



Chairs and Council Members Peer Session November 1, 2018

Notes

Chairs and Council Members Peer Session coordinators:

[Barbara Bershon](#), Council Member and Former Chair, Maryland State Arts Council
[Shelley Cole Morhaim](#), Council Member and Immediate Past Chair, Maryland State Arts Council

Approximately 50 state arts agency chairs and council members attended the peer session (see [roster](#)), which was facilitated by Maryland State Arts Council members Barbara Bershon and Shelley Cole Morhaim. The [agenda](#) included introductions, remarks from National Endowment for the Arts Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter, a federal update from NASAA Legislative Counsel Isaac Brown and roundtable discussions on various topics.

Notes and Comments from Roundtable Conversations

Arts and Health

Many health issues affect American communities, including the opioid crisis, aging related matters, care for our veterans and mental health disorders. What role can our agencies play in helping to address health and wellness related concerns that affect our communities?

- It is important to facilitate partnerships and connections outside the state arts agency network—we have a role to play in this arena but need to work with other stakeholders.
- Create best practices to help cross-agency pollination; state arts agencies need to be informed about programming in other agencies, and vice versa.
- Identify needs and connect benefits to those needs to help others better understand how the arts can help. State arts agencies can broker this process, in part because we have research and data that demonstrates the role of the arts in improved health outcomes.
- The [Creative Forces](#) model is effective—check out the website for more information.
- ArtsFund in Washington just released a new report called [Social Impact of the Arts](#), which includes health and wellness as a primary focus.

Arts and Social Justice

Some issues that need Americans' attention can be challenging, or even divisive, for our communities to understand and discuss. What is the role of the arts—and of our agencies—in bringing awareness to problems such as immigration, juvenile justice, or the unequal rates of incarceration of people of color?

- Incorporating the arts into corrections facilities can support incarcerated people, help with reintegration into society and reduce recidivism.
- Artists are adversely affected by the lack of affordable housing. State arts agencies need to see more models of arts and housing.
- Entire cities and communities are affected by social justice issues (housing, immigration, veteran care, brutality, hate crimes, etc.). The arts can help get civic conversations going *before* hard things happen. State arts agencies can work to change cultures and conversations proactively.
- We need to have a real equity statement in our agencies and live by it. We need to ask the same of grantees.
- The [Expansion Arts](#) program in Rhode Island uses equity issues to partner with foundations to support communities that aren't equitably funded.
- What other funding models can help besides the standard 501(c)(3) nonprofit?
- What kinds of partnerships can help with these issues, such as getting representatives to serve on boards, committees, etc.?
- Be proactive in curating and promoting readings and resources about equity issues. There are many different kinds of inequities—we need to be open and learn.

Rural Economic Development

How can our agencies help rural communities harness the arts and cultural sector to support economic development?

- Think about state arts agencies in different ways—as partners with local communities.
- Colorado has key projects in specific communities that include and/or use the arts as community development anchors.
- The [Change Leader Institute](#) in Colorado is helping to catalyze changes in rural communities.
- Need to build rural technology infrastructure to allow for remote working.
- Information dissemination can be a problem—we need to get into communities with other funders to raise awareness and build more competitive applicant pools.
- Need to convince elected officials of what "the arts" are.
- Overall, state arts agencies need for more info about rural economic arts development and more model programs.

A new brief from the [National Governors Association](#) on the arts and rural economic development, produced in partnership with NASAA and the National Endowment for the Arts, will be released in December 2018. Stay tuned!

Statewide Arts Advocacy Groups

Is your advocacy group outstanding? On the fritz? In hibernation? What challenges and opportunities face our agencies as we work with advocacy groups in our states?

- It's hard to use other states as models because no two states are the same!
- One problem is connecting people across large states/geographic areas.
- Tennessee's [specialty license plate](#) program is a good model for other statewide groups to consider.
- How many states have a state arts caucus? (Approximately 12, but NASAA is reviewing this and will issue a report in 2019.)

Explore the [Advocate](#) section of NASAA's website for a wide variety of resources to help you with state level case making and advocacy.

Arts and Entertainment Districts

What is the impact of arts and entertainment districts on our communities? Is it different working with cultural districts in urban versus rural areas?

- Maryland has been working since 2001 to develop A&E districts and can offer various models. The arts council has had many successes and learned from challenges.
- Wyoming is also working on this.
- Nebraska has to figure out how A&E districts work in rural communities (most of the state).
- Iowa has tax benefits for all artists, not just A&E districts.
- It's challenging in many communities to get people to understand how and why arts and commerce need to come together.

See NASAA's [State Cultural District Programs Strategy Sampler](#) for more information on the key issues associated with managing cultural districts at the state level.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Too often, the individuals and organizations applying to our agencies for support don't fully reflect the diverse demographics of our states. What are state arts agencies doing to diversify our applicant pools? What more can we be doing?

- Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is an overarching national issue/theme.
- Maryland, Virginia and Washington all have DEI statements.
- Washington has worked DEI statements and considerations into its strategic plan. The state has also adjusted granting systems to allow for greater diversity.
- Maryland is working on a DEI statement, including diversifying staff to better represent the demographics of the state.
- Virginia created a committee to plan for DEI to adjust and broaden applications without alienating current grantees.
- A robust traditional arts (folklife) program can help diversify an agency's grantee population, which can lead to contacts with otherwise underserved communities.

See these NASAA resources to learn more about DEI:

- [State Policies and Programs Addressing Diversity](#) is a curated catalogue of programs and policies that state arts agencies use to foster inclusion and equity in the arts; .
- [Race Equity](#) is an examination of where state arts agency grants are allocated in relation to U.S. demographics.
- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Activities](#) is a review of work NASAA has undertaken since 2015 to address DEI issues, as an organization and for the field.

Arts Preparedness

It can be challenging to prepare for crises that haven't happened yet, but efforts we put into preparing our organizations for unexpected problems contribute to our long-term sustainability. Susie Surkamer from South Arts led this conversation about arts readiness:

- South Arts got involved in disaster preparedness in 2006, after Hurricane Katrina. Research found that more than 90% of arts organizations nationally had no

preparedness plan for a disaster, natural or human-caused. This led to the founding of the National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER).

- NCAPER is a loosely formed organization (not a nonprofit), cochaired by South Arts and Americans for the Arts. It addresses issues of preparedness and deals with arts organizations and individual artists. Readiness tools are one component; a new arts-ready tool is in development and will be released in spring 2019.
- Preparedness plans are not specific to one type of disaster, but include everything from natural disasters to industrial catastrophes to economic crises.
- Object protection and preservation is much more advanced than live-action, program, and service readiness preparedness. Performing arts readiness provides planning assistance and a road map to help organizations be ready for emergencies.
- State arts agency boards need to talk about readiness. It's hard to ask grantee organizations to be ready if the agency hasn't done this itself. In time, grants may be contingent on having a readiness plan in place. Adding this mandate slowly and methodically places the field on notice and allows time for grantees to plan.
- Disasters can include but aren't limited to: the unexpected death of a key staff person, which can leave an agency unable to perform basic tasks; threatening packages, which can leave an information void; and changed plans for events that can create major operational problems. Changed circumstances alone can constitute a disaster, but this doesn't have to happen if there is a readiness plan in place.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency is part of NCAPER, but funding can be hard to find. State level agencies may be a better place to start for funding. As far as resources go, it is not expensive to do a readiness inventory, but it takes time to ask and explore questions that can be uncomfortable.
- The perception that one doesn't live in a flood zone, or some other hazard-prone area, is not realistic. Everyone is at risk of a catastrophic event ending or drastically altering our lives.

Check out the [Arts Ready](#) website for more information and resources on arts preparedness.

Additional Resources

NASAA regularly updates one of its foremost publications, [Why Should Government Support the Arts?](#) to keep current with the latest arguments and research to support arts advocacy. In addition, a special area of NASAA's website, [For Council Members](#), organizes resources that are helpful to chairs and council members, including Reports to Councils, all editions of The Practical Advocate, and Legislative Alerts. You can also browse the [State to State Archives](#), where you can search more than 350 programs by state, region and topic. Please contact NASAA Chief Advancement Officer [Laura Smith](#) if you have questions or need help identifying other resources. And don't forget to mark your calendar for the NASAA 2019 Leadership Institute, **September 18-20, 2019**, in Providence, Rhode Island.

Thank you!