**NASAA 2017 Leadership Institute**

**Case Studies**

**1. Inclusive Planning**

Per federal requirements, every state arts agency must conduct an inclusive strategic planning process that is responsive to the needs of historically underserved groups. The definition of "underserved" varies, but is usually some combination of specific cultural/ethnic groups, immigrant populations, geographically isolated communities, institutionalized persons, the elderly or the disabled. State arts agency planning processes must determine the needs of such populations, and the resulting strategic plans must demonstrate how the agency will address those needs. Teams comprised of senior staff and council/board members typically lead planning efforts. DEI questions that typically arise for those teams are:

* What is the best way to get demographic data from populations served?
* How can we help agencies understand the importance of this data?
* Can we engage this conversation if we ourselves are not diverse?

Notes

**2. A Council DEI Committee**

A state arts agency's council/board has created a formal Diversity Committee. Among other roles, this group has assumed responsibility for building new relationships with ALANA (African Latino(a), Asian, Native American) arts organizations, learning more about their work and facilitating their access to state arts agency resources. The committee's first priority is to open new lines of dialogue, which will inform subsequent action plans for developing new resources tailored to ALANA organizations' needs. The committee's initial questions might include:

* What is the ‘best’ way to connect with ALANA organizations with whom we haven't worked before? How can we convey a sincere/authentic interest in building relationships?
* How do we can convey the importance of investing the time it takes to build these relationships?

Notes

**3. Introducing a Dedicated Grant Program**

A state arts agency is creating a new grant program that is designed specifically for ALANA organizations. The awards will provide $15,000 awards for up to three years that can be used flexibly for programming, staffing or operations. Awardees also will receive money to participate in capacity-building training and peer-to-peer networking. The new program has been designed with care, and with the input of stakeholders, to avoid eligibility restrictions (like audit thresholds or onerous reporting requirements) that would pose disproportionate barriers to funding for groups with systemically limited access to capital. When the state arts agency staff presents the new grant program's guidelines to the council for policy approval, the following discussion questions arise:

* What is the rationale for targeting this kind of resource to ALANA organizations as opposed to other needy organizations?
* How do the requirements for this program shed light on our other grantmaking requirements? Can we use this process to inform and streamline our core practice?
* To provide these grants, we'll need to divert funds away from programs serving other groups, how do we build buy-in for inclusion rather than competition?

Notes

**4. Shifting GOS Grant Criteria to Incentivize DEI Practices**

A state arts agency wants to retool the criteria it uses to adjudicate its General Operating Support (GOS) grants, which provide substantial unrestricted awards ($25,000-$500,000) to large arts institutions. The new criteria would promote DEI by taking applicants' board, staff and audience diversity into account; requiring applicants to document practices that advance DEI best practices; and increasing the weight of panel evaluation scores for "community involvement" as well as "artistic excellence." Some GOS grantees have strong institutional commitments to DEI already, but the majority do not, and these criteria changes are likely to upset longstanding funding norms for those recipients. GOS grantees wield a lot of clout, media visibility and political influence. Questions that arise as the staff develops these recommendations include:

* Is the definition of ‘artistic excellence” clear, consistent and culturally inclusive or is it being defined in such a way as to exclude the work of organizations serving a broad and diverse range of people?
* Resistance to inclusion could potentially damage our agency if some GOS grantees go to the legislature to undermine our grant authority. How can we plan to address those problems, so that these criteria changes can succeed?

Notes

**5. Council Nominations**

In most cases, state arts agency councils (aka their governing boards) are appointed by the Governor. Many states have statutes directing the Governor to appoint a "diverse" group that is "representative" of the state as a whole, and some governors are very thoughtful about that. But in many cases the council appointees come from well-connected, visible or influential circles – not a demographically diverse pool. Governors are not required to consult with the state arts agency prior to making appointments, but sometimes this opportunity does occur, or can be created. When a state arts agency board chair can speak with a Governor's Appointments Officer to recommend names or articulate the council's needs, questions that arise are:

* How can we make a compelling appeal for culturally diverse appointments?
* How do we frame the case, in the face of explicit political opposition (e.g. "pushing a liberal political agenda," “bowing to political correctness”, “diversity not relevant to arts councils” etc.)?

Notes

**6. DEI in the "Non-Diverse" States**

According to the Census, White non-Hispanic residents comprise upward of 90% of the population in 9 states (ME, VT, NH, WV, ID, WY, IA, UT, MT). This does not make DEI any less important to those state arts agencies but it reflects the context in which those state arts agencies approach DEI. For instance, arts grantees can truthfully say that their white boards, white staffs and white audiences meet the threshold of "reflecting the community that they serve." Among the questions that arise in this situation are:

* How do we argue that we "reflect the community" while still being aware of the demographic nuances that may mean parts of our communities are not represented?
* How do we authentically engage a conversation and practice of valuing diversity and inclusion when we can’t produce ‘the optics’?

Notes

**7. Competing Constituencies**

One state arts agency council member has publicly voiced (through an op-ed article in a local paper) that the state arts council needs to do a better job of funding African American organizations. The council was not notified in advance and the agency logo was used to accompany the article. Public records show that in 2017 the council awarded 12% of its grant funding to African American organizations, 9% to Asian groups, 16% to Latino/Hispanic organizations and 3% to Native American tribal entities. The op-ed included these numbers, citing the 12% figure as evidence of structural racism that has a particularly acute impact on African American communities. The council's executive committee convenes a conference call to determine next steps, and the following (hypothetical) conversation transpires:

"Based on our numbers, it looks to me like we should be talking about reaching more Asian and Native American organizations before trying to boost African American awards."

"….This council member is advocating for one single constituency. Is that the way our policy-making works? Shouldn't we all advocate for everyone? I'm gay, but I don't advocate for just LGBTQ groups. Our council can't abandon our statutory obligation to serve 'all citizens' by favoring one group."

"African American groups absolutely need more money. But so does every other marginalized group, and our resources are limited. That reality needs to be acknowledged."

"If our message is 'everyone needs more money,' isn't that dismissive of the unique experiences and needs of the African American community?"

"I wish we could have discussed these views around the council table first, rather than having to play this out through the media. Is this saying something about our board culture? Did we shut down prior attempts to discuss this? Or is there another reason he felt he needed to go public fist?"

Notes