Reclamation & Relevance convening hosted by the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as two racial equity forums hosted by Grantmakers in the Arts
- prioritizing DEI in planning NASAA's 2020 professional development offerings through an intentionally diverse cadre of facilitators and speakers as well as sessions dedicated to equity, access and inclusion
- promoting DEI models and resources in every edition of our NASAA Notes newsletter

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

- State to State, a monthly column in the NASAA Notes newsletter, profiled **26 innovative state arts agency initiatives**. Examples of recently featured programs include the [Made in the USVI Pop-Up Store](#), Pennsylvania's [Creative Communities Program](#), the [Arkansas Veterans Arts Grant](#), the revival of [Maritime Traditions](#) in the Northern Marianas and New York's [Creative Aging Initiative](#). More than 390 state program summaries are available online in the [State to State archive](#).

NEW! NASAA's **creative aging partnership** with Aroha Philanthropies took stock of current creative aging efforts as well as gaps where additional resources might spark meaningful new efforts. [Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging](#) summarizes a survey NASAA conducted to inform state arts agency programming as well as future collaboration opportunities with Aroha Philanthropies.

NEW! NASAA continued our **collaboration with ArtPlace America**. This [multiyear initiative](#) will strengthen state arts agency capacities for community development and creative placemaking. Activities completed in this fiscal year include completing a community development coordinators' needs assessment, a quantitative analysis of creative placemaking investments and a field scan of the varied placemaking roles of state arts agencies. NASAA recently engaged [Looking Glass Creative](#) as our project management partner for this collaboration.

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

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

NASAA fulfilled an estimated 250 **information requests** so far in FY2020. We answered a high volume of questions about COVID-19 as well as routine inquiries about state arts agency revenues, staffing, grants and planning. Most inquiries come from members. Nonmembers (including the Arts Endowment, advocacy groups, consultants and scholars) also request information.

2020 PRIORITY: STATE ARTS AGENCY INNOVATION



This year's **COVID-19 crisis** required state arts agencies to quickly pivot their operations and programs to address new realities. NASAA [supported](#) these rapid innovations by:

- [advocating](#) for federal resources and advising state arts agencies on how best to access them
- circulating timely guidance on grant system adaptations, including justifications for general operating support
- sharing examples of state arts agency programmatic responses, such as [research](#) activities, dedicated [relief grants](#), [public engagement strategies](#) and [expanding online markets](#) for artists
- offering resources to help state arts agencies reduce xenophobia and address the needs of vulnerable populations
- recommending best practices for facilitating inclusive meetings online
- convening peer groups to exchange ideas and experiences
- answering scores of information requests from members, the Arts Endowment and other allies, most within 24 hours

Our [COVID-19 Resources for State Arts Agencies](#) web page offers handy tools and keeps you up to speed on new developments.



- 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 Arts Endowment, this online interactive dashboard draws on U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data to provide information on arts jobs, the economic footprint of the sector, location quotients and more. NASAA also updated and maintained the [Interactive Database of State Creative Economy Studies](#).
- NASAA provided **in-depth technical assistance** to eight member agencies during the first half of FY2020. We facilitated council deliberations, led conference workshops and conducted custom research to inform planning and policy development.
- 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; the economics of gig workers; state budget vulnerabilities to recessions; and the role of the arts in fostering public health, to name a few topics of note. A new monthly newsletter column, [The Research Digest](#), synthesizes both [NASAA information](#) and a [selective mixture of material harvested from other organizations](#) within and beyond the arts field.

NEW!

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

- NASAA is immersed in preparations for [NASAA's Assembly 2020 conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico](#). Hosted by the [Institute for Puerto Rican Culture](#), the Assembly will provide a full lineup of engaging and relevant learning sessions as well as artist performances and community based activities that celebrate the culture and creative resilience of America's largest jurisdiction.
- The 2019 **Arts Education Managers Professional Development Institute (PDI)** took place in Missoula, Montana. The [agenda](#), supported through a cooperative agreement with the Arts Endowment, focused on diversity, equity, access and inclusion within rural, remote and tribal community contexts. Planning has started for the 2020 PDI, taking place in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in conjunction with NASAA Assembly 2020.
- NASAA is facilitating planning efforts for state arts agency peer group gatherings of **folk and traditional arts managers** (supported through an Arts Endowment cooperative agreement) and **community development coordinators** (supported through ArtPlace America) in San Juan. Learning programs, networking forums and community site visits will be tailored to the distinct needs of each group.
- **Web seminars** offered so far in 2020 featured Michigan and Rhode Island initiatives designed to cultivate [The Creative Workforce of the Future](#) and recent Arts Endowment research on [Living Traditions: A Portfolio Analysis of the National Endowment for the Arts Folk & Traditional Arts Program](#).

GOAL 3: CONNECT STATE ARTS AGENCIES.

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

- NASAA issued **Report to Councils** in [November](#), [January](#) and [March](#). This publication highlights recent 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's social media channels promote the good work of our members and share news within—and beyond—the state arts agency community. We use both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to share advocacy alerts, bite-sized research nuggets and programmatic highlights.
- Monthly issues of the [NASAA Notes newsletter](#) shared updates and resource alerts useful to state arts agencies, state arts advocacy organizations and allies.



B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.

- To help state arts agency staff learn from one another's **responses to COVID-19**, NASAA is coordinating conversations among state arts agency job-alike groups. NASAA also launched a peer-to-peer file sharing platform to help state arts agencies share draft grant guidelines and other materials relating to COVID-19 grant program development.
- 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.
- 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. Listserv usage spiked by 155% in the first three weeks of the COVID-19 crisis.
- To support state arts agencies, NASAA offers **mindfulness meditation** via conference call several times a week. These sessions are led by Chief Advancement Officer Laura Smith, who is trained in teaching meditation and has experience helping creative professionals develop a practice that supports their goals and well-being. All staff and council members are welcome to participate.

NEW!

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

2020 PRIORITY: STATE ARTS AGENCY LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS



NASAA orients state arts agency leaders to public service and equips them to succeed in meeting the unique demands of our field. So far this year, NASAA:

- facilitated onboarding for new leadership in the District of Columbia, Iowa and New Mexico
- encouraged long-term thinking about the arts leadership pipeline in our [The Creative Workforce of the Future](#) web seminar

- Three **new executive directors** joined our network. Each 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 the South Dakota Arts Council. Convened via video conference, the session reviewed NASAA's services, with a specific focus on information of interest to volunteer leadership. Any member state can request a virtual orientation by contacting NASAA Communications Manager [Sue Struve](#).

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

- The **Governance Committee** began its book of business for 2020 with a review of NASAA's nominating procedures. This spring, the committee

will consider options for improving NASAA's nominating process and will articulate the skills and attributes desired for the 2021 board of directors.

- The **Development Committee** currently is considering how best to position NASAA fundraising and donor communications in light of the COVID-19 health emergency and related economic recession.

GOAL 4: BUILD NASAA'S CAPACITY.

A. Develop and diversify NASAA's revenues.

- NASAA's **foundation partnerships** remain strong. Activities being funded by the Ford Foundation are under way, our work with ArtPlace America to support creative placemaking continues; and we're in dialogue with Aroha Philanthropies about how we'll proceed with creative aging. We are also in touch with other foundations to collaborate and consult on how best to support the arts sector in this time.
- In 2019 (January 1 – December 31), NASAA raised \$120,511 from **individual donors**, surpassing our \$100,000 goal by more than 20%. [Gifts](#) ranged from \$25 to \$25,000 and were contributed via the Annual Fund and during the 2019 Leadership Institute in Providence, Rhode Island. We also rolled out the new NASAA Signature Society, an initiative to recognize and encourage \$1,000+ gifts.
- To date, NASAA has secured \$124,500 in commitments toward our \$200,000 fundraising goal for **Assembly 2020 in Puerto Rico**. Sponsors include the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, ArtPlace America, Flamboyant Foundation, Aroha Philanthropies, National Endowment for the Arts and Mid-America Arts Alliance.
- The Arts Endowment increased its **cooperative agreement** to NASAA to support the 2020 PDI as well as expanded information services activities relating to the mapping of public and private arts funding in each state.

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 strengthened its hiring process by continuing its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in 2020 **recruitment** efforts.
- We continue to encourage **professional development** opportunities, so that every staff member gets training specific to his/her job responsibilities at least every other year.

C. Improve NASAA's operations and technology.

NEW!

- NASAA adapted to COVID-19 restrictions for the safety of our personnel as well as to comply with closure orders from the District of Columbia and surrounding states. Our recently expanded **telework program** meant that we had technology and procedures already in place to ensure continuity of operations. Laptops, remote access to our server, instant messaging and video conferencing are serving us well as 100% of staff work from their homes.

- We completed round two of **technology upgrades**, which included replacement of some staff workstations/monitors, company laptops and software upgrades.
- We executed a major transition to a new **membership database**. The Salesforce platform will improve NASAA's data management for member tracking, donations, information requests, communications and other functions. Data migration and initial staff training are complete.

NEW!

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.

- NASAA conducted an **evaluation** of the 2019 Leadership Institute in Providence, Rhode Island. The member satisfaction [ratings](#) surpassed any prior Leadership Institute that NASAA has convened. Detailed participant comments are being used to design our future conferences and other learning programs.
- NASAA transitioned to Hootsuite to streamline management of our social media content, scheduling and engagement measures. We analyze these **communications metrics** as well as those relating to our websites and bulk e-mail messaging. We draw on these resources to inform content delivery and make real-time adjustments to our communications tactics.
- The Audit Committee provided oversight for conducting an **independent audit** of NASAA's FY2019 finances and internal controls, as well as preparation of our annual Form 990 for the IRS.