



Survey Highlights:

Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging

November 2019

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

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KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

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Introduction

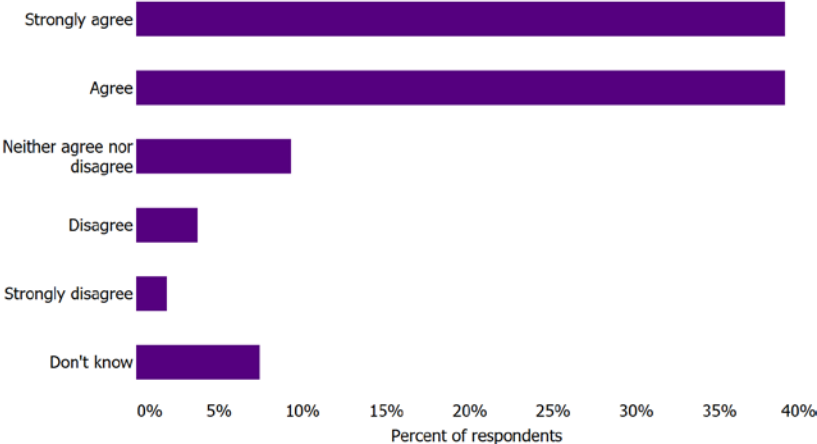
The arts are a [powerful tool](#) for promoting the vitality and wellness of older Americans, who are living longer and healthier lives than they did a generation ago. The arts help older adults to fulfill their creative potential and form meaningful connections, a benefit to seniors and communities as a whole. State and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) can play a leadership role in fostering an abundance of creative aging opportunities. To explore how this occurs—and what might be done to amplify it—NASAA conducted a national survey that inventoried existing SAA creative aging programs, partnerships, capacities and needs.

Administered in the summer of 2019, NASAA’s survey yielded a 98% response rate, with 54 SAAs sharing details about their creative aging work, goals and challenges. The following pages present key findings and selected highlights from the data analysis. These findings will be used to inform future action steps NASAA might take in partnership with Aroha Philanthropies to help SAAs broaden or deepen their creative aging work.

Demand for Creative Aging

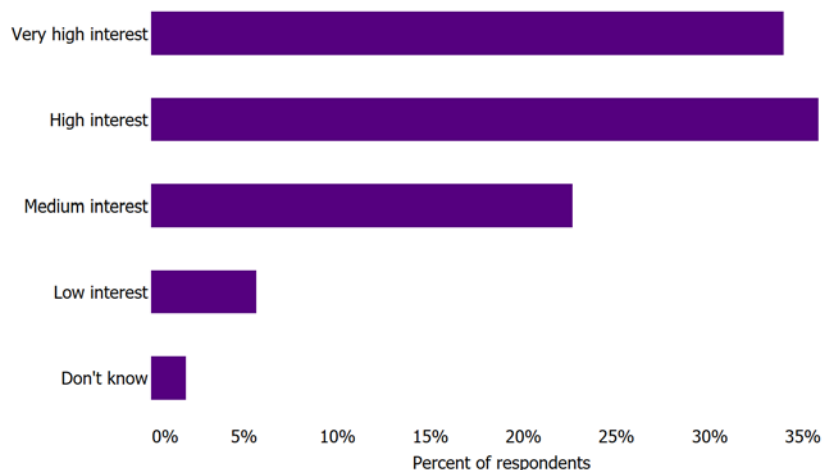
Survey results show that **a large majority of state arts agencies perceive high demand in their state for creative aging programming.** In fact, 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Arts engagement and services specifically targeted toward older adults are in high demand in my state." Only 6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with it. While these perspectives might not definitively benchmark demand for creative aging services and opportunities, SAA staff are generally well connected to and informed about their constituents, giving them a good basis to identify unmet needs and underserved populations.

"Arts engagement and services specifically targeted toward older adults are in high demand in my state."
SAA Average: 4.2 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

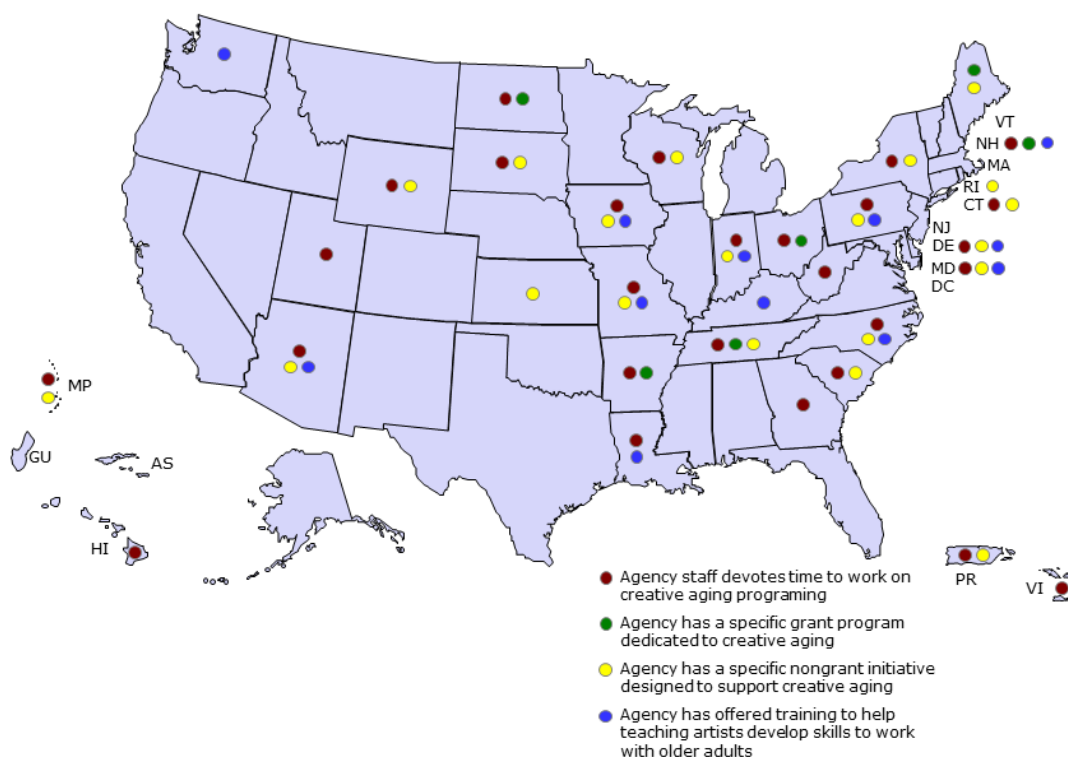


The survey asked about state arts agencies' interest in advancing creative aging opportunities. Paralleling the findings about demand for creative aging, responses show that 70% of SAAs have a very high interest or high interest in helping older adults access arts activities. Only 6% of respondents expressed low interest, and none indicated no interest.

State Arts Agencies' Interest in Creative Aging as a Service Area
SAA Average: 4.0 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)



Current SAA Programs



A

number of survey questions explored state arts agencies' grant programming, nongrant programming and other resources that foster creative aging activities. While only 11% of state arts agencies currently have or recently had a dedicated creative aging grant program, many more foster creative aging through other mechanisms. Six SAAs reported a current or former grant program specifically designed to support opportunities for older adults.

State Arts Agencies with a Dedicated Creative Aging Grant Program

Arkansas Arts Council – [Arts for Lifelong Learning Mini-Grants](#)

This program funds (up to \$1,000) short-term teaching artist residencies. Grantees must use the council's [Arts in Education Artist Roster](#).

Maine Arts Commission – [Creative Aging Grant](#)

This program funds (up to \$1,000) teaching artist residencies in community settings. Grantees must use the commission's [Creative Aging Teaching Artist Roster](#).

New Hampshire State Council on the Arts – [Arts in Health Project Grant](#)

This program supports—through grants of \$500 – \$4,500—participatory arts activities, creative aging projects and artist residencies that take place in health care facilities. The goal of the program is to enhance the quality of health care experiences by cultivating clinical environments that are not only conducive to patients' well-being but also supportive of health care professionals. Nonprofit arts groups and health care institutions, including veterans' centers and older adult care facilities, are eligible.

North Dakota Council on the Arts – [Art for Life](#)

This program supports arts activities—such as combining traditional dance and a mobile painting device—designed to improve the emotional and physical health and wellness of elders living independently or in care facilities. The program develops creative aging capacity throughout the state by fostering long-term partnerships between local arts agencies, artists, schools, and eldercare and related service facilities. A related resource is the Council's [Sundogs and Sunflowers: An Art for Life Program Guide for Creative Aging, Health, and Wellness](#).

Ohio Arts Council – [Creative Aging Ohio Initiative](#) (FY2016-2018)

Over the three years of this initiative, the council awarded project grants of \$1,500 – \$15,000 to support of arts groups creating hands-on arts experiences tailored to the needs and interests of older adults, including those living with degenerative conditions or in environments that can strain mental health.

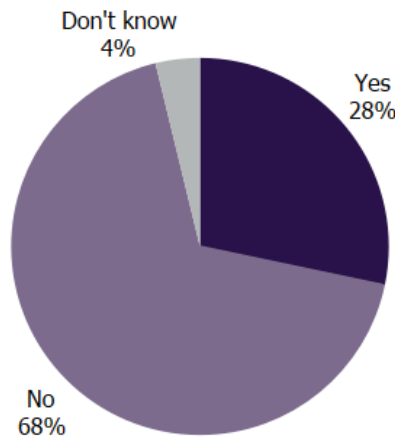
Tennessee Arts Council – [Creative Aging Tennessee Grant](#) (FY2018)

This one-year initiative—a partnership of the Tennessee Arts Commission, the Tennessee Department of Health, and the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability—awarded grants of up to \$5,000 for projects that enabled older adults to engage with the arts and to reap associated benefits, such as social connections, positive perceptions about aging, and improved health and wellness. After that, applications of this nature mainstreamed into regular project support programs.

The agency currently is the leading partner in the [Tennessee Person Centered Music Program](#), a \$1 million partnership with Music and Memory, the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability, Tennessee Health Care Association, Alzheimer's Tennessee, Volunteer Tennessee and the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum to provide music programming to more than 2,200 residents in 147 residential elder care facilities across the state.

A large majority of state arts agencies—80%—have funded creative aging activities through grant programs not specifically focused on older adults. These grants fall into several categories. Project grants, the most common of this cohort, support a wide variety of arts based activities, including, for 24 SAAs, creative aging. Teaching artist residency grants in 10 states, meanwhile, can support arts learning activities for older adults. Other types of SAA funding that may support creative aging include folk art apprenticeship grants, program support grants, capacity building grants, regranting programs and special funding partnerships. A significant number of state arts agencies, however, indicate that they are not seeking to stimulate greater demand for these grant funds.

Is your agency actively seeking more grant applications for creative aging projects and programs?



State arts agencies are more than grant makers, as most also support artists and cultivate cultural ecosystems through other services. **Examples of nongrant programming include technical assistance, professional development, partnership facilitation and information dissemination.** According to SAAs' survey responses, the most common form of nonfinancial support is training. Eight SAAs facilitate creative aging training through workshops, ongoing professional development and/or related toolkits. Several SAAs are engaged in creative aging partnerships with another state agency or a nonprofit organization. And three SAAs are currently designing a nongrant initiative or partnership to better support older adults. The ability to foster creative aging through multiple means of support is one of the reasons that SAAs are so well equipped to be leaders in efforts to help adults age positively.

Examples of Nongrant Initiatives Designed to Foster Creative Aging

Arizona Commission on the Arts – [AZ Creative Aging](#)

This is a multifaceted initiative to build a statewide infrastructure fostering the health and well-being of older adults through the arts. The initiative's [Generation\(s\) Lab](#) is a free incubator program designed to help arts organizations, local arts agencies and other creative aging stakeholders to strengthen and/or develop new programming to better serve older adults. The [Teaching Artist Institute](#), meanwhile, is a comprehensive training program that equips teaching artists with the knowledge, skills and connections to productively engage older adults in arts activities.

Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture (Northern Mariana Islands)

The Council has hosted exhibitions of older artists.

Maryland State Arts Council – [Maryland Micro-Credentials for Creative Classrooms](#)

The agency is developing competency-based professional development courses for arts educators, teaching artists and arts institutions in collaboration with by the state Department of Education Fine Arts Office. One of the courses focuses on methods for engaging military veterans and older adults in creative activities. Artists and educators who complete the curriculum receive a Professional Endorsement for Community Arts Providers from the Maryland State Arts Council and are eligible to be added to its Artists in Residence and Visiting Performer rosters.

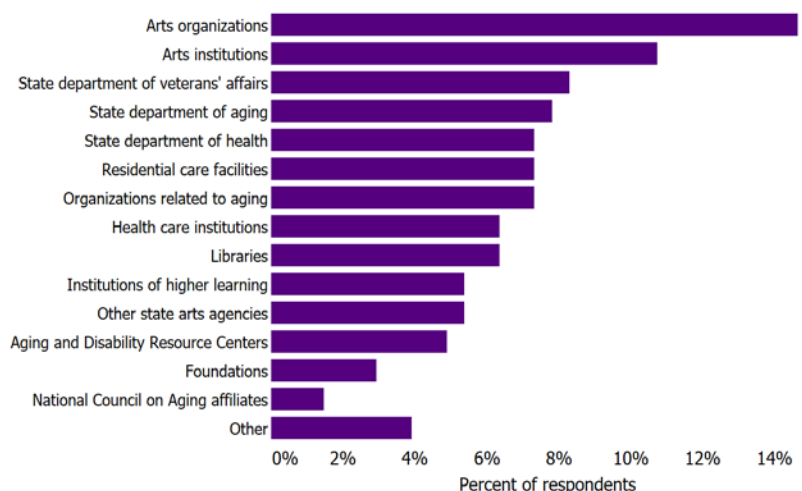
Institute of Puerto Rican Culture – [Cultura Rodante \(Redes Culturales\)](#)

This initiative presents arts programming in neighborhoods most deeply affected by Hurricane María. It facilitates free performances, film screenings and arts education workshops for children and adults. Priority sites include shelters, public plazas, community facilities and senior centers.

Many state arts agencies—building off their capacity for and expertise in constituent communication and knowledge sharing—**promote creative aging through their website, social media, newsletter and other means of mass communication.** Examples include the websites of the [Arizona Commission on the Arts](#), [Georgia Council for the Arts](#) and the [Maine Arts Commission](#), which provide detailed descriptions of creative aging practices and/or resources. Additionally, most SAAs hold annual statewide arts convenings, where policy and cultural leaders can explore the benefits, challenges and best practices of fostering the creativity of older adults. Some SAAs have developed in-depth resources designed to shape practice at the local level. The North Dakota Council on the Arts, for example, designed the [Art for Life toolkit](#) and distributed it to every local arts agency and eldercare facility in North Dakota and South Dakota as well as to every SAA in the nation.

Forming partnerships is another strategy for expanding the reach and increasing the benefit of SAA efforts to support the creative life of older adults. Forty-two state arts agencies report having formal or informal partnerships with other state agencies, foundations, arts organizations and institutions, health care institutions, care facilities, universities, senior centers, individual artists, and other stakeholders.

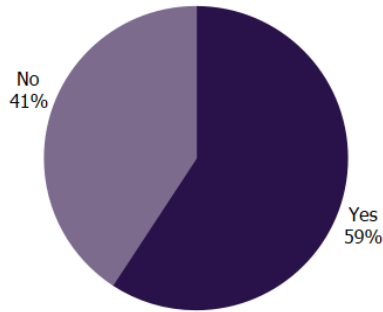
Does your agency work (formally or informally) with any of the following entities to support, facilitate or promote creative aging?



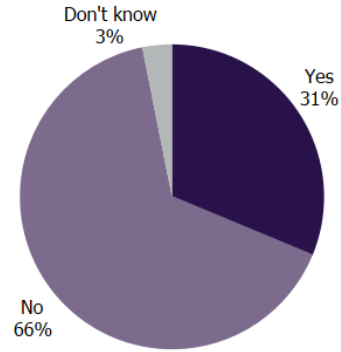
Teaching Artists

Supporting arts learning is a core part of the strategic plans of many state arts agencies. 31% of SAAs with teaching artists rosters identify roster artists trained to work with older adults.

Does your agency have a teaching artist roster?

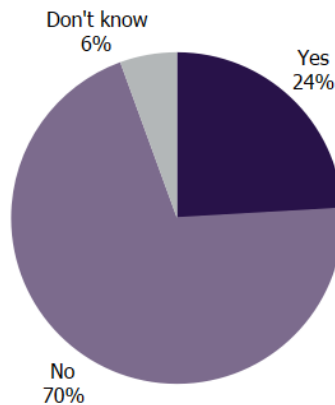


Does your teaching artist roster specifically identify artists who are trained to work with older adults?



Teaching artists can be highly effective facilitators of creative aging because they engage older adults in active artistic experiences and sustained learning, which often have a greater cultural, intellectual, emotional and social impact than passive experiences like watching a performance. Not all teaching artists, however, are equally equipped to work with older adults, which requires a different skill set than working with children and youth. Just 24% of SAAs currently offer training to enable teaching artists to work in creative aging.

Has your agency offered training to help teaching artists develop skills to work with older adults?

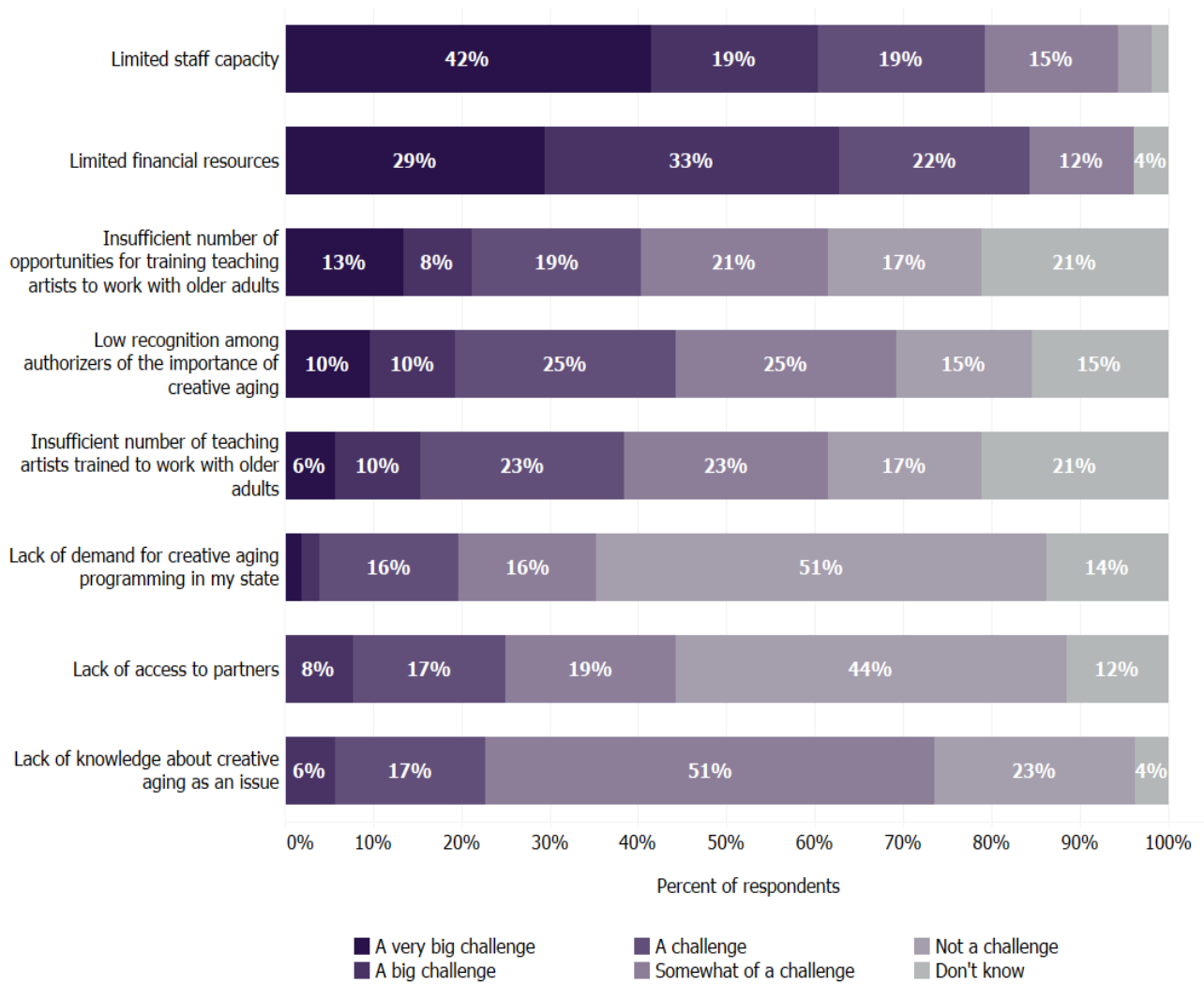


Challenges & Opportunities

NASAA's survey also asked about the **potential challenges** of supporting creative aging activities. **The biggest perceived challenges are the limitations of staff capacity and financial resources.** Other common challenges are the insufficient number of teaching artists trained to work with older adults, an insufficient number of related training opportunities, and insufficient recognition among authorizers of SAA budgets and policies of the importance of

creative aging. Conversely, about half of SAAs indicate that there is no lack of demand for creative aging opportunities and no lack of access to partners committed to supporting older adults through the arts.

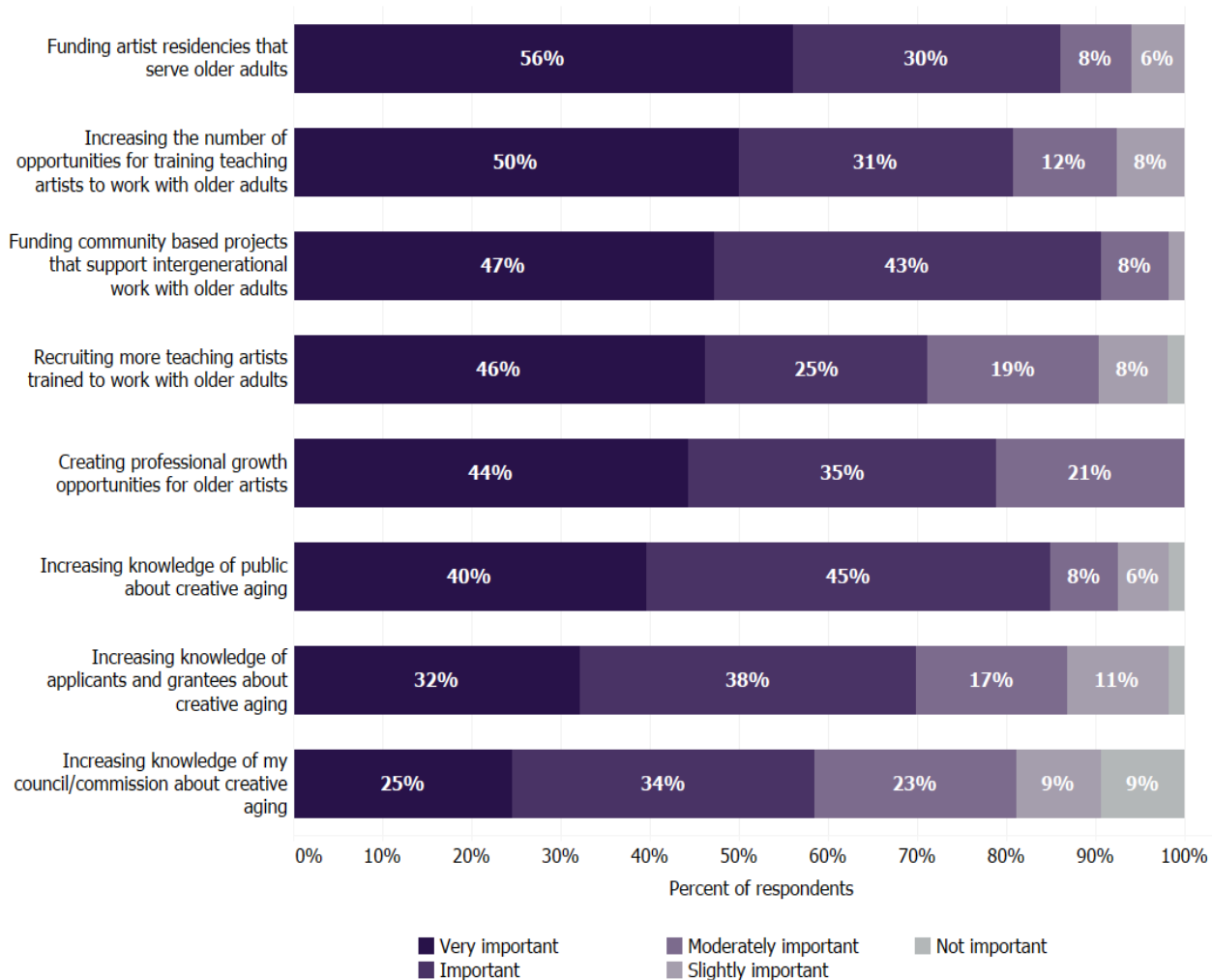
Potential Challenges to State Arts Agency Efforts to Serve Older Adults



The survey asked several questions about how state arts agencies would like to expand their support of creative aging. The responses indicate that **SAAs are keen to award more funding, share more knowledge and offer more training in an effort to increase the number and quality of artistic enrichment opportunities for older adults.**

Among states with high interest in creative aging, artist residencies, community based projects and increasing opportunities for teaching artists were seen as being the most important activities to support.

If you were able to expand your agency's creative aging activities and resources, how important would the following activities be?



Nearly half of state arts agencies responding to the survey elaborated on their goals for supporting creative aging. As indicated by the sample of SAA responses below, issues of interest include how creative aging activities can incorporate **traditional cultural practices** and **diversity, equity and inclusion awareness**.

- "The biggest challenges and focus areas are on addressing racial equity in creative aging practices and service models, taking what we learned in pilot programs and expanding that work statewide including exploring partnerships to better reach remote communities, and continuing to build value for the integration of the arts into existing aging and healthcare service infrastructures."
- "As we move forward with our next strategic plan, we are planning to include a creative aging component."
- "Our next step in creative aging would be to take the Arts Learning in Libraries program to the next level by offering more formal training for both the librarians and the teaching

artists and re-structure the program slightly so it wouldn't require as much SAA staff oversight."

- "Older adults who in facilities or living in poverty would be sub-sets of 'creative aging' that might be better served through a special initiative."
- "Funds to create very unique, creative, and visible projects that bring attention to creative aging and, thus, greater understanding and support. I think there is too much of an emphasis on accreditation and 'teaching artists' as they are currently viewed. Community artists who learn and grow with the program have economic and cultural...advantages that teaching artists who might be from outside the area may not have. This limits access to these programs and much more understanding and acceptance of folk and community artists to do this work is needed."
- "Create more programs for artists to share their knowledge about traditional practices and culture so we can pass them down to next generations, as they have been practiced for thousands of years."
- "If we had ONE staff person and this was their sole responsibility, more time could be dedicated to this one area of GREAT importance. Most state arts agencies do not have THAT luxury!"
- "I would encourage you to think in terms of learning in the arts as a whole life journey that keeps one healthy and engaged till you leave this planet. I'd like our agency to facilitate abundant opportunities to use the arts for staying physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy in any nurturing community context. I'd like us to help arts orgs and artists provide tools to be resilient, and inventive as our journeys progress through all the ups and downs. I'm SO tired of being viewed and seeing others as aging and growing old. Wine and cheese age and get better."

Next Steps

This research is one component of a longer-term strategic partnership between NASAA and [Aroha Philanthropies](#). Using this data—along with insights gleaned from a focus group of state arts agency leaders convened in September 2019—our Leveraging State Investments in Creative Aging partnership will explore how additional resources could help state arts agencies advance creative aging in the years ahead. For more information, contact NASAA Chief Advancement Officer [Laura Smith](#). NASAA and state arts agencies express our deepest gratitude to Aroha Philanthropies for their visionary leadership and strategic support that opens doors to lifelong learning and creative expression across the nation.



Image credit, front cover: Arlene Lopez performs in "Dancing the Mural," a site-specific performance featuring older adult residents of South Tucson, AZ. Photo by Dominic Arizona Bonuccelli, courtesy of Safos Dance Theatre.

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