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Demographic, political and economic changes are reshaping the state arts agency landscape. Some state arts agencies have endured harsh cuts in recent years, others have grown. While some in our field have long, proud careers in public service, many new leaders are infusing the state arts agency profession with fresh perspectives and diverse talents. American society is made stronger by the emergence of new demographic majorities, even as our nation aches from acute political and economic divides. Old assumptions about how we define, create and fund the arts are dissolving, but fundamental questions remain about how our nation can best empower and sustain artists and arts organizations.
In light of these shifts, every state arts agency has reasserted its value, defining the contributions it makes to public life and exploring new ways of doing business. No two states’ solutions to these challenges look exactly alike, a testimony to the creativity and resiliency of the state arts agency field.

As we mark our 50th anniversary, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) must rise to these same challenges. We must address new trends and clarify how we can achieve the greatest impact for our members. While building on a legacy of accomplishment, we must pursue changes that position our Assembly and state arts agencies to thrive in the future.

This strategic plan reflects a fresh examination of NASAA’s role. It is infused with high-caliber advice from members, as well as ideas and wise counsel from leaders in other sectors. It distills how we will work—in collaboration with our members and partners—to advance state leadership for the arts in America.
WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

NASAA is the professional association of the nation’s 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies. The arts are fundamental to human expression and are an essential ingredient in the well-being and prosperity of our nation’s individuals, communities and families. Together, NASAA and the state arts agencies advance the arts.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: THE EVIDENCE

Rigorous research documents the public value delivered by the arts and state arts agencies. Review the latest findings:
- economic impacts
- educational impacts
- health impacts
- civic impacts

NASAA’s policy brief, Why Should Government Support the Arts? puts all the evidence at your fingertips.
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES NEED THE ARTS.
The arts foster vibrant communities and create desirable and productive places for people to live, work, play and raise their families.

AMERICA'S ECONOMY NEEDS THE ARTS.
The arts put people to work, produce tax revenue, stimulate business and retain a talented work force. The arts are an especially powerful ladder to economic independence for rural regions, urban areas and communities struggling out of poverty.

AMERICA'S CHILDREN NEED THE ARTS.
The arts ignite young imaginations and boost achievement in academic fundamentals. Education that includes the arts teaches the critical thinking, communications and innovation skills essential to success in school, in the workplace and in life.

AMERICA'S DEMOCRACY NEEDS THE ARTS.
The arts support a strong democracy, engaging us in civic discourse and bridging divides among us.

AMERICA'S WELL-BEING NEEDS THE ARTS.
The arts foster physical, mental and emotional health. Arts-integrated medical treatments are especially effective for aging adults, pediatric patients and military personnel.

AMERICA'S HERITAGE IS EMBODIED IN THE ARTS.
The arts preserve our legacies and our roots, passing along our nation’s unique character and traditions to future generations. Through the arts, we express who we are as a nation, and who we aspire to become.

AMERICAN INGENUITY IS DRIVEN BY THE ARTS.
The arts deepen our nation’s creative capacity, fueling innovation that gives businesses a competitive edge and helps communities resolve complex problems.

AMERICA'S SPIRIT NEEDS THE ARTS.
Intrinsic to the arts is the power to uplift us and help us perceive things in new ways. In the face of economic hardship, natural disasters, civic unrest and other adversity, the arts are a force for recovery, understanding and healing.

The public sector ensures that these benefits accrue to all communities, regardless of wealth or geography. To this end, NASAA is committed to a future in which every U.S. state and jurisdiction achieves its fullest potential in and through the arts.

STATE ARTS AGENCIES GET THE JOB DONE
State arts agencies are assets to government because they:
- make the arts available everywhere
- engage the public in decision making
- instill accountability and good management practices among grantees
- uphold equitable funding practices
- leverage additional investments from public and private sources
- model efficiency and transparency in their stewardship of public dollars
- lead cross-sector partnerships within and outside of government
- contribute to a distinctive state identity
MISSION

STRENGTHEN STATE ARTS AGENCIES

NASAA EMPOWERS THE WORK OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES THROUGH:

**REPRESENTATION**

NASAA is a champion and advocate for state arts agencies, asserting the importance of the arts to government leaders. We shape public policy, foster multisector support for the arts and give state arts agencies a persuasive voice in influential national networks.

**KNOWLEDGE**

NASAA provides authoritative data that fuels fact based decision making and highlights the impact of state arts agencies’ work. NASAA’s research also drives the evolution of evidence based answers to the question of why government should support the arts. Our knowledge services inform and inspire state arts agencies, driving excellence and sparking new ways of working.

**COMMUNITY**

NASAA convenes and connects state arts agencies. Our professional community energizes the work of state arts agencies, unites our members around common goals and builds a shared vision for the future.

NASAA amplifies the expertise, influence, funding and vision that state arts agencies employ on behalf of every American. Through NASAA, state arts agencies achieve more together than they can alone.
America’s diversity enriches and strengthens our nation. NASAA and the state arts agencies recognize that diversity, equity and inclusion are fundamental to a strong democracy. The public sector has an important role to play in ensuring that all communities thrive through the arts. To this end, NASAA’s action plans articulate specific steps we take each year to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in state arts agency policies, practices and programs as well as in our own governance, management and services.

NASAA’s work is further guided by these enduring values:

**SERVICE**
NASAA programs are timely, relevant and responsive to the needs of members. Because every state and jurisdiction is unique, NASAA tailors our services to the needs of each member agency.

**CREDIBILITY**
Factual accuracy and bipartisanship are hallmarks of NASAA’s work.

**EXCELLENCE**
NASAA is recognized for the high caliber, creativity and professionalism of our services. We exemplify good stewardship of public resources and rigorous evaluation spurs continual improvement.

**COLLABORATION**
Partnerships broaden understanding of our impact and build communities of support for our work.

The arts are fundamental to human expression and are essential to the well-being and prosperity of our nation.
Advocate for State Arts Agencies

By developing policy resources and relationships that advance state arts agencies, NASAA ensures that the arts play a central role in American public life and that all communities have equitable access to the arts.

**Objectives**

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

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

C. Strengthen state level advocacy practices.

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

State arts agencies need savvy and agile leaders capable of solving immediate problems while also driving the long-term evolution of their agencies. NASAA helps our members rise to those challenges. NASAA’s knowledge services lead state arts agencies to exemplify what government can do right and to demonstrate a compelling return on the public’s investment.

**Objectives**

A. Supply authoritative facts about state arts agencies.

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

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

D. Deliver educational programs that boost members’ knowledge and leadership skills.
Our Assembly is an inclusive, welcoming community where members learn from each other, co-create a shared history and find common purpose. Connecting through NASAA yields tangible policy results for members: it empowers our decisions, increases our influence and defines NASAA’s credibility as a representative policy voice.

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Keep state arts agencies informed through timely, relevant and accessible communications.
B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.
C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.
D. Engage members in the governance, planning and advocacy work of the Assembly.

To strengthen state arts agencies now and into the future, NASAA must achieve the financial and operational capacity to meet our members’ escalating demands for services. Fulfilling these objectives supports the attainment of all NASAA goals.

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Develop and diversify NASAA’s revenues.
B. Develop NASAA’s human resources.
C. Improve NASAA’s operations and technology.
D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.
WE’RE IN THIS TOGETHER

State arts agencies are NASAA’s primary stakeholders, volunteers, advisors and ambassadors. Most importantly, state arts agencies are the owners of this Assembly, its originators, leaders and investors. State arts agencies created NASAA in 1968, and still count on their Assembly today to expand their knowledge and influence. Members share an equal stake in the goals of this plan—and share equal responsibility for building an association to achieve them. NASAA issues calls to action throughout the year and we urge state arts agencies’ full engagement in that work.
Collaborations beyond the state arts agency field are integral to NASAA’s success, and to the success of state arts agencies, themselves. NASAA’s annual action plan identifies specific collaborations that help us attain our objectives in any given year. Some relationships have perennial importance. These national partners include:

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA)**
NASAA represents state arts agencies with the NEA and fosters program and policy collaborations between the NEA and its state partners.

**STATE POLICY NETWORKS**
NASAA connects with national organizations that shape the knowledge and actions of state policymakers. Through these networks, NASAA helps governors, legislators and other public officials understand the value of the arts and state arts agencies—and we bring important cross-sector insights back into our own field.

**CULTURAL ADVOCACY GROUP (CAG)**
This alliance of national arts organizations, which includes Americans for the Arts, does the all-important work of ensuring that Congress hears a unified message from the arts community.

**REGIONAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS (RAOS)**
NASAA advocates for NEA funds that support the work of RAOs as well as NASAA and state arts agencies. We meet regularly with RAO leaders to identify shared interests and to synchronize efforts that benefit state arts agencies.

**ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (AEP)**
NASAA is part of the leadership team for AEP, operated by the Education Commission of the States in cooperation with the NEA and the U.S. Department of Education. State arts agencies also are strengthened by numerous state and local allies. NASAA serves as a resource to citizen advocacy organizations, philanthropic partners, public agencies and civic groups who work in concert with state arts agencies to advance the arts.
NASAA planning is evergreen—it is continually renewed and never stands still. We do this by combining strategic plans and action plans.

Our strategic plan (this document) charts NASAA’s overall course. It sets forth our purpose, our long-range goals and the principles that guide our work. Annual action plans and budgets itemize the near-term steps we take to achieve our long-term goals. This tandem approach ensures that NASAA’s day-to-day priorities align with our strategic vision.

Although the strategic plan has no expiration date, it is regularly assessed for relevance. The standard review interval is three years, but the board initiates a planning cycle sooner if needed.

Annual action plans ensure the dynamic currency of NASAA’s work, helping us address new realities, opportunities or constraints. We invite input from every state and jurisdiction through an annual interview process, and a membership vote is required to approve the action plan.

Why an Evergreen Plan?

NASAA conducts a miniature planning process every year, through rigorous and member-driven action planning. This keeps us in step with rapidly changing conditions.

We initiate a full strategic planning cycle when we anticipate significant environmental shifts.

By conducting comprehensive planning judiciously, NASAA spends less time planning to serve members and more time serving them.
EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

In keeping with our evergreen approach, planning at NASAA does not end when the planning documents are approved. Rigorous measurement practices—which are fully transparent to members—continually refine our aim and improve our performance.

DATA MINING
We draw on website analytics, chart our social media reach, track e-mail action rates and collect extensive data about information requests and member engagement. This active data mining informs action planning and provides real-time intelligence that NASAA uses to adjust tactics to address member needs.

PROGRAM EVALUATION
NASAA uses annual member interviews and periodic polls to identify our most and least successful services and get suggestions for improvement. We also conduct evaluations, using the results to guide future programs. Key questions are asked on a longitudinal basis to help us gauge changes over time.

DIALOGUE
We talk with—and listen to—members every day. Our annual nominating interviews ask every executive director and council chair to weigh in on their satisfaction with NASAA services, unmet needs and suggestions for the future. Combined with parallel discussions among our five standing committees and NASAA’s board, these feedback channels form a human chain of qualitative data driving ongoing improvement.

FIELD INDICATORS
In conjunction with this strategic plan, NASAA is adopting a set of new 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 long-term outcomes relating to the stability and growth of our field as well as NASAA’s success in attaining our mission of strengthening state arts agencies.

PERFORMANCE METRICS
NASAA monitors a robust suite of operational performance metrics. Expanded in conjunction with this plan, the targets are informed by best practices among professional associations. Under the direction of NASAA’s Planning & Budget Committee, the vital statistics and the performance measurement dashboard are used together to inform annual action planning.
This plan was formulated through an inclusive process designed to reshape our long-range goals, reach out to new stakeholders and surface insights that will help NASAA be smart in our day-to-day work. The participatory process was led by NASAA’s Planning & Budget Committee. We used a mix of methods to invite candid, diverse opinions and make sure every voice was heard.
FUTURE FORECASTING
As a first step in planning, we engaged the full membership in a dialogue about the future of our field. Our board focused on salient trends affecting the success of state arts agencies. We also examined expert analyses of long-range trends reshaping the future of state government, the arts and professional associations.

CROSS-SECTOR PERSPECTIVES
We cast a wide net, reaching far beyond our membership to engage 83 outside advisors in our process. We conducted 51 interviews (a mix of phone and face-to-face) with people representing the fields of economic development, government innovation, creative placemaking, community development, education, health care, agriculture and philanthropy as well as the arts. Face-to-face forums with associations serving state government, regional arts organizations and national arts service networks reinforced key relationships—and built new ties for the future.

SELF-ASSESSMENT
Staff and board appraised strengths and weaknesses and considered what needs to change for both state arts agencies and NASAA.

MEMBER INPUT
Because state arts agencies are NASAA’s primary stakeholders, member input was a keystone of our process. We conducted 84 member interviews, received 143 responses to our membership opinion poll, and engaged 29 board and committee members (representing more than half of our member agencies) in developing plan drafts.

DATA ANALYSIS
We analyzed 3,716 member information requests, conducted a website user survey and conducted a statistical benchmarking study comparing NASAA to 41 other associations serving state government or the arts. To inform future fundraising and revenue diversification, we evaluated the success of NASAA’s past annual fund campaigns and conducted in-depth prospect research to identify foundations that may be likely candidates for support of our new plan.

THIRD-PARTY OBJECTIVITY
To ensure an unbiased assessment (and to expedite the work), NASAA engaged a consulting team to lead portions of our planning process. Artistic Logistics conducted interviews, facilitated forums and reality-checked our conclusions.

DRAFT REVIEWS
Members, nonmember planning informants and independent consultants offered revisions to the plan in draft form.

TRANSPARENCY
NASAA established a publicly accessible strategic planning hub on our website to share our findings and invite ongoing input.

The adoption of this strategic plan represents the beginning—not the end—of a process. Together, state arts agencies, NASAA and our partners will work to sustain the arts as an asset for individuals, families, communities and state governments across America. We invite you to join us.
LISTENING TO DIVERSE VOICES

84 MEMBER INTERVIEWS
143 RESPONSES TO OUR OPINION POLL
29 BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERS ENGAGED
83 OUTSIDE ADVISORS ENGAGED

STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTICIPATION

*Includes informants from the field of government innovation, education, health care, economic development, rural development, community development and philanthropy.

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
ASSESSMENT
SUMMER 2016 – FALL 2016
- Data review
- Trend scans
- Benchmarking

OUTREACH
WINTER 2017 – SPRING 2017
- Interviews
- Forums
- Dialogues
- Member poll

FORMULATION
SPRING 2017 – FALL 2017
- Reflect on insights

3,716 MEMBER INFORMATION REQUESTS ANALYZED
41 STATISTICAL BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

RATIFIED
- Membership Vote
  October 13, 2017
  Portland, Oregon
NASAA is deeply grateful to the many individuals and colleague organizations who contributed their expertise, ideas and volunteer time to the creation of this plan.
THANKS!

Cross-Sector Perspectives
Jeremy Anderson, Education Commission on the States
Elizabeth Armstrong, National Association of Government Communicators
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Corina Eckl, National Conference of State Legislatures
Charles Fluharty, Rural Policy Research Institute
Michael Fraser, Assoc. of State and Territorial Health Officials
Barbara P. Glenn, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
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Esther Mackintosh, Federation of State Humanities Councils
Ann Markusen, Humphrey School of Public Affairs
Robert McNulty, Partners for Livable Communities
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Arturo Pérez, National Conference of State Legislatures
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Cultural Leadership & Advocacy Perspectives
Jamie Bennetts, ArtPlace
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Jesse Rosen, League of American Orchestras
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Steven Tepper, Arizona State University
Carlton Turner, Alternate Roots
Beth Tuttle, DataArts
Zannie Giraud Voss, National Center for Arts Research
Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts

Regional Arts Organizations
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David Fraher, Arts Midwest
Anthony Radich, Western States Arts Federation
Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, US Regional Arts Organizations
Todd Stein, Mid-America Arts Alliance
Suzette Surkamer, South Arts

National Arts Service Organizations
Alternate ROOTS
American Alliance of Museums
American Composers Forum
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Performing Arts Professionals
Chamber Music America
Chorus America
Dance USA
Future of Music Coalition
League of American Orchestras
Local Learning
National Alliance for Musical Theatre
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
National Council for the Traditional Arts
Network Theatre Ensemble
New Music USA
OPERA America
Performing Arts Alliance
The Recording Academy
Theatre Communications Group

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Cover | Courtesy of the California Arts Council and Colorado Creative Industries
Page 2 | Courtesy of the California Arts Council
Page 3 | Courtesy of the California Arts Council
Page 4 | Top: Axis Dance Company, photo by Andrea Basile Bottom: The Verdant Walk, North Design Office, photo by Ryan DiVita courtesy of the LAND studio
Page 6 | Ercilia Brazil at Española Valley Fiber Arts Center, photo by Diane Bowman
Page 7 | Top right: Native American Drum and Dance Ensemble, photo by Chad Coppess courtesy of the South Dakota Department of Tourism
Page 8 | Top: Musician Frédéric Yonnet, photo by Eddie Arossee Bottom: Arizona Art Tank, Arizona Commission on the Arts
Page 9 | Photo courtesy of Sheila Smith, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts
Page 11 | Musician Desmond Mason, courtesy of the Oklahoma Gazette
Page 12 | Top: Brady Arts District mural, courtesy of the Tulsa Convention & Visitors Bureau Bottom: “Pink Canyon” by Sonja Frey, courtesy of the Delaware Division of the Arts
Page 14 | Left: Ririe Woodbury Dance Company, photo by George Long Right: Tony Feher installation detail, Utah Museum of Fine Arts
Page 17 | “King Salmon,” sculpture and photo by Ray Troll, photo courtesy of the Alaska State Council on the Arts