



Accessibility Coordinators Peer Session October 3-4, 2012

Notes

Wednesday, October 3

1:00 – 1:45 p.m. Greetings, Introductions and NEA Updates

Beth Bienvenu, Director, Office of Accessibility, National Endowment for the Arts; 202-682-5567; Bienvenub@arts.gov

Bienvenu started the session off by asking three questions:

- What are your concerns or issues?
- What are solutions you can offer to others?
- What can the NEA do to assist?

She then gave an update on recent NEA Office of Accessibility activities, including:

- *Design for Accessibility* redesign project
- [Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development](#)
- [Arts and Health in the Military](#)
- Creativity and Aging in America project with the National Center for Creative Aging to develop an effective-practice database and artist training
- the NEA's interagency agreement with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to support artists in residence
- internal NEA staff training the Office of Accessibility has been conducting

Bienvenu also discussed the direct calls to state and regional accessibility coordinators conducted over the summer. She reported back that the states and regions accessibility efforts include:

- active programming for accessibility
- training for staff and constituents
- technical assistance
- review of accessibility statements and accessibility plans in both grant applications and post-award activities, as applicable

- programming for artists with disabilities, such as the NEA-funded statewide forums and follow-up activities, and rosters of artists with disabilities

Key state partners include state disability offices, [VSA affiliates](#), [ADA Centers](#), [University Centers of Excellence](#), [Centers for Independent Living](#) and other service organizations. Accessibility coordinators reported that issues and barriers for their role included lack of funding, lack of time and juggling multiple responsibilities/roles within their organizations. When asked what accessibility coordinators need, the responses included training, access to best practices, networking opportunities, and materials and resources for their constituents. Bienvenu recommended low-cost modifications to websites, such as the addition of an accessibility statement, accessibility resources and accessibility coordinator contact information. She also recommended accessibility coordinators communicate with their constituents through e-mail newsletters, teleconferences and webinars. (E-mail the NEA Office of Accessibility for examples of accessibility statements and accessibility sections of state arts agency websites.)

The *Design for Accessibility* redesign project will address some of the needs addressed in Bienvenu's calls with coordinators, but to provide more immediate training and resources particular to the state arts agency field, the Office of Accessibility will be developing an orientation guide for accessibility coordinators over the winter. An [NEA Handbook for State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations](#) was introduced at the NASAA conference. The handbook includes information about accessibility requirements for the states and regions, as well as information on the role of the accessibility coordinator. Bienvenu requested feedback from coordinators, seeking points for inclusion in the more specialized accessibility coordinator orientation guide.

1:45 – 2:45 p.m. [Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities](#)

The National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) and two state accessibility coordinators provided an update on the current statewide forum in Kentucky and a follow-up project in Missouri.

Speakers:

Katharine Hayward, Project Director, Statewide Forums on Careers in Arts, National Arts and Disability Center, Tarjan Center at UCLA; 408-294-6171; khayward@mednet.ucla.edu

Sarah Schmitt, Arts Access Director and Accessibility Coordinator, Kentucky Arts Council; 502-564-3757; SarahSchmitt@ky.gov.

Virginia Sanders, Executive Assistant and Accessibility Coordinator, Missouri Arts Council; 314-340-6851; virginia.sanders@ded.mo.gov

Hayward gave a brief overview of [NADC](#) and the recommendations stemming from the NEA's [2009 National Summit on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities](#). She reviewed the aims of the statewide forums, which are to assess education and career needs and barriers specific to the state and local communities, and to implement strategies to advance careers in the arts for individuals with disabilities. Outcomes of these forums typically include: the identification of and outreach to artists with disabilities, the development of partnerships across the arts and disability communities, and the creation of a strategic plan to prioritize needs. Forum follow-up activities focus on extending activities started in the statewide forums and identified within the strategic plans, and on strengthening existing partnerships. Since 2002, 27 states have conducted forums and 15 states have received funding for follow-up activities. Hayward highlighted that states now have a strong interest in reaching out to youth and nurturing their potential for arts careers. Hayward recommended that states develop the sustainability of their arts careers programs by building partnerships with arts employers, exposing youth to arts careers, and identifying more established artists to serve as mentors or leaders.

Schmitt discussed the Kentucky Arts Council's (KAC) process for planning this year's activities, and the resulting "[unconference](#)" [for artists with disabilities](#). Kentucky started its project by consulting with its Accessibility Advisory Group, developing a solid communications team, and identifying opportunities for artists. They set the following goals: to find artists with disabilities, inquire about their professional needs, and then provide professional development based on these expressed needs. KAC held an "unconference," the agenda of which was set by the attendees themselves on the day of the event. Artists and arts administrators with and without disabilities attended the convening. The problems that arose in organizing the event included transportation, poor attendance, and being overly ambitious with outcomes. The strengths of the event were that there was great publicity, new partnerships, connections with artists, KAC staff involvement and new professional development for teachers. KAC developed new goals for the initiative, including making more opportunities for literary artists, offering more

intergenerational opportunities and opportunities for veterans, and using more art from artists with disabilities in KAC's publicity materials. Schmitt highlighted how KAC has modified the artist database to include an indication of whether an artist has a disability.

Sanders gave a brief summary of the Missouri Arts Council's 2004 forum, and of its support for reestablishing a VSA affiliate within the state in 2009. From these efforts, Missouri established three goals: set up a 400-member stakeholder network, create an anthology of work by artists with disabilities, and support an art-infused camp for students with and without autism. Sanders discussed at length the outcome of the second goal—the first iteration of a published juried anthology of work by artists with disabilities titled [*Blindness Isn't Black*](#). The anthology was designed to showcase some of the best contemporary work of artists with disabilities in Missouri. Contributors to the publication received copies of the anthology and an honorarium. A traveling exhibition of works selected from the anthology toured the state. A second anthology was published in 2011, titled *Where We Can Read the Wind*. Through the forum follow-up support, a traveling exhibit of this work is now touring the state.

2:45 - 3:15 p.m. [Presentation by the 2012 winner of the National Accessibility Leadership Award: The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts](#)

Speakers:

Amy Gabriele, Program Director and Accessibility Coordinator, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; 717-525-5547; agabriele@pa.gov

Mimi Smith, Executive Director, VSA Pennsylvania; 215-564-2431; mksmith@amaryllistheatre.org

Gabriele gave an overview of the history of accessibility work at the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), including the Council's publication *Keystones of Accessibility*. Gabriele also highlighted that PCA sets an example for arts organizations by providing captioning and audio description at the Governor's Awards in the Arts ceremony, providing ASL interpretation for its Poetry Out Loud competition, and providing ADA compliant signage in its own building—the first in state government to do so. In addition, PCA purchases captioning equipment for a cultural organization in the city hosting the annual Governor's Award in the Arts, so it can be shared with other community organizations afterward.

In 2005, PCA helped to support the formation of the Pennsylvania Cultural Access Project (PCAP), in partnership with Amaryllis Theatre Company and VSA Pennsylvania. Smith discussed the goal of PCAP—to help arts organizations increase their accessibility efforts and to increase audiences, awareness, and inclusion. To achieve this goal, PCAP helps the participating regions and cities by sharing technology, providing training, and helping to establish an advisory board of people with disabilities from within its community. These advisory boards provide advice to local arts organizations on cultural access and help build audiences by marketing to the local disability community. Smith emphasized the importance of these advisory groups. These groups ensure that people with disabilities are talking to cultural organizations and the two constituencies are sharing their perspectives. There are currently nine regions and cities working with PCAP. The PCAP utilizes connections across the state to explore opportunities for the expansion of accessible programming, building on established and new relationships. In addition to PCA funding, PCAP has received support from the Verizon Foundation and the Pennsylvania Council on Developmental Disabilities.

3:30 - 4:30 p.m. ***Design for Accessibility Redesign Project Update***

Presentation of the proposed framework for the *Design for Accessibility* website and summary of feedback on state needs for technical assistance and training resources

Speakers:

Valerie Fletcher, Executive Director, Institute for Human Centered Design; 617-695-1225; VFletcher@ihcdesign.org

Beth Bienvenu, Director, Office of Accessibility, National Endowment for the Arts; 202-682-5567; Bienvenub@arts.gov

Bienvenu summarized the publication history of the NEA's [*Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook*](#) and the need for updates due to new laws and regulations, new technology, changes in terminology, and the evolution of the disability and accessibility field. *Design for Accessibility* will be redesigned as a new website that will integrate the *Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook* and the NEA's [*Accessibility Planning and Resource Guide for Cultural Administrators*](#), along with new resources, research and effective practices. This effort is an interagency project, receiving funding support from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) and the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#). The selected organization for the cooperative agreement to develop the

website is the [Institute for Human Centered Design](#) in Boston. An eight-member task force representative of the cultural and accessibility fields is advising the redesign. The field will be surveyed to determine what the needs are for cultural accessibility, and what resources would be most useful. The new website is expected to launch in mid-2013.

Fletcher gave a brief overview of the Institute for Human Centered Design's work, including design and consulting across all sectors, federally funded technical assistance ([Fair Housing](#) and [ADA](#)), a user expert lab for accessibility testing and assessment, education and training, and research. Fletcher highlighted some of the resources previously developed by IHCD, including an [ADA Checklist](#), which a few of the accessibility coordinators applauded as a useful resource in plain English. The new *Design for Accessibility* website will be an easy-to-use intuitive resource. It will include clear information on the rights and responsibilities for cultural organizations under the related laws, including the ADA, Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the [21st-Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010](#). The website will be able to be easily updated and expanded, unlike the current hard-copy publication, and will include data and printable materials, charts, and graphs to help make the compelling case for accessibility and universal design. It will link to [Department of Justice Settlement Agreements](#) for legal settlements involving cultural organizations. An example cited was a recent settlement with the [Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts](#). Fletcher discussed the search for much-needed training materials, since currently most existing training is not culturally specific. The Institute will distribute two surveys to inform the development of the website. First, a needs assessment will be sent to more than 300 cultural administrators. Second, a survey seeking new and innovative materials will be sent to experts in cultural access. The audience for this website includes state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, regional humanities organizations, libraries, cultural entities of all sizes, and designers, including architects, graphic designers, web designers, and exhibit designers. Fletcher discussed challenges of this new NEA-hosted website. Since it is a federal site, it cannot endorse specific products and services or have a moderated exchange or interactive component.

continued

Thursday, October 4

8:30 –
10:00 a.m.

Topical Discussion: How State Arts Agencies can serve people in healthcare settings, older adults, and military service members/veterans in medical and long-term care facilities

Speakers:

Gay Hanna, Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA); 202-895-9456; ghanna@creativeaging.org

Dorothy Williams, Director of Education Services, National Center for Creative Aging; 301-357-2040; dwilliams@creativeaging.org

Catherine Lavenburg, Participation Program Assistant and Accessibility Coordinator, North Carolina Arts Council (NCAC); 919-807-6501; Catherine.lavenburg@ncdcr.gov

Hanna started the discussion with an explanation of the importance of creativity and aging, including an overview of the coming increase in the older adult population, given the aging of the baby boomers and longer life expectancies. Hanna briefly touched on the [Society for the Arts in Healthcare's](#) (SAH) work with the *National Initiative on the Arts in the Military*. SAH, in partnership with Americans for the Arts, the NEA and a number of other organizations, organized a [summit](#) in October 2011, which is being followed by a Leadership Roundtable in November 2012 and another summit in 2013. The goals of the initiative are to promote artist training and program development in military facilities and community settings.

The [National Center for Creative Aging](#) (NCCA) recently launched a [partnership with the Veterans Administration \(VA\)](#) in the Washington, D.C., area—specifically, working with VA Community Living Centers to provide creative aging programming. In the first year of the project, NCCA will be conducting a needs assessment, completing valuable asset mapping, and piloting model programs. In the following two years, NCCA hopes to build the infrastructure for sustainable program services, staff training, volunteer training, internship programs and support from consultants.

Williams spoke about the NEA-funded Arts and Aging Core Training Project, which trained 72 artists in Princeton, New Jersey; Clearwater, Florida; and Greensboro, North Carolina, in early 2012. The training project provided teaching artists and administrators with practical skills for working with older adults and an appreciation for the social and emotional benefits of arts

programming. In 2013, NCCA will launch an artist training initiative specifically working with people with dementia that will include methods used by recognized teaching artists from [Dancing Heart](#), [Alzheimer's Poetry Project](#), and [Timeslips](#). Additionally, NCCA is partnering with NASAA and state arts agencies in three-year initiative to work with local leaders in a community of practice to further learning and best practices in the fields of arts, aging, accessibility, and health care.

Lavenburg presented on the [Creative Aging Network-NC](#), which aims to be the state resource for bringing together the arts and aging communities. The North Carolina Arts Council (NCAC) partnered with the Network to conduct a one-and-a-half-day training on creative aging for teaching artists, providing travel stipends to artists from across the state. The artists had experience with residency work, but few had experience working with older adults. The training provided an educational foundation for the artists, expanding the artists' audience reach and the professional market. Further, the Network received an artist residency grant from NCAC for two trained artists to work with older adults. Lavenburg recommended that other states identify the strongest players in the state doing arts and/or aging work and build relationships and partnerships. Additionally, the Network works with artists and constituents directly as they navigate the field; recognize points of cross-over among creative aging, accessibility and arts in health care; refine grant guidelines to include creative aging projects; and encourage sharing of best practices through a forum or conference calls.

Peer session discussion surrounding the state arts agency and NEA funding of arts and aging projects emphasized the lifelong learning aspect of the projects. Similar to arts education for youth, the artistic merit of the project can be evaluated based on the qualifications of the professional artists, programming history and work samples of the service-providing organizations. Accessibility coordinators from Connecticut, New Jersey, Oregon and Puerto Rico highlighted the creativity and aging and arts and health-care initiatives taking place in their states.

10:15 –
11:00 a.m.

Topical Discussion: How VSAs and state arts agencies are working together to support accessibility in their states; update on the Leadership Exchange on Arts and Disability (LEAD) network

Speaker:

Betty Siegel, Director of VSA and Accessibility, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; 202-416-8727; BRSiegel@Kennedy-Center.org

Siegel led an informal discussion about initiatives of the Kennedy Center and VSA arts. Siegel discussed a new opportunity, funded by the Department of Education, for competitive, non-matching contracts to arts organizations to conduct arts education projects for children with disabilities. The projects must have educational outcomes tied to federal and state standards. An RFP is to be released in October, with an early November deadline for proposals.

This winter, another RFP will be released by the Kennedy Center to support internship programs for people with disabilities within arts organizations. Last year, organizations could apply for support from the Kennedy Center for up to \$25,000 for their internship programs.

The [Leadership Exchange in Art and Disability](#) (LEAD) Conference will be held in Washington, D.C., in August 2013. A moderated listserv for cultural administrators to discuss accessibility was highlighted as a great resource for arts managers to learn and share. To participate, e-mail access@kennedy-center.org and request access to the LEAD listserv; include name, organization and contact information.

11:00 a.m. –
12:00 p.m.

Breakout session discussing next steps for staying connected throughout the year, including how the NEA can help to communicate with the states

The peer group made the following suggestions:

- Routine e-mail with updates, new resources, regulations and best practices from the NEA Office of Accessibility would be beneficial.
- E-mails from the Office of Accessibility that contain important news be sent to executive directors as well as accessibility coordinators.
- The NEA 504 Workbook should be put into "plain speak."
- The regional arts organizations could list the accessibility coordinators for their member states on their websites, as they do for other discipline coordinators, and consider hosting an online wiki page for regional accessibility questions and resources.
- NASAA could indicate on its website its accessibility coordinator and could highlight an access story in the "Spotlight" feature in its monthly e-mails.
- The NEA Accessibility Office should consider doing presentations on access at the annual Americans for the Arts conference and for other NASAA peer sessions.

- Suggested topics for new NEA Accessibility Office webinars included the federally funded regional ADA centers and the use of closed/open captioning.
- The group expressed a need for more regional convenings for accessibility coordinators, and coordinators sought assistance for building their case for travel funding to attend such events and other professional development opportunities.

Please contact Katie Lyles Levy, accessibility specialist, NEA Office of Accessibility levyk@arts.gov for copies of the Accessibility Coordinator Peer Session Power Point presentations.