

NASAA
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Vitality & Arts Briefing

Thank you, Teresa. I am going to talk a bit about the HOW of Creative Aging –
But first - a little background: My colleague, Ed Friedman and I launched Lifetime Arts in New York in 2008 as an arts service organization. We were veteran arts administrators AND caregivers. We learned about Gene Cohen's research, and saw a need and an opportunity to help shift traditional "senior programming" from passive entertainment to engaged learning. We set out to help community based organizations to make and maintain a programmatic shift that embraces older adults as creative learners.

Ten years later, we are working nationally across multiple sectors promoting the inclusion of arts education programs in organizations that serve older adults; preparing artists to develop the creative capacity of older adult learners; fostering lifespan learning in and through the arts by increasing opportunities for participation in community based programming. We do this through a variety of training, technical assistance programs and consulting services.

VIDEO

This short video that will give you a picture of what Creative Aging looks and feels like.

HOW DO WE GET THIS TO HAPPEN?

We **TRAIN people how to do this work** (not just teaching artists, - but programming and administrative staff of host organizations, policy makers and funders) and we **SEED** programs – to demonstrate what the work looks like, and then we tell the story of the impact by building peer networks,

DOCUMENTING, EVALUATING and SHARING.

Our capacity building programs and services have evolved over ten years – first with public libraries as our partners. The content and format is adapted according to the target audience's needs and resources. It is based on the actual experience of launching over 600 creative aging programs in as many libraries, and arts and community organizations across 25 states. We have trained over 1100 teaching artists, hundreds of librarians, arts and cultural organizations and the staffs of senior centers and community organizations.

CREATIVE AGING PROGRAM MODEL

In practice – Older adults participate in professionally conducted, instructional arts workshop series (minimum of 8 sequential workshops,

At least 90 minutes each to allow for instructional time as well as intentional social engagement.

All disciplines – digital memoir, rhumba, printmaking, poetry - opera!

Programs are student centered, skill-based and sequential.

Each workshop series **culminates with a public sharing** -- providing an opportunity for participants to celebrate and share their work with friends, family and the general public. These events are varied in format and scale - depending on the individual host organization, community, arts discipline.

For older adult audience members these events serve to ignite interest and confidence in participating in arts learning programs. “If not now? When? If she can do that - so can I...”

WHO DOES THIS WORK?

Because this work is based on best practices in arts education – professional teaching artists from the core workforce for Creative Aging programming. Most of these artists – hail from the K-12 arts education field. They are generally adept at designing skills-based, scaffolded curriculum – but they need significant training in adult learning, senior services, the impact of ageism on program design and delivery – and importantly - embedding intentional social engagement activities into each lesson. Training and mentoring opportunities are crucial.

I’ll share some of our training protocol with you in a minute.

For non-arts Creative Aging stakeholders – such as libraries or senior centers – understanding the role of the teaching artist and how to find and engage them is one of the biggest challenges to implementing this type of program. This is one of our most requested technical assistance jobs.

TRAINING CONTENT

In addition to live trainings - We provide customized technical assistance to develop, implement and sustain site specific projects. We work at the local level in partnership with teaching artists and their host organizations. We provide online resources including webinars and “office hours”, customized consulting services and referrals. The format of our training programs vary according who the trainees are, and the kind of institution - whether we’re working with librarians or senior center staff or teaching artists.

Generally - these topics are included in all training - In live trainings - which are of course the most effective (and fun) include quite a bit of experiential work to support the ideas around ageism, generational differences, social engagement. In - in addition we provide templates and practical tools and guidance about how to find teaching artists, - we even have a “teaching artist interview” guide for non-arts partners - and ways to determine whether your facility or community can offer a particular type of arts discipline - and how to market and recruit students.

S.A.F.E. PLANNING

For teaching artists, we’ve developed a curriculum protocol that helps insure that each workshop lesson is reaching its goals of mastery and social engagement because adult learners are different from young students.

Skills - Scaffold and Structured lesson design where one skill builds to the next skill. Sequential and Experiential.

Assessment - Systems to evaluate where your students are at so that you can tailor your instruction to fit their needs.

Feedback - Protocols to ensure that students can give and receive feedback but in a safe, positive and respectful way.

Engage - Embed activities within the lesson to create opportunities for students to engage as peers around the art-making. Team and solo work – a group critique.

- Adult learners are self-directed.
- They have their own interest, they are independent, and they decide what they want to learn about and how they want to learn it.
- Adult learners bring life experience to every new experience. Adult learners are READY to learn. if not now - when?
- They aren't messing around with their learning. They want to be engaged and if they aren't - they will leave.
- Adults are not interested in being lectured.
- They want to participate in their learning

INTERDEPENDENT DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

We aim for institutionalization of creative aging programs – and so we work with our partners - arts and non-arts - to understand that sustaining this new type of programming is not just about finding the money to pay for it. In the case of Creative Aging - - there's a big part of the work that is about changing organizational and societal culture - and that may require re – examining and realigning not only funding – and but staffing and programming resources – both human and OTPS. There are three interdependent dimensions or aspects of sustainability that must be considered. They are institutional level administrative buy in, programmatic fit, and financial support. Is there board and staff buy-in? Administrative support will insure that the programming fits into the infrastructures – and importantly – the culture of the organization.

The integration of any new program into an organization **should** trigger an examination of the impact that program has on organizational resources - staffing, facilities, budget, leadership.

- This should include evaluating how resources are allocated for current programs. Its valid to question whether certain long standing programs need to be maintained in light of shifting goals or a changing patron base.
- Can resources be allocated more effectively?
- Are your proposed programs responsive to your community? Are they a natural extension of your primary work? Does the programming leverage your assets?
- And of course – there's the money – where is the money coming from and is it expected to continue?

KEY STATE LIBRARY INTERVIEW FINDINGS

To inform our own trainings and as a service to the field – over the past few years, we have conducted three national surveys. The first was focused on independent teaching artists. The 2nd on State Arts Agencies with the help of NASAA. And the 3rd and most recent – on State Libraries. We wanted to investigate and disseminate a more complete picture of Creative aging funding, programming and professional development and training by sector and to uncover successful models and to identify the gaps in service. We'll start with the State Libraries We conducted in-depth interviews with 13 of the 50 state libraries. All acknowledge the growing population of “older adults” in their states – and include “older adult services” as a targeted area for support and improvement. The interviews underscored some of the challenges to building capacity -- variability across agencies in terms of structures, resources, geography -- as well as long-standing approaches within the library field such as “senior services” that are geared to dependent older adults in senior centers or living situations or, if they are in the library setting, are primarily passive entertainment rather than participatory learning. We found

that the State Libraries are keen to reach out to and partner with other agencies; they see the value in this but have not taken steps to build that kind of collaboration. Some have worked State Humanities Councils but not necessarily around older adults. All respondents saw the potential to build larger alliances at the state level to share resources and create an improved environment for older adults in their states.

KEY STATE ARTS AGENCIES SURVEY FINDINGS

There are many parallels between the State Libraries and the State Arts Agencies. For the Arts Agencies The survey revealed strong interest in Creative Aging among but inconsistent policies to plan and allocate funds for programs and teaching artist training. Most STATE ARTS AGENCIES include Creative Aging or lifelong learning in their strategic plans and others said they plan to add these areas to their plans in the next two-three years. Most agencies (56%) offer programs for older adults, but only 25% have a Creative Aging funding category. Many STATE ARTS AGENCIES (67%) maintain a roster of teaching artists, but only 11 respondents say they have trained artists to work with older adults and only 8 respondents identify roster artists who have experience in Creative Aging. The respondents had some RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Creative Aging services must be built into state and local cultural plans.
- Capacity building is a crucial issue.
- Training and information sharing is needed between STATE ARTS AGENCIES staff, cultural workers, and TAs to develop quality instructional arts programs for older adults.
- STATE ARTS AGENCIES should take advantage of staff expertise, funding and program relationships that already exist in their arts education, folk/traditional and community arts departments.
- STATE ARTS AGENCIES should seek out partnerships with healthcare networks, library systems, and aging services (among others.)
- All of these initiatives require a creative workforce (arts organizations and Teaching Artists) that are representative of the communities they serve.

CROSS SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

Creative Aging work is cross-sector by nature because older adults are part of every segment of society. We partner with library systems, arts organizations, regional arts councils, adult care communities, county governments, individual artists, national and local foundations and service organizations. We specifically aim for institutional/system level partnerships that can effect lasting change on a large scale and at the local level.

We understand that like State Library Agencies – there are no two State Arts Agencies that are alike.

Dependent on:

- Governmental structure
- Size + internal structure
- Scope + type of statewide services
- Allocation of state + federal funds
- Geography
- Associations
- Types of libraries
- Various training platforms

There is however one thing that all states have in common – and that is a growing population of older adults who could benefit from meaningful, accessible arts education.

We believe that State Arts Agencies and their peers in other sectors of State government can play a significant role in this work.