



Deputy/Assistant Directors Peer Session

November 1, 2018

Notes

The session was called to order by session coordinators [Cassandra Mason](#) (Chief Grants Officer, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts), [Chandra Boyd](#) (Deputy Director, Oklahoma Arts Council) and [Dan Katona](#) (Deputy Director, Ohio Arts Council).

Audit Presentation by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Inspector General Office and Grants Office

NEA Presenters:

[Brenna Berger](#), Senior Advisor to the Deputy for Programs and Partnerships

[Nicki Jacobs](#), Director, Grants and Contracts Office

[Mindy Garfinkel](#), Final Reports Officer

[Leslie Liberato](#), Final Reports Officer

[Meg Kowalik](#), Grants Management Specialist

[Ron Stith](#), Inspector General

[Monica Muhammad](#), Assistant Inspector General for Audits

[Darlan Mims](#), Senior Auditor

A joint meeting was held with deputy directors and grants officers to learn more about state arts agency federal audits and ask questions of the NEA's Inspector General Office and Grants Office. The auditors went over risk assessments, required documentation, the audit process and common findings of deficiencies. Participants engaged in an extensive question and answer period with the auditors and grants office staff, after which the audit section of the session concluded and the deputy directors moved to their own meeting.

[NEA Auditors Handout](#)

To connect with your peers who have undergone audits, please contact NASAA Chief Operating Officer [Sylvia Prickett](#) or Senior Director of Research [Ryan Stubbs](#).

Introductions

While introducing themselves, deputy directors talked about what is new at their agency and what topics they'd like to discuss with peer group members beyond the day's peer session.

- **Cassandra Mason** (Chief Grants Officer, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts)
 - Cassie wants to discuss statewide arts conferences.

- **Chandra Boyd** (Deputy Director, Oklahoma Arts Council)
 - Chandra would like to talk about grant-making processes as seen through an equity lens.
- **Dan Katona** (Deputy Director, Ohio Arts Council)
 - Ohio is undergoing an NEA audit. Dan is happy to talk with anyone about it.
 - They use the SmartSimple grant system.
- **Jim Bob McMillan** (Deputy Director, Texas Commission on the Arts)
 - Texas has undergone an NEA audit.
- **Alison Watson** (Program Manager, Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs)
 - Michigan is undergoing an NEA audit.
 - They are undergoing an executive director transition and staff reorganization.
 - Alison wants to continue to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practices.
- **Rebecca Cruse** (Deputy Director, South Dakota Arts Council)
 - South Dakota recently completed a strategic planning process. Rebecca wrote the plan through an equity lens.
- **Alex Nelson** (Deputy Director, Arizona Commission on the Arts)
 - Alex wants to discuss state arts agency engagement with tribal communities and the tensions that exist between government agencies and anticolonial practices.
- **Mike Markey** (Director of Administration, Nebraska Arts Council)
 - Would like to discuss accessibility and program grants.
- **Larry Morrisey** (Deputy Director, Mississippi Arts Commission)
 - Mississippi went through an NEA audit.
 - They use Foundant grants-management software.
 - Larry wants to discuss succession planning.
- **Michael Bigley** (Deputy Director, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities):
 - Michael wants to discuss possibilities for outsourcing aspects of grant making.
- **Kristin Pleasanton** (Deputy Director, Delaware Division of the Arts)
 - Delaware is transitioning to the SmartSimple grants-management system.
- **Amy Cunningham** (Deputy Director, Vermont Arts Council)
 - Amy is new to the state arts agency world.
- **Milly Hough** (Deputy Director, South Carolina Arts Commission):
 - Just switched to Foundant grants-management software.
- **Linda Nelson** (Assistant Director, Maine Arts Commission)
 - Linda wants to continue the DEI conversation.

- **Megan White** (Deputy Executive Director of Programs, New York State Council on the Arts):
 - New York has gone through an NEA audit.
 - They are reexamining their on-line grant portal.
- **Elliot Knight** (Deputy Director, Alabama State Council on the Arts)
 - Alabama is new to the SmartSimple grants-management system.
- **Paige Sharp** (Director of Programs, Indiana Arts Commission)
 - Happy to discuss their recent Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access Statewide Evaluation
- **Ian Tresselt** (Deputy Director, Programs, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation)
 - The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation is undertaking strategic planning next year for its 40th anniversary. The plan will have a special focus on DEI and accessibility.
- **Mollie Quinlan-Hayes** (Deputy Director, South Arts)
 - South Arts has been busy with ArtsReady, which next year is being folded into the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response.
- **Kathleen Morrissey** (Assistant Director, Missouri Arts Council)
 - Missouri is holding DEI conversations around the state.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Session coordinators Chandra Boyd, Dan Katona and Cassie Mason facilitated a discussion on DEI issues and practices. The discussion was premised on three questions:

- What are the areas of challenge?
 - What are the areas of success?
 - What has your experience been?
- **Dana Parsons** (Director of Grants and Professional Development, Maryland State Arts Council): Maryland revised its general operating support grant program application. In so doing, it focused on DEI and used an Americans for the Arts resource to that end. There was a lot of stakeholder feedback in the drafting process. The application previously had 23 questions; now it has 16 questions segmented into four focus areas: (1) why the work is important, (2) how the organization operates, (3) how it evaluates its work and (4) how it designs its programming.
 - **Jim Bob McMillan** (Deputy Director, Texas Commission on the Arts): In 1992, the Texas state legislature passed an (geographic and ethnicity) equity mandate. Since then, the Texas Commission considers the mandate to be a guiding principle for each panel it convenes and each program it designs. Staff has had to become knowledgeable about equity since not all panelists are. Some final grant reports show that grantees haven't lived up to the equity expectations they articulate in their applications. The question is whether these final reports should be considered when adjudicating future applications from these grantees.
 - **Alison Watson** (Program Manager, Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs): Michigan's grant application forms seek information about the demographics of

communities to be served and how applicants intend to serve them. Alison discussed the difference between outcomes and outputs.

- **Nancy Trovillion** (Deputy Director, North Carolina Arts Council): In the late 1980s, North Carolina's board adopted a resolution directing the Arts Council to award funding to arts groups that reflect the diversity of North Carolina. Because grant making alone did not sufficiently increase equity, the Arts Council developed cultural heritage trail programs. DEI trainings and discussions only do so much; it is more important to do the work that fosters DEI practices.
- **Jim Bob McMillan** (Deputy Director, Texas Commission on the Arts): It is important to track the demographics of communities that receive state arts agency funding.
- **Rebecca Cruse** (Deputy Director, South Dakota Arts Council): South Dakota's initial work on its most recent strategic planning process did not sufficiently focus on DEI. Realizing this, the Arts Council endeavored to broaden its outreach and made sure it worked with underserved communities.
- **Cassandra Mason** (Chief Grants Officer, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts): It is important that state arts agency staff be DEI trained and prepared before reaching out to underserved communities with a DEI agenda.
- **Dana Parsons** (Director of Grants and Professional Development, Maryland State Arts Council): Great examples in a community are not always great DEI training facilitators. Americans for the Arts has a good DEI training resource.

Retreat for the Deputy Directors Peer Group?

The session concluded with a question from Chandra Boyd, Dan Katona and Cassie Mason: Would participants welcome a Deputy Directors Peer Group retreat?

- **Nancy Trovillion** (Deputy Director, North Carolina Arts Council): The deputy directors peer group used to hold retreats. Participants valued them.
- **Milly Hough** (Deputy Director, South Carolina Arts Commission): Another option would be more time dedicated at NASAA conferences for the Deputy Director Peer Group. Maybe the cohort should have a preconference session during the 2019 Leadership Institute?