

Arts Education Working Group Description

The Arts Education Working Group (AEWG) designs and leads the annual arts education Professional Development Institute (PDI), funded under a cooperative agreement between NASAA and the National Endowment for the Arts. The AEWG typically includes 12 members: seven arts education managers from the six arts regions across the country (the Western region has two representatives due to its large size); the PDI state host arts education manager; a state arts agency executive director representative (who is frequently also a member of NASAA's board of directors); the arts education director and arts education specialist from the National Endowment for the Arts; and NASAA's Professional Development Institute manager. Regional arts education manager representatives serve staggered three-year terms on the AEWG, and the executive director representative serves a two-year term. The PDI host serves one year, during which the PDI takes place in their state.

AEWG leadership includes a chair, cochair, the PDI host, Arts Endowment partners and the NASAA PDI manager. The AEWG chair serves a one-year term. Prior to their year as chair, they are elected to serve as cochair for one year. AEWG leadership meets separately (one hour per month) to prepare the agenda for the monthly full AEWG committee call (1.5 hours per month) and reports to Arts Endowment partners on PDI planning. The AEWG cochair also serves as the point person for the AEWG's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access in the Arts Subcommittee, for a total of four quarterly meetings per year. Both the AEWG chair and cochair may serve on additional subcommittees (Hospitality, Programming, Mentoring, etc.) during the PDI planning process. The AEWG chair and cochair also participate in the PDI site visit, which generally takes place in May, to meet with the PDI host and gather information about potential PDI venues and local partner organizations.

The PDI planning process is staffed by NASAA's Professional Development Institute manager and the Arts Endowment's director of arts education and arts education specialist. Planning typically begins in February with a meeting to introduce new AEWG members, share an evaluation report from the previous year's PDI and review the PDI planning time line. In years during which the PDI is not a preconference activity of NASAA's biannual Assembly, the AEWG requests and evaluates proposals from prospective state arts agency hosts and selects the location.

When the PDI host joins the AEWG (typically in March), they bring key suggestions and guidance related to every aspect of planning the PDI, including potential meeting venues, arts partners, teaching artists, etc. Planning the PDI is a highly collaborative, iterative process that works best when all members of the AEWG attend and fully participate in all of the monthly committee and subcommittee meetings, between March and October.

During the planning process, AEWG members conduct independent research, interview potential speakers, facilitate group planning conversations and develop a detailed conference agenda.

AEWG representatives also lead regular meetings with their regions' arts education manager counterparts, varying from monthly to quarterly conference calls, in order to make sure there is representation from all arts education managers in the planning process and that the developing agenda is relevant to the peer group's concerns.

During the PDI, which takes place generally in September or October, AEWG members facilitate and staff the PDI, along with the PDI manager and Arts Endowment staff, as needed. After the PDI, the AEWG members review the PDI evaluation survey and make recommendations about how to incorporate feedback into the next PDI planning cycle.

The Arts Endowment's arts education director and arts education specialist are active collaborators in the work of the AEWG. Beyond providing valuable financial support, the National Endowment for the Arts is a working partner in PDI site selection, planning, and evaluation. Arts Endowment staff also serve as ambassadors, sharing insights and lessons learned from the PDI across the Endowment and within other arts education leadership networks.

Serving as an AEWG member (particularly in the roles of chair, cochair and PDI host) is a leadership opportunity for state arts agency arts education managers. AEWG members are elected by their peers for their role as regional representative because of their commitment to and knowledge of the work of arts education in their region. They lead the peer group conversation on important topics and shared priorities for arts education across the country, and benefit by learning and sharing closely with a group of other leaders in arts education. Joining the AEWG group helps grow the capacity of participating members and increase their national view of trends in arts education.

For more information about NASAA's Arts Education Working Group, please contact PDI Manager Susan Oetgen, susan.oetgen@nasaa-arts.org or 202-347-6352 x116.