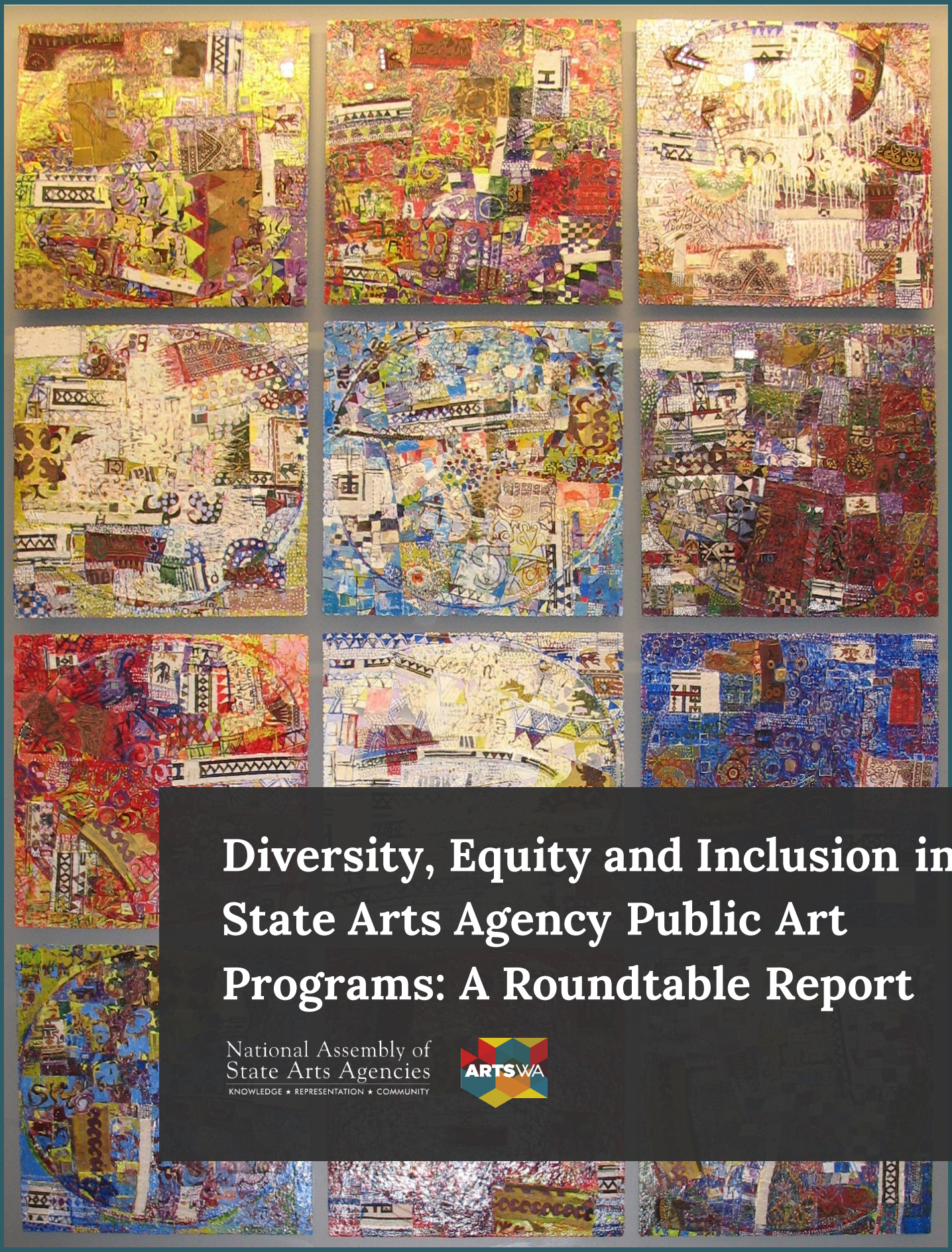


Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in State Arts Agency Public Art Programs: A Roundtable Report

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

ARTSWA

Introduction

Contents

Introduction 2
Setting the Stage: Public Art Programs and Key Policy Issues 2
Public Art Field Dynamics and Practices 6
Community Outreach and Local Partnerships 9
Panels, Committees and the Selection Process .. 13
Understanding Equity Issues through Data 15
Additional Readings and Resources 17
Methodology Notes and Acknowledgments 18

In May 2021, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) convened eight state public art administrators in a roundtable discussion to gain a deeper understanding of how state arts agencies are approaching equity work in public art practices. The Public Art Equity Roundtable was conducted on behalf of and in conjunction with the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) to examine barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion in state level public art programs and to inform state arts agency strategic planning processes. This roundtable was one strand of a broader research effort to examine how state arts agencies are advancing equity in their policies, programs and practices. For more information on this related research, see Deepening Relationships with Diverse Communities: State Arts Agency Strategies and In Pursuit of Equity: Four Case Studies of State Arts Agencies.

The public art roundtable participants were asked to discuss the following questions:

- **What do we know about the artists who are selected for public art commissions, collections and rosters?** Who's missing? What strategies has your agency tried to diversify the artists who are selected?
- **What is the process by which artists are selected for commissions, collections and rosters?** What rules, requirements or procedures present the biggest equity barriers? What is the public's role in these decision-making processes?
- **What steps has your agency taken to address these barriers and obstacles?**

During a robust roundtable discussion, common themes emerged with unique perspectives from each state. This report articulates those themes by highlighting the specific equity challenges faced by public art program managers as well as the strategies states are taking to improve equity in state level public art commissioning and collections management practices.

Setting the Stage: Public Art Programs and Key Policy Issues

Caption: Puerto Rican heritage murals by Berto Cintron and Jossue Ramos Guzman, Trenton, New Jersey.

Public art and percent for art mechanisms are long-standing policies that allocate needed resources to grow the public's appreciation, participation and understanding of the arts in public spaces. Currently, half of the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies have active public art programs. NASAA's public art resources provide information on all current and past programs. By and large, public art is funded though statutes and ordinances stipulating that a portion of government-owned property's capital construction or renovation costs be dedicated to the creation and installation of public art. Most commonly, this funding is set at 1% of the total costs. Public art programs and projects also can be funded through agency allocations and legislative appropriations.

NASAA's Percent for Art Policy Brief provides a well-rounded review of relevant policy considerations for state arts agencies. Policies that are especially pertinent to equity include:

- **Site exemptions.** State statutes often define what types of government properties or construction initiatives are exempt from art requirements. If those exemptions include facilities used by underserved populations (such as families seeking social services, individuals reliant on public transportation, veterans or incarcerated individuals), then the benefits of a state's investment in public art will not be universally accessible.

- **Community involvement.** Many states have requirements around the composition of public art committees, who holds decision-making authority, and whether community involvement components are needed. These policies affect who has a seat at the table as well as whether and how public art projects will reflect the needs of the communities they are intended to serve.

- **Artist and Artwork Selection.** Percent for art legislation and programmatic practices establish policies for purchasing artwork or selecting artists for

commissions. These policies and procedures contain many decision points that can be affected by bias or can skew choices in favor of artists with more resources, mainstream credentials, or certain types of work histories. The rules for selection may be statutory or they may be created by the state arts agency. When the composition of selection committees or the processes by which they commission works are statutory or long-standing policies, these can be especially difficult to reform.

- **Artist Residency Requirements.** Policies determining whether or how many public art contracts can be executed by in-state or out-of-state artists may affect the frequency with which projects reflect local needs or cultural traditions. Conversely, residency requirements or preferences may limit the diversity of artists who are likely to be selected for a project.

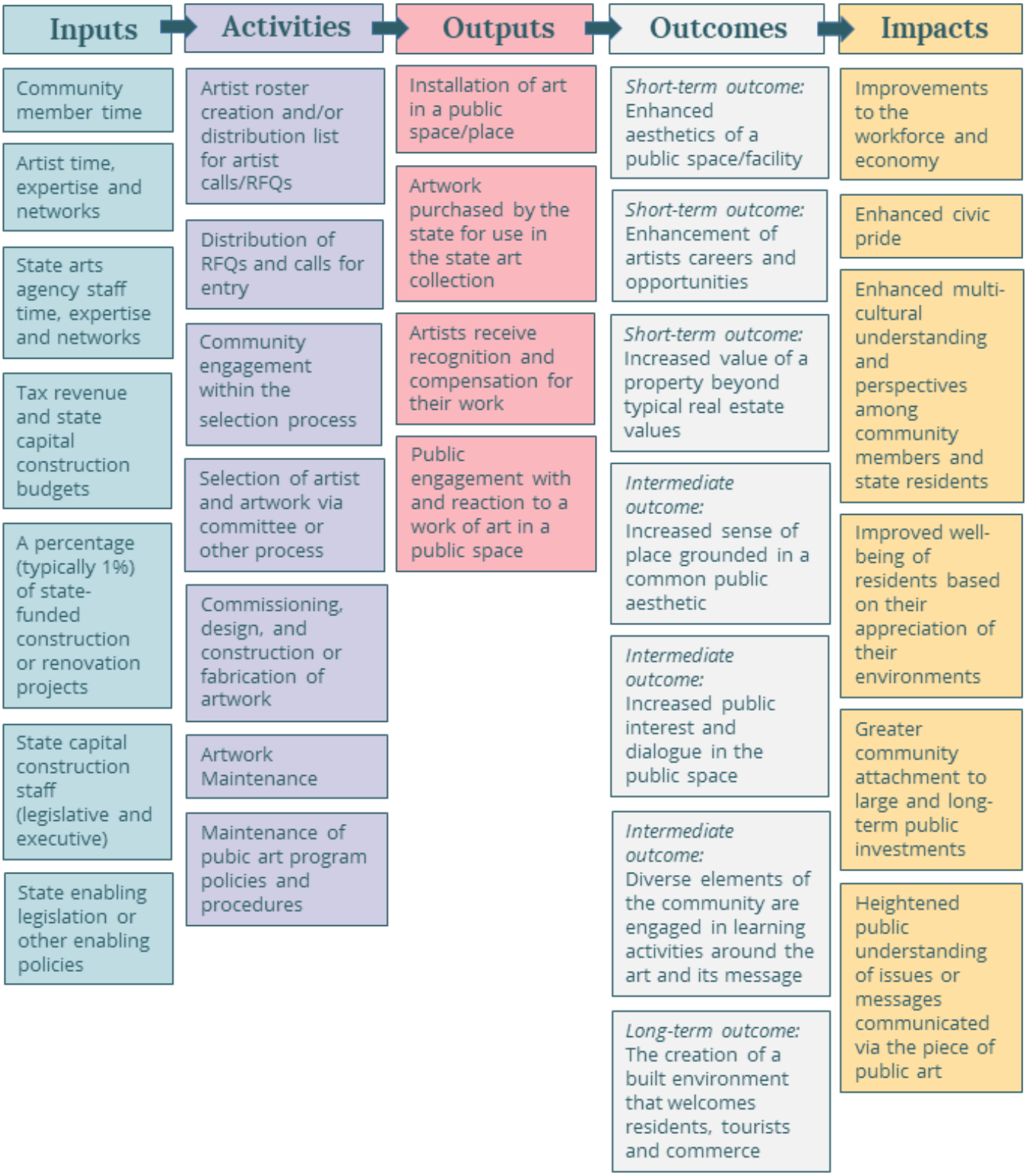
- **Public Art Controversies.** If communities are polarized about issues or events symbolized through certain public artworks, those works (and the programs that supported them) might become a focal point for controversy. Aversion to this perceived risk could result in missed opportunities for locally relevant artworks or projects that can stimulate productive civil discourse.

State arts agencies have various roles and responsibilities in the administration, funding, selection and management of public art. These roles and responsibilities are fulfilled inside of the larger regulatory setting, including state contracting and procurement requirements, the capital budgeting process, and other bureaucratic systems. Such systems are vulnerable to unconscious bias, economic exclusion, structural racism and other systemic issues.

Percent for art polices benefit all residents who engage with public buildings such as schools, colleges, universities, court houses, libraries, museums, etc. However, the artists, institutions and communities that benefit from public art are not always represented equitably. Policy architects and public art practitioners have a variety of choice points—both large and small—that can theoretically lead to more equitable outputs.

The following logic model presents a theory of how percent for art policies result in activities and outputs that provide beneficial community outcomes and longer-term social and economic impacts. This model demonstrates some of the activities that can lead to equity focused impacts and the decision points under the control of state governments and state arts agencies. All inputs and activities within this model can be modified to have more equitable or less equitable outcomes. If state arts agencies can exert influence over these inputs and activities, this can reverberate throughout the system, helping state public art programs achieve more equitable outcomes.

Theoretical Public Art Program Logic Model



The following pages highlight thematically grouped issue areas addressed by the roundtable discussion. Each set of themes addresses the articulated equity concerns along with strategies used to improve equity.

Public Art Field Dynamics and Practices

The most important equity challenges identified by the roundtable discussants were the structural issues within the public art field along with procedures that can impede or advance equity.

Challenges

- Artists of color are under-represented in large commissions (which are often the focus of public art opportunities). Artists who have the credentials, portfolios and experience to do large-scale works of art are anecdotally observed to be primarily White and male. While this doesn't detract from the talent and work of these artists, it does speak to the ability of well-resourced and well-connected artists to submit more competitive proposals. Artists who have not worked on large-scale commissions don't always have opportunities to gain this experience. This disadvantages diverse, less experienced and under-resourced artists.

- State procurement practices—which operate under the strictures of state and federal laws—often restrict the selection of any contractor or artist based on race. This color-blind paradigm is a hindrance to advancing equity when knowledge of vendor race and ethnicity would allow for equity to be a consideration in hiring and procurement practices.

- Often, strict limitations accompany percent for art statutes and ordinances. Public art funding is most commonly associated with 1% of construction costs for specific state projects and tied to the same compliance as the bonds that often finance capital construction. This further limits the types of artists available to produce such large-scale and long-term works.

- Organizations, project implementers and institutions that have a say in the selection of public work—either based on the need for them to be included via a statute or because they are a key stakeholder in the selection of the work—may not have the same equity values as the state arts agency or the public being served by the percent for art program.

- Many public art stakeholders have a logical aversion to risk within their roles. Not all people will agree on the commissioning of certain pieces of art, their placement,

their message and their contribution to public spaces. The public nature of these works make them all the more subject to scrutiny, interpretation or dissatisfaction. Thus public art stakeholders may choose art and artists that mitigate the risk of unwanted public backlash. Projects that are governed by risk management decision making—similar to policies that are a result of political compromise—can result in dissatisfaction from multiple perspectives. The silver lining to this dissatisfaction is that it is evidence of an open process and democratic values.

- Application language may contain unintended cultural bias that skews toward Western, white and cis-gendered male artists. Language framed within a dominant culture may not appear inviting or accessible to those applying from nondominant cultures.

- Not only are the artists who are selected for public art commissions predominantly White, there is also an observed lack of racial diversity in the field of public art administrators. This lack of racial diversity of administrators contributes to more homogeneous perspectives, less diverse administrator/practitioner networks and less visible diversity in leadership.

- Many public agencies that fund the arts, regardless of the program, struggle with the requirement or desire to fund "excellent" works of art. Public art programs that, in their inception, put a majority of their weight on commissioning "excellence" exclude nondominant artistic practices unless those definitions of excellence encompass diverse aesthetic perspectives and acknowledge that capability takes many forms.

Thunderbird, by Andy Wilbur-Peterson and Greg Colfax

Strategies

Scrutinize language communicating program values. Although public art policy language can be restrictive, there is still a large amount of language under the control of state arts agency councils and staff. Guidelines, RFPs, RFQs and applications for rosters or calls for entry can all be examined for cultural biases and edited to be as inclusive as possible. NASAA's Inclusive Language Guide can provide some guideposts when reviewing language.

De-emphasize past performance and portfolios in the selection process. Given current inequities in opportunities for artists, decision making based solely on past performance for comparable projects can perpetuate inequities into the future and lock emerging artists out of opportunities to compete. Adjudication criteria often are created and maintained by state arts agencies and it is possible to adjust these criteria to allow for nontraditional work histories and a variety of creative credentials in a way that doesn't automatically reward past performance.

Identify funding for public art programs not directly tied to a specific location and capital project. Given that the history and rigidity of place often contributes to unintentional bias and inequities, flexible funding that can support public art not tied to place can go a long way toward mitigating the inherent inequities in public art practices.

"By speaking with our allies in the community, we've found that there is an emerging practice among artists of color doing ephemeral installation work. To meet these artists in their preferred space, we've created a trust that is funded by fees. This money can be used to form a committee for proposed temporary installation works of art."

Create developmental opportunities for artists who haven't traditionally been in the public art field, particularly artists of color. Implementing nontraditional models for projects, like temporary works or mentorships, can give artists of color and emerging, disabled, female-identifying, LGBTQA+ and rural artists experience in and confidence in pursuing larger-scale public art projects in the future.

De-emphasize large exterior sculpture. If statutorily available as on option, using percent for art funds to commission public art other than exterior sculptures extends the types and demographics of artists who can participate. Large-exterior-sculpture artists who can complete a high-cost project are anecdotally less diverse than the full scope of practicing artists. States are beginning to experiment with ways of funding mobile art, temporary

works and performances—all of which get to the same purposes of public engagement without the restrictions of art that is inexorably tied to a facility.

Integrate curatorial advice from underrepresented communities within the purchasing or selection process. Curatorial advice is another strategy for purchasing public art. With positive effects, some states can employ people with expertise in artistic subject matter, familiarity with the contributing artists, and an understanding of the equity issues relevant to the public art selection and commissioning process. States have found that the percentages of female-identifying artists and artists of color whose work is coming into their collections is ramping up significantly due to curated collections. When a state can purchase a work of art rather than commissioning a project, there is a more direct line to making the values of diversity, equity and inclusion a reality.

Targeted Purchasing Strategies

Several state arts agency public art programs permit applicants to emphasize their cultural background or allow selection from a pool of diverse artists. Examples include:

New Mexico Arts BIPOC Artists Purchase Initiative: This initiative aims to increase the participation of artists who are Black, Indigenous and/or people of color in the Art in Public Places Program and to diversify the state's public art collection by purchasing artwork by diverse artists in all stages of their careers. The cultural background and/or experiences influencing applicants' art-making practice are part of the consideration.

Washington's Public Art Roster: ArtsWA's public art roster is how the agency selects artists to create new artworks for the State Art Collection, and is seen by the agency as a starting point to center equity and to reflect Washington's diverse communities. Through a focus on diversifying this roster, the number of artists of color, female-identifying, nonbinary, disabled, and Central and Eastern Washington artists have all more than doubled since 2018.

Community Outreach and Local Partnerships

Authentically serving diverse communities in all areas of a state is a shared goal of state arts agencies. This work entails significant outreach, local partnerships and the right technical tools and strategies to engage diverse communities. Each state is different, with different cultural heritages, geographies, histories of immigration, diaspora, and other factors that drive population growth and settlement. However, all states have rural areas, suburbs and urban cores with layers of diverse populations throughout. How public art programs can reflect, serve and advance the unique demographics of a state is of continuous concern.

Challenges

- Particularly challenging to statewide public art programs is adequately serving remote areas and native populations. All states have rural communities that need access to arts programing, services, grants and opportunities. State arts agencies and their public art programs strive to reach communities that often have less arts infrastructure, are geographically isolated, have unique and intersectional cultural values, and have specific socioeconomic issues.

- In the United States, the cultural basis on which governments, private companies and nonprofit organizations operate is often centered on White, Western European ways of communicating and interacting. These powerful entities are increasingly looking to address concerns around equity and reaching out to indigenous populations and people of color. However, the dominant cultures are slow to adapt their ways of doing business to effectively work across different cultures and different ways of doing things.

> ***"Tribal elders in our state communicated that 'your structure is on a different time than we typically work in, and so if you want to work with tribal peoples it's a slower process, because you first have to build a relationship and build trust.'"***

- Technology can be a major impediment for rural and tribal communities. States and regions use a handful of web based software to manage calls for entry, to both communicate about specific opportunities and to manage the adjudication and selection process. Using these types of online software can be a serious impediment to lower-income and rural artists who don't have the same resources to spend on the fees and equipment and live in areas with less access to the broadband connectivity that is required to access and submit proposals via web based platforms.

> ***"We are stopping artists from wanting to participate or having the ability to participate by using web based call for entry software. There's a need to bridge the technical gap and this has only become more of a problem due to the pandemic."***

- Some calls for artists are for state residents and some are national calls. Public art managers can struggle to get local artists to apply for public art opportunities, especially if the call is national. There can be different reasons why local artists are not submitting public art proposals in larger numbers, but likely contributing factors are the lack of resources to accomplish large-scale projects, general intimidation, and lack of training and experience in applying for these types of projects. This issue also becomes a resource problem, because it takes time and resources to train local artists or artists new to the public art field to build their portfolios and submit competitive proposals. State arts agency programs are often short-staffed and are necessarily focused on the fulfillment of current projects rather than building the pipeline for future submittals. Conversely, regardless of whether a certain call requires residency, committees can lean toward established artists from their state. Depending on the demographics of the state, this can lead to repeated commissions of the same established and experienced White artists.

Strategies

Partner and collaborate with local arts councils. Partnering with local arts agencies has been a successful and important strategy for state arts agencies that want to build community trust and buy-in. Community input and local decision making lend credibility to selection processes for large investments in art. Having local artists and knowledge bearers involved can help make sure that authentic community voices are included and that projects speak to local needs and desires. This knowledge, especially if it is coming from people of color, helps bring more artists of color into the process. States also are collaborating with local arts agencies to train local artists about public art as a career opportunity and how to improve their proposals so that they are more competitive.

Explore direct calls for entry with federally recognized tribes. One potential strategy—which requires vetting from individual state attorney's general offices—is to do direct calls for entry for public art with federally recognized tribes. These tribes are sovereign nations, allowing for government-to-government relationships which can help ensure culturally relevant representation in cases where this representation is particularly important and needed.

Ask applicants how they learned about this opportunity. A key data point for understanding outreach and marketing is simply asking applicants, "How did you hear about us?" This type of information can help evaluate the success of marketing and outreach efforts, which is crucial when resources are expended in marketing to reach certain communities. Knowing whether that outreach led to new applications or partnerships can inform necessary outreach adjustments.

Find national service organizations and partners that can provide equity models. National partners with expertise in how to reach and communicate with specific populations can provide helpful models. In turn, these models can be expanded and shared by state and local arts agencies with their stakeholders and grantee organizations.

"Our state VSA did an agencywide accessibility training based on national VSA models, covering issues such as accessibility history, legislation and challenges. We then offered the same training to all cultural organizations in the state to help them do outreach to the community on accessibility issues."

Ask for candid feedback from communities and stakeholders. In some cases, when opening the doors to feedback, states have received candid—and sometimes harsh—criticism from the community about their processes and how they serve the state in an equitable fashion. Opening the doors to this kind of input comes with the risk of negative communications that do not reflect a fair assessment of the public art program. However, these efforts are opportunities for self-reflection and can build trust among constituents.

Offset costs that can be barriers to inclusion in the public art process. Paying honorariums for people to sit on selection committees is another practice that contributes to greater equity by offsetting the real cost of people's time. Knowing that people of color are disproportionately paid less than average across the workforce[1], the financial decisions that individuals make in allocating their time and effort is important to consider. Furthermore, when people of color are asked to do extra work in committees and provide equity perspectives, this additional work should be compensated. As another cost-reducing equity strategy, many states waive application fees for their public art calls and pay the costs associated with the application software or other administrative fees.

Reduce reliance on technologies if they create equity obstacles. While such systems are necessary and efficient tools, they may be at cross-purposes with outreach to diverse and underserved artists—especially for smaller projects in small communities that lack Internet bandwidth. States are exploring simplified and accessible submission processes that are mobile friendly and can be completed over the phone. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to this problem. Greater public investments in broadband infrastructure will lead to improvements, along with further experimentation on behalf of states, software providers and individuals using these tools with a lens toward equity.

[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/01/racial-gender-wage-gaps-persist-in-u-s-despite-some-progress/

African American History Monument in Columbia, South Carolina, by artist Ed Dwight

Panels, Committees and the Selection Process

Central to the decision-making process for selecting public art commissions are the panels that adjudicate artist submissions. Panels have been identified as an important lever to improve equity in state arts agency grant making. This is especially relevant to public art selection committees. Resources addressing implicit bias and inequities—such as RE-Tool: Racial Equity in the Panel Process from the Jerome Foundation—are just as applicable to public art panels as they are to panels reviewing grant applications.

Challenges

- Panel training on equity goals is not consistently administered across programs and across state agencies. Therefore, panelists and selection committees don't always have the tools and training to approach the adjudication process with an equity lens or the values that are important to state arts agencies and the constituents that they serve.

- In some cases, given the demographics of a state or community, it can be difficult to recruit diverse panelists. Without people of color or other marginalized communities at the table, those voices won't be heard and the process may have blind spots. Even in cases where there are diverse panelists or committee members, without careful facilitation the conversion still can be monopolized by the dominant cultural paradigm.

- Panel policies and state regulations for how these processes work often come from color-blind principles that prohibit the disclosure of information on race, gender, age or other demographic attributes. Although many of these regulations are intended to prevent discrimination, these principles can hamper equity and inclusion efforts by obscuring information that can help state agencies detect skewed applicant pools or take proactive steps to address the uneven playing field.

Strategies

Clarify your agency's values. Program managers can prepare panels with training, resources and language that explicitly emphasize the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Make equity a priority across all state arts agency programs and allow for various program managers to learn from each other. States are taking wide-ranging approaches to addressing equity issues. Ideas and initiatives can come from public art program managers *and* public art program managers can adopt or benefit from initiatives being implemented across state agencies. For example, the recent strategic plan of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts asks that three-fifths of panelists are people of color, which is a higher percentage than the state demographics. Applying equity polices not only to grants but to public art selection committees as well could be beneficial.

Assess whether state and federal contracting policies designed to promote diversity can be useful for public art contracting. The federal government—and many states—have put policies in place to ensure government contracting opportunities are available for small disadvantaged, minority-owned, women-owned or veteran-owned businesses as well as businesses in historically underutilized business zones. Particulars vary from state to state, but these policies may provide useful ideas or precedents for public art contracts. This is especially important in the public art field due to the variety of contractors involved, such as installers,

"Any state funded expenditure needs to have at least one bid that's from a registered minority, woman-owned or disabled-owned enterprise. So we have to get bids from those people and consider them."

fabricators, conservators and others. The legal basis for these policies often is rooted in remedies for proven past discrimination.

Understanding Equity Issues through Data

Anecdotally, arts-in-public-places managers at state arts agencies perceive that their collections, especially the large-scale permanent installations, do not reflect the diversity of artists and artistic practice present in their states. However, there is also a consensus that there is a lack of data that captures the diversity of artists contributing to public art collections and state art collections—and there are a number of challenges to collecting valid demographic data.

Challenges

- States have varying legal barriers to collecting data about race/ethnicity, and even if allowable, these questions are often asked on a voluntary basis. Legal restrictions are often focused on the application side with the ostensible purpose of assuring that selections are not based on race or gender. However, states often have more leeway on collecting demographic data in final reports. Aside from the legal limitations, there are resource limitations to collecting and analyzing data. State arts agency public art program staff do not have the capacity, authority or expertise to implement changes in state level data collection protocols or to undertake a major data collection and analysis effort. This creates a barrier to understanding the race/ethnicity composition of the artists represented in state collections. Furthermore, collecting data that accurately reflect beneficiaries of public art installations and state art collections is an even more difficult task.

- As an example of the type of report that would be beneficial to many states, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs for the City of Houston released a Civic Art Collection Equity Review in 2020 that provided a review of artists represented in Houston's public art collection by race and gender. The report used Internet research to estimate the race/ethnicity of commissioned artists and resulted in data that aligned with the anecdotal perception of the predominance of White male artists in the public art collection. Although this methodology isn't able to obtain accurate self-reported data, it does include sobering evidence that there is a public art equity problem—even in a city as diverse as Houston.

- In some cases, the logistics and processes by which public art projects are implemented and installed—with multiple parties managing the process—mean that there is not a centralized system for data collection at the back end of projects. These types of situations, which are not uncommon, make data collection even more problematic in the public art realm.

Students engage with the stone mosaic mural *Hoʻo Pomaikaʻi* at Pomaikaʻi Elementary School as a part of a lesson.

Strategies

Take the first steps toward demographic data collection. While challenging, confounding and often problematic, knowledge and data as it relates to race/ethnicity is vital to understanding equity issues and benchmarking progress toward equity goals over time. Increasingly, state arts agencies are making strides toward collecting accurate and actionable data about the people they serve and the artists and organizations that they support. This includes asking for demographic data at the back end of calls for entry (if there are restrictions on collecting it up front) or trying small-scale data experiments before trying to tackle large-scale systems. For instance, one roundtable participant noted, "A really good graduate student project can be researching and trying to gather ethnicity, gender data, whatever might be missing." While these first steps are important, even more consequential is the use of these data to affect policies. Research and evaluation efforts will be most effective when tied to the political will to make change, however good data collection practices will always be important for case making and evaluation.

Use open-ended, qualitative questions to understand artistic practices as they relate to targeted communities. One way to compensate for the inability to ask questions about demographics and gain information relevant to equity actions is to use open-ended questions that ask artists to speak about their community, how they relate to their community and why their artistic practice is important to their community. These types of questions can substitute for questions about artistic quality that might be an impediment to equitable selection practices.

Additional Readings and Resources

Forecast Institute for Equitable Public Art Practices: Forecast is a nonprofit arts organization for artists working in public space. Forecast proves a number of resources for artists and public art administrators including art opportunities, trainings and workshops. It partners with decision makers and stakeholders on arts and cultural planning efforts, and supports public artists to create partnerships and advance their careers. Forecast emphasizes access for artists of color, Indigenous artists, and groups that are traditionally excluded.

Grantmakers in the Arts, Building Racial Equity in Public Art Funding: A Seattle Story (2019): This article explores the work of the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture (ARTS) in moving toward a more equitable call for and creation of public art. The case study focuses on ARTS's Emerging Public Artist Program and its 2015 update to center ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American) artists who had not previously received a public commission. It also offers suggestions for the creation of similar public art "boot camps" as well as insights for more generally equitable calls for public art and artists.

Kristen Day, Public Art and the Promotion of Racial Equity (2012): This book chapter examines the role public art can play in challenging structural racism through the multiple aspects that go into its creation: resource allocation, site placement, artist selection, and the artwork's aesthetics and message. The chapter uses the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, as a small case study.

Metro Arts, Public Art Community Investment Plan (2017): Metro Nashville city plan to encourage public art creation while centering equity. (The Executive Summary and Chapter 3 [Public Art: A Theory of Change] may be the most useful.)

Marquise Stillwell, Public Art: The Case for a Cultural Heart Transplant (2021): *Nonprofit Quarterly* article advocating for the inclusion of community members in transformation initiatives, offering examples of public art and the benefits of a "democratic design process."

New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) is leading a multiyear initiative to reimagine systems of support for public art. Collective Imagination for Spatial Justice grants provide funding for artists, creatives, culture bearers and community based organizations to form collaborations that lead to more just and equitable futures for public spaces and public culture. Public Art for Spatial Justice grants support artists to create community-centered works. The Public Art Learning Fund supports professional development to equip artists with skills, resources, and networks to deepen their practices and advance their careers. All of these programs explore the intersectionality of racial and spatial justice, seek to disrupt harmful narratives and structural inequities, and prioritize opportunities for artists of color and rural communities. For more information explore, NEFA's public art resources.

Americans for the Arts, Animating Democracy, Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change (2017): In the United States, evaluative practices—from academia to art criticism to funding panels—have historically been dominated by Euro-American values. This framework, developed by artists with ally evaluators and funders, offers 11 artistic attributes that elevate aesthetics in civically and socially engaged art, expand the criteria for considering aesthetics, and promote appreciation of the rigor required for effective work.

Americans for the Arts, Public Art Resource Center, Cultural Equity in the Public Art Field (2020): This document is a starting point to help the public art field address some of the inequities that are present in current and traditional systems. It includes an understanding of cultural equity, what inequities occur and how they occur, along with recommendations on how to build a more equitable field.

NASAA, Equity Choice Points (2020): State arts agencies are committed to making cultural activities more accessible to people and places, though there are many challenges to achieving equity when distributing resources. The Equity Choice Points tool was created to help state arts agencies address these challenges. It encourages the field to examine—and improve—the accessibility of systems used to distribute grant funds.

NASAA, Percent for Art Policy Brief (2018): This NASAA State Policy Brief summarizes state level percent for art policy and program trends, examining benefits as well as challenges. The brief is designed to equip arts leaders and policymakers—as well as cultural advocates and public art managers—with a succinct overview of how these policies can work at the state level and what factors should be taken into account by any state considering changes to its current policies.

Methodology Notes and Acknowledgments

This report surfaces equity challenges and solutions that will apply to many state arts agencies, and to numerous municipal programs as well. There are inherent limitations in the methods used to compile this information, however. Some limitations of this research stem from the small sample of programs and the limited amount of time available to gather perspectives.

Other limitations originate from the composition of the roundtable. State participants included those managing public art programs representing programmatic diversity, those that serve a wide range of diverse constituents, and those perceived to be actively pursuing diversity, equity and inclusion practices in their programs. But the group did not include any individuals of color. This leaves several blind spots in this report, but also speaks to two specific challenges identified by the participants: one, that there is a lack of knowledge about diversity in the public art field; and, two, that public art practitioners are seen as

predominantly White. Undoubtedly, forum participants brought deep knowledge, skills, experience and some fresh perspectives to equity work in commissioning public art. All are engaged in work to center equity in state arts agency practices. To help with some of these blind spots, NASAA sought and received external review from public art administrators of color from inside and outside the SAA field.

NASAA and ArtsWA thank the roundtable participants and external reviewers for their time and effort in contributing to this deeper understanding of equity issues related to public art practices among state arts agencies. NASAA recognizes that language about identity is constantly evolving and that words—especially when used by government entities—hold the power to harm and well as to heal. This research report discusses the systemwide effects that inequity has on distinct populations in the United States. Necessarily, the report refers to particular populations, and we acknowledge that the terminology used is imperfect and may not adequately reflect the preferences, complexity or lived experience of every group. Given those caveats, the following general terminology is used in this and other NASAA reports: *Asian American and Pacific Islander; Black; Latinx; LGBTQA+; Native American; people with disabilities; people experiencing homelessness; people experiencing incarceration; remote, rural and urban communities;* and *White.* We use *people of color* when describing practices and policies that affect multiple communities that are non-White, non-Hispanic. We also use the terms *historically marginalized, historically under-represented*and *underserved,* since those terms are regularly invoked in state and federal government policies that attempt to advance equity. For more guidance on language choices as a vehicle to advance SAAs' equity work, see NASAA's Inclusive Language Guide.

Image Credits

Cover: *Topophilia - Imbuing in Maru* (2006) by Keiko Hara uses painting, as well as fabric and text from cultures around the world, to create a collage that evokes interconnectedness in the face of global conflict. "Topophilia" refers to the love that each of us holds for places of personal significance and "maru" is the Japanese word for circle, indicating something infinite. Located at Seattle Central College, Seattle, WA. Part of Washington's State Art Collection. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Page 3: Puerto Rican heritage murals by Berto Cintron and Jossue Ramos Guzman, Trenton, New Jersey.The project was spearheaded by Casa Cultura, in collaboration with the Puerto Rican Civic Association of Trenton in 2017 to promote neighborhood pride among Puerto Ricans. The two-panel mural was a collaboration between local tattoo artist Berto Lugo and Puerto Rico based artist, Jossue Ramos Guzman. Photo courtesy of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Page 7: *Thunderbird,* by Andy Wilbur-Peterson and Greg Colfax (western red cedar and paint, 1995), located at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington. Part of Washington's State Art Collection. Photo courtesy of Washington State Arts Commission

Page 13: Artist and former aviator Ed Dwight is recognized for his portrayals of African American contributions to United States history through works documenting the evolution of jazz, the civil rights movement, and Black contributions to education, law, science and society. The African American History Monument in Columbia, South Carolina, was dedicated in 2001. Photo by Carol McKinney Highsmith, Library of Congress collection

Page 16: *Hoʻo Pomaikaʻi* (To Create Good Fortune) at Pomaikaʻi Elementary School in Kahului, Hawai'i (stone mosaic mural, 2013). Illustrated in this vibrant mural is the kuleana (responsibility) of the kumu (teacher) to teach the youth to strive to maintain the balance between man and nature. Each panel contains a kumu describing the values and tools of pomaikaʻi, and the importance of perpetuating natural resources for future generations. Photo courtesy of the Art in Public Places Collection of the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts

About NASAA

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is the nonpartisan membership organization representing the state and jurisdictional arts councils of the United States. NASAA is a clearinghouse for research about government support for arts and culture in America, providing statistical data, policy analysis and information on exemplary practices.

The work of NASAA and state arts agencies is supported in part through funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Copyright 2021, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Per this work's Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, noncommercial distribution, use and adaptation is encouraged. Please acknowledge NASAA as the source.