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This report was produced by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies in partnership with the Ohio Arts Council and with support from Arts Midwest.
Executive Summary

The Ohio Arts Council (OAC) and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) created the Equitable Grant Making Assessment Pilot Project (known colloquially as the Equity GAP Project) to conduct an audit of the OAC’s general operating support (GOS) programs. In particular, the project focuses on organizations that serve specific populations that are historically underserved: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or people of color) populations, rural communities, low-income communities and people with disabilities.

This report is a summary of equity strengths and weaknesses in the OAC's general operating support programs and recommendations for changes that can improve their grant-making practices. This report is just one component of the Equity GAP Project. It is intended to frame discussions with OAC staff about what practical steps can be taken to improve the state arts agency's work. It will be followed up with an action plan and implementation support, both specifically tailored to meet the needs of the OAC. In addition, an overview of the project will be shared with other state arts agencies.

The assessment process illuminated several equity strengths for the OAC:

- Explicit commitments and intentions with regards to diversity, equity and inclusion are present.
- OAC staff are highly communicative, supportive and responsive.
- The OAC has a strong commitment to general operating support.
- The OAC distributes funds broadly across many organizations and geographies.
- There are dedicated entry points for organizations serving the areas of focus.
- Support for disability populations is multifaceted.
- Current GOS grantees have diverse staff.

The research process informed a set of recommendations. These recommendations, along with the rest of the report, are intended to provide a starting point for discussion with OAC staff. It is important to understand that many of these recommendations are interconnected.

Define Directions

1. **Continue the practice of providing multiyear general operating support.** The research affirms that the OAC should continue to offer flexible, multiyear funding.
2. **Frame the trajectory to GOS as a capacity building goal.** The OAC can communicate that this progression is, indeed, something beneficial that organizations can elect to work toward.
3. **Establish an ongoing equity focused work process.** In order to enact impactful change, the OAC should commit to an action plan—a process of establishing specific
goals and action steps, with designated responsibilities and regular progress reviews.

Policy, Guidelines and the Application Process

4. **Simplify the application process.** Adjusting the application process to be simpler and less burdensome was one of the most frequently cited actions that would encourage organizations to apply for GOS and make the OAC a more equitable grant maker. Simplifying the application for smaller-budget organizations would be particularly impactful.

5. **Increase award amounts for small-budget organizations.** Increasing financial support for small organizations was one of the most frequently cited actions to make the OAC a more equitable grant maker. This finding holds true even when segmenting responses by budget.

6. **Reduce the cash match requirement.** Reducing the cash match requirement was one of the most frequently cited actions that would encourage organizations to apply for GOS and make the OAC a more equitable grant maker.

7. **Allocate dollars between Arts Access and Sustainability grant programs judiciously.** Increasing award amounts needs to be paired with an increase in funds to the Arts Access program (which funds organizations with smaller budgets).

8. **Challenge the budget-driven funding formula.** Given that so many constituents support increased financial support for small organizations, it is possible that this moment is an opportunity to consider alternatives.

Communications, Outreach and Assistance

9. **Communicate more formally and frequently about eligibility for GOS.** An information gap about eligibility exists, regardless of budget size or population served.

10. **Continue relationship building efforts and support.** Many constituents interviewed shared that their peer institutions did not know about OAC grant opportunities.

11. **Create more agency capacity for relationship building and equity efforts.** Constituents expressed a strong desire to see the OAC out in the field even more through site visits, in-person outreach and other relationship building efforts.

12. **Find ways to authentically identify organizations serving the priority areas of focus.** Organizations that explicitly served these populations had mixed feelings about defining and labeling themselves as such.

Data Collection and Use

13. **Collect more specific panelist demographics.** This would allow the OAC to more formally track demographics, see trends over time and work toward any stated goals.

14. **Review and revise demographic data collected through applications and final reports.** Ways that data collection processes could be revised and strengthened
were identified through NASAA's data analysis, survey feedback and the document review.

15. Establish appropriate funding metrics. Once specific equity goals are determined, appropriate metrics should be established to track progress toward these goals.

16. Adopt a practice of routine reporting on equity metrics. A practice of regular analysis and reporting could help the agency communicate its success to stakeholders and chart its progress over time.

Overall Agency Policy

17. Continue to model a culture of feedback and continuous learning. The OAC should work in partnership with its constituents to become a more equitable grant maker.

18. Continue to bring an equity lens to the agency's strategic planning. Ongoing dialogue with constituents about equity issues and approaches can give the agency's plans good aim while also reinforcing constituent confidence in the OAC's approach.

19. Allocate funding across programs in a way that supports the OAC's equity goals. Consider how program allocations can further the OAC's equity goals, including ensuring that Arts Access and programs for the priority areas of focus are well funded.

20. Evaluate the current entry points for rural, BIPOC and disability organizations. If the OAC determines that these programs should indeed serve as on-ramps to GOS, they should be evaluated and revised.

21. Develop an entry point or supports specifically for organizations serving low-income communities. If there are equity goals established for this population, consider how they could be supported through a dedicated grant program, outreach effort or some other type of initiative.

22. Continue to support equity work for constituent organizations. Organizations expressed a desire for support in their own equity efforts.
Introduction

About the Equity GAP Project
State arts agencies have a public mandate to facilitate access to the arts and ensure that every community in America can thrive through the cultural, civic, economic and educational benefits that the arts provide. As part of that commitment, many state arts agencies are actively seeking new ways to measure the equity of their grant investments, especially funding for populations that have historically faced obstacles to accessing arts support.

The Ohio Arts Council is a case in point. The OAC's mission states that it "is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically." Over its history, the OAC has built a robust grant portfolio of funding programs that have reached all 88 counties in Ohio. But the agency is focused on continual improvement. In alignment with Gov. Mike Dewine's statewide equity plan, the OAC adopted an agency level Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. The agency also identified funding equity as a priority in the agency's Essentials Plan, which includes commitments specific to grant making:

- invest in Ohio artists and organizations in an equitable, transparent and accessible manner
- streamline and improve agency grant-making processes through regular assessment and adjustment
- identify and remove racial and other biases in grant-making practices, language or processes

To help the agency fulfill these objectives, the OAC consulted with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to learn more about assessment practices or partnerships that are calibrated to the unique needs of government arts agencies. NASAA polled its membership on their current equity assessment practices and realized that there was an opportunity to demonstrate an approach tailored to the needs of state arts agencies. Together, the OAC and NASAA created the Equitable Grant Making Assessment Pilot Project (colloquially known as the Equity GAP Project). The Equity GAP Project aims to conduct an audit of selected OAC grant programs, with these goals:

1. Diagnose equity strengths and weaknesses in the OAC's current grant-making systems.
2. Identify practical actions the OAC can take to attain greater equity in how its state and federal funds are distributed.
3. Demonstrate an assessment approach attuned to the public sector that can serve as a model for other state arts agencies.
4. Contribute to the collective state arts agency knowledge base by sharing key insights and lessons learned from the OAC assessment.

In order to keep the project practical and actionable, the Equity GAP Project concentrated on the OAC’s multiyear general operating support programs: Arts Access (for organizations with budgets less than $50,000) and Sustainability (for organizations with budgets greater than $50,000). These grant categories represent the largest investment of OAC grant funds and are crucial to building and sustaining the capacity of the arts community in Ohio. Operating support dollars also play a crucial role in the arts ecosystem, so it is important to understand the degree to which they are or are not being equitably distributed.

Four priority areas of focus were identified. NASAA and the OAC acknowledged that identity is highly dimensional and intersectional, encompassing many different aspects of human experience. While recognizing the importance of different factors, it was necessary to be explicit about some priorities for this project, given the OAC’s operating context and constraints on available time and resources. The areas of focus were race and ethnicity, geography, economic status, and ability. Consequently, the organizations of focus are those that serve specific populations that are historically underserved: BIPOC populations, rural communities, low-income communities and people with disabilities.

About This Report
In March 2022, Angela Han was selected as an independent consultant for the Equity GAP Project. She offered expertise in program evaluation; experience in facilitating work with small, community-rooted and BIPOC organizations; and in-depth knowledge of state arts agency programs and operations, she was brought on board to design and conduct the assessment process, help the OAC interpret the results, and help NASAA and other state arts agencies learn from the experience.

This report is a summary of equity strengths and weaknesses in the OAC’s general operating support programs and recommendations for changes that can improve grant-making practices. The information sources used to inform the recommendations included:

- a review of OAC documents (e.g., program guidelines, evaluations, policy reports)
- a review of other state arts agency documents (e.g., program guidelines, planning reports, evaluation plans, equity-related work)
- a topline summary of OAC grant awards, prepared by NASAA
- an empirical analysis of OAC grant-making data, prepared by NASAA
- a literature review of equity audit resources
- interviews with seven OAC staff
- interviews with four NASAA staff
- constituent interviews with 19 Ohio organizations representing historically underserved constituencies
• constituent survey responses from 392 arts and community organizations that have interacted with or received support from the OAC

Please see Appendix A: Methodology for additional details about the overall research process used for the Equity GAP Project. The complete technical report for the empirical analysis is available under separate cover.

This written report is just one component of the Equity GAP Project. Also integral to the project were a variety of meetings and consultations designed to help OAC staff learn from the assessment, decide on follow-up actions and set practical steps in motion to improve the agency’s work. This implementation support was specifically tailored to meet the needs of the OAC. In addition, an overview of the project was shared with other state arts agencies during a professional development session in fall 2022.

Let's Start with Strengths

The assessment process illuminated several equity strengths. For the purposes of developing recommendations, it is useful to focus on what the agency does well, what resources are already available, and how those assets can be built upon so that the OAC can improve its practices to become an even more equitable grant maker.

Explicit commitments and intentions with regards to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are present.
Prior to undertaking the Equity GAP Project, the OAC had taken a number of steps to address equity within the agency. This was revealed through the OAC document review and staff interviews and included adopting an agency level DEI Plan in alignment with the statewide equity plan, developing a strategic plan that names equity as a priority, and extensive staff training.

Constituent feedback affirmed an understanding and appreciation for the OAC’s equity work to date. The majority of survey respondents rated the OAC as "good" or "excellent" with regards to funding artists and organizations in an equitable, transparent, and accessible manner. 76% of survey respondents felt that equity should continue to be prioritized as a strategic goal.

Some quotes from the survey:

• "The wonderful OAC works very hard to explore how to accommodate these barriers [for people with disabilities]."
• "We appreciate the [DEI training] opportunities offered this past year (webinars, etc.)."
• "Continue your good work in identifying panelists from a broad swath of Ohio communities with different backgrounds, experiences, and abilities."
• "Funding every county is a great start."
• "Equity seems to be a priority, and I appreciate that you are actively working toward improving your progress toward this goal."
• "Our staff and contractors and community members are largely people of color and we feel very supported by OAC."
• "The Ohio Arts Council is incredibly responsive to our needs and supportive in their communications."
• "Thank you for these efforts and everything you do!"
• "Thank you for asking these tough questions in pursuit of being better."

Several constituent interviewees reacted positively to the equity assessment process:

• "It's good that they're looking at themselves and wanting to be equitable and be more applicable for people that use it. It's always good to self-examine yourself..."
• "...you as a consultant reached out to us and want to know how we're doing, what we feel, and how we feel...that says to me that they have said, 'Well, we want to hear your experiences. We want to know what you're feeling. And we are hopefully in a position to make some changes.'"
• "...that they're doing these interviews in and of itself is a good sign that they're looking to engage so on behalf of my colleagues here at [organization] we appreciate that we're being provided with a voice in the conversation."

OAC staff are highly communicative, supportive and responsive.

Through both the constituent survey and interviews, there was consistently positive feedback regarding OAC staff. Overall, 86.4% of survey respondents reported it was easy or very easy to get help from OAC staff. In addition, both survey respondents and interviewees offered up feedback through open ended-questions. Here is a sampling of that feedback:

• "...the staff is VERY helpful. As long as staff continues to be helpful...all is well with the process."
• "...want to say that all staff I have worked with at OAC are extremely helpful and responsive when called upon for assistance."
• "...speaking with our liaison at the OAC, we were able to receive feedback on how to make the language more inclusive."
• "We have been happy with the process as well as the support provided by the OAC staff."
• [Regarding grant application process:] "Staff was communicative and great. A+ for the staff."
• "OAC has been very supportive and helpful."
The OAC has a strong commitment to general operating support. Operating support funding—flexible support, especially on a multiyear basis—is one of the most helpful investments a grant maker can make. The ability of organizations to determine for themselves how best to use funds (for programming, operations or staffing) has always been helpful to grantees, but the pandemic further accentuated the importance of flexibility to adapt to changing community needs. The OAC has a robust GOS mechanism in place. OAC staff have expressed a desire to continue developing long-term relationships with organizations through the GOS programs. More than 75% of the OAC’s total grant dollars take the form of GOS.

The OAC distributes funds broadly across many organizations and geographies. Data show that OAC grant dollars are reaching more than 700 organizations in all 88 counties of the state. A substantial number of these organizations are small organizations with operating budgets of under $50,000. Grant making in the Appalachian region is especially strong. It is important to examine the distribution of OAC grants in a more granular fashion to assess equity (as is done through the NASAA empirical analysis), but a foundation of broad distribution is firmly in place.

There are dedicated entry points for organizations serving the areas of focus. The OAC document review and staff interviews provided insight into how the GOS programs are structured, including how organizations become eligible. Entry into the GOS programs requires a history of successful project grant awards, at least two in the previous four years. ArtSTART and ArtsNEXT are general project grant programs, offered once a
In addition to these two programs, specific populations have additional opportunities to access project support:

- Artists with Disabilities Access Program (ADAP) grants to both individual artists and organizations and is offered twice a year.
- Building Cultural Diversity (BCD) is open to organizations that are "authentically representative" of a culturally specific population, including BIPOC populations. It is offered twice a year.
- Fund Every County (FEC) is a dedicated outreach effort to provide public support for the arts to every county in the state, with a focus on rural counties. This is an ongoing effort and organizations submit applications on a rolling basis. Note that an FEC grant does not count toward the grant history requirement for entry into the GOS programs.

Support for disability populations is multifaceted.
The OAC document review and staff interviews revealed that the OAC's support for disability populations takes many forms, reaching across its constituents and agency in many ways:

- There are broad expectations for all organizations. All organizational grantees are expected to provide accommodations for people with disabilities, as demonstrated through accessibility plans and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- There are opportunities to achieve excellence. Scholarships to attend the national Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability conference are regularly made available, as is subsequent capacity building support to implement improvements.
- There is an entry point for organizations and programs dedicated to disability populations. The ADAP program is specifically for artists with disabilities. There is some evidence that this has served as a successful entry point into the GOS programs.
- There is a tailored, multipronged assistance system. OAC staff are attuned to identifying and offering appropriate accommodations for applicants. The OAC has an ADA (American with Disabilities Act) coordinator who serves as a resource for staff and applicants. In addition, an arts and disability organization is contracted to provide specialized support for accommodations that are outside the capacity of agency staff.
- There is a culture of learning and continuous improvement within the agency. The ADA coordinator offers regular trainings for the agency. In staff interviews, there were multiple references to these trainings and the ADA coordinator as a resource.

Current GOS grantees have diverse staff.
NASAA conducted a quantitative analysis of the OAC's grant-making data, with a particular focus on GOS grant awards. Data provided included staff counts broken down by select demographics, including race and ethnicity. Overall, staff of GOS grantees represent a
more culturally diverse representation than the population of Ohio. For further details, refer to the Quantitative Analysis Technical Report.

**Selected Findings**

Each strand of research in the Equity GAP Pilot project yielded a different perspective on strengths and opportunities for improvement in the OAC's grant making. In the interest of keeping this report focused and actionable, only a few findings from each research strand are presented here. For a full description of the research process, see Appendix A: Methodology.

**Grant Awards Summary**

NASAA provided a high level analysis of the Arts Access and Sustainability funding streams. Analysis was based on data provided in grant recommendation summary sheets from the past five years, taken from council board book information. Key points from that analysis:

- The OAC receives in excess of 700 grant applications per year. More than 90% of applicants receive funding.
- New applicants with budgets of $50,000 or less are entering the Arts Access program. In the past five years, the OAC has received applications from 65 organizations that had not previously received Arts Access support. All of those organizations ultimately received Arts Access funding.
- The 40 largest organizations in the Sustainability grant category receive 63% of all OAC dollars allocated for operating support. Arts Access grant recipients comprise 15% of the grantee pool and received 1% of available funds.
- During the past five years, program allocations for the Arts Access category have increased at a greater rate than the OAC's other GOS grant categories.
- The average grant award size has increased over time for all the OAC's grant categories, but has grown the most for midsized organizations.

Please refer to Appendix B: Ohio Arts Council Grant Awards Summary for additional insights gleaned from the review of grant summaries.

**Quantitative Analysis of Grants Data**

NASAA conducted a quantitative analysis of OAC grant awards based on data supplied by the OAC and comparative benchmarking data from other state arts agencies. These statistical and geospatial analyses examine how the OAC's GOS grant awards align with the overall demographics of the state. This analysis does not consider grant policies or procedures, but it does provide an in-depth report on where the OAC's operating support dollars are going. Please refer to Appendix C: Quantitative Analysis Executive Summary for an executive summary, and refer to the full technical report for complete details. Key excerpts are shared here, as they are salient to the recommendations in this report.
The executive summary shared 10 top level observations from the technical report.

1. **The Ohio Arts Council makes a substantial commitment to operating support grants.** Ohio makes a larger investment in GOS funding—in absolute dollars and as a share of all grants—than most other states. More than 75% of the OAC's grant dollars take the form of GOS awards.

2. **The OAC invests in a large number of small, grassroots organizations.** Among the 11 benchmarking states to which Ohio was compared, only one gave more GOS awards or GOS funds to arts organizations with operating revenues of less than $50,000. This is an important finding given that many groups representing historically underserved constituencies are smaller organizations.

3. **Ohio's largest organizations receive the most GOS grant dollars.** Organizations over $20 million in budget size represent only 1% of the OAC's total GOS awardees, but account for 23% of all GOS grant funds awarded.

4. **Operating support grants reached most Ohio counties, but the majority of dollars went to Ohio's most populous counties.** The OAC's Arts Access and Sustainability awards were distributed across 54 counties in FY2019 and FY2020. The majority of these GOS grants (54.3% of total grants, 73.9% of total grant dollars) went to major counties in Ohio.

5. **Appalachian counties received GOS awards in proportion to their populations.** The share of GOS grants to Ohio's Appalachian counties met or exceeded the share of state population represented by those counties.

6. **Rural regions received less GOS funding than urban areas.** Rural regions of the state received fewer GOS awards and less GOS funding than did Ohio's metropolitan statistical areas.

7. **Counties with higher poverty rates received greater GOS support.** Statewide, 72% of Ohio's OAC grant dollars went to census tracts with population poverty rates higher than 16.4%, which is substantially above the poverty rate for Ohio as a whole. When the 11 largest organizations are removed from the equation, the statewide percentage of dollars going to census tracts with high poverty rates drops from 72% to 52%.

8. **Counties with higher numbers of disabled individuals received roughly proportionate numbers of GOS awards.**

9. **GOS grantee organization staff are more culturally diverse than the overall state population.** Overall, staff of Arts Access and Sustainability grantees represent a more culturally diverse representation than the breakdown of Ohio's population, although persons with disabilities and seniors are less well represented.

10. **A substantial number of Ohio GOS awards reached organizations run by BIPOC staff.** A quarter (25%) of all OAC GOS awards went to organizations that may have
majority BIPOC staff. Awards to these groups tend to be smaller in dollar amount. Almost a third (32%) of OAC GOS grantees reported zero people of color on their boards of directors.

Constituent Interview Feedback
The research process included gathering input from constituents, both those who have a current relationship with the OAC and those who do not. Constituent feedback provides a crucial perspective and complement to grants data analysis and a review of internal operations. For the Equity GAP Project, feedback strands included interviews, which allows for nuanced, qualitative information to be gathered from a focused set of constituents. Interviews with representatives from 19 organizations were conducted between May 24 and June 9, 2022. Interviewees were organizations that specifically served one or more of the priority areas of focus. None were current Arts Access or Sustainability grantees, which was intentional in order to gain insights about the real and perceived impediments to entrance into the GOS system. Organizations were primarily OAC grantees.

What's Working Well
- **OAC staff are very supportive.** Many interviewees offered positive feedback about their interactions with the staff.
- **The experience of serving on a panel has great value.** A few interviewees had served on grant panels in the past and found that experience helpful for them as executive leaders and grant writers.
- **Inviting feedback from constituents was well received.** The act of the OAC reaching out and asking for their opinions through these interviews was valued.

Major Takeaways
- **Grants are seen as small relative to need and compared to those awarded to other organizations.** Some interviewees mentioned hearing about major grants from the OAC that have gone to large organizations and expressed frustration about how small their own grants are by comparison.
- **Requirements are burdensome.** Application and reporting requirements are especially onerous given the modest size of grant awards.
- **The application and adjudication processes are perceived to privilege experienced grant writers and organizations with capacity.** The format and the number of application questions pose a significant barrier to potential new applicants and require a steep learning curve for new applicants and smaller organizations without dedicated development staff.
- **General awareness of the OAC and the opportunities it provides is lacking.** Interviewees noted that many of their colleagues do not know of the OAC’s work or these potential arts funding opportunities.
- **Diversity should be represented in program materials.** To encourage more diversity of applicants from historically underserved organizations and populations, the OAC should ensure that their stories are visible as examples.
• **Representation matters.** OAC staff, board, and panels should reflect the diversity of the state.

**Constituent Survey Feedback**

The constituent feedback process included a survey, which allowed for broad, primarily quantitative information to be gathered from a large number of constituents. An online survey was administered May 31 - June 13, 2022. Outreach was done to all organizations that had applied for an OAC grant in the past four fiscal years. The survey invitation went out to 1,129 email addresses and 392 surveys were completed, a 35% response rate.

Appendices H-K provide constituent survey feedback, first as overall results and then segmented as described below. The findings that are driving these report recommendations are provided here. The survey analysis looked at overall responses and also the following segmentations:

• **Priority areas of focus.** The survey asked if organizations specifically served BIPOC, rural/Appalachia, low-income communities, and/or people with disabilities. There were 103 organizations that indicated BIPOC, 88 organizations that indicated rural/Appalachia, 147 organizations that indicated low-income communities, and 80 organizations that indicated people with disabilities. These numbers seem a little large in proportion to Ohio's overall population, so in addition to looking at respondents by this question, analysis was done by segmenting responses from specific grant programs.

• **BCD/FEC/ADAP grantees.** Some of the OAC’s work is already focused on organizations serving the priority areas of focus. 45 organizations indicated that they had received a grant award through Building Cultural Diversity (BIPOC), Fund Every County (rural), and/or the Artists with Disabilities Access Program (disability). Note that the sample size was too small to break down responses by each individual program.

• **Budget.** Organizations were grouped into four budget categories for the purposes of analysis: less than $50,000, $50,000 to $250,000, $250,000 to $2 million, and greater than $2 million.

**Survey Observation 1: OAC staff are easy to reach.** Respondents were specifically asked about their ability to get help from staff during the grant application process and the responses were overwhelmingly positive.
Table 1. How easy or difficult was it to get help from OAC staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easy or Very Easy</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Difficult or Very Difficult</th>
<th>N/A or No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current GOS grantees</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-only grantees</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Observation 2: There is a lack of understanding about eligibility for general operating support. When asked why they weren't currently receiving general operating support, the most frequently cited reason was "not sure if we are eligible." This was the most cited reason from organizations serving each of the four priority areas of focus as well as BCD/FEC/ADAP grantees.

Table 2. Why aren't you currently receiving an Arts Access or Sustainability grant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>BCD/FEC/ADAP</th>
<th>BIPOC</th>
<th>Rural/Appalachia</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Disability-Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sure if we are eligible</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not currently eligible because of grant history</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not eligible because of organization type</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied in the past and were declined*</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process seems too difficult</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer to receive funding only through other OAC grant programs</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were allowed to select more than one answer, so columns do not sum to 100%.

Selected comments regarding eligibility confusion:

- "We didn't actually know we'd be eligible in this next cycle except that [OAC staff person] mentioned it at a follow-up meeting for ARI grantees"
- "I'm totally clueless on what is available to be honest."
- "...not sure if we fit the criteria and how we would use the funds."
• "We look forward to qualifying for Access or Sustainability funding. Ooh—maybe we do now?"

* Note that the incidence of declined unsuccessful GOS applications reported by respondents (6.9%) does not match with actual data on the success rates of applicants into the Arts Access and Sustainability programs (which have had a 100% application success rate for the past five years).

**Survey Observation 3: Not all organizations currently plan to apply for GOS, but those that do seem to value it highly.** Overall, less than half of survey respondents indicated they planned to apply for GOS; about the same proportion were unsure whether they would apply. A much larger proportion of BCD/FEC/ADAP grantees indicated that they planned to apply.

| Table 3. Do you plan to apply for an Arts Access or Sustainability grant in the future? |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| All                            | BCD/FEC/ADAP    |
| Yes                            | 41.7%           | 66.7%           |
| No                             | 12.4%           | 5.1%            |
| Not sure                       | 45.9%           | 28.2%           |

Selected comments about desire for GOS:

• "In order to embrace more of our mission and strengthen our organization we need a sustainability grant."
• " Seems like a great next step for an organization that has received project support for the past three years."
• "It would be very helpful for us to receive funding for our operations that [isn’t] tied to specific programming."
• "Our organization is at a crossroads and needs funding for paid staff to move into the future."

**Survey Observation 4: There is some consensus on what changes would encourage a GOS application.** The survey invited respondents to react to possible changes that the OAC could theoretically do to encourage more entrants into the GOS funding system. A majority of respondents indicated that the ability to apply in any year, a simpler application and a reduced match requirement would encourage them to apply. These were the three most common changes selected by organizations serving each of the four priority areas of focus as well as BCD/FEC/ADAP grantees. In the chart below, changes selected by more than 50% of that group are highlighted in green.
Table 4. Would any of the changes listed here encourage you to apply for Arts Access or Sustainability in the future?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change selected</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>BCD/FEC/ADAP</th>
<th>BIPOC</th>
<th>Rural or Appalachia</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Disability-Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to apply in any year</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpler application</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced match requirement</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger award amount</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpler budget form</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter grant history requirement</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate DataArts component</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application in a different format</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application in my native language</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Changes selected by more than 50% of that group are highlighted in green

Survey Observation 5: Constituents have made a commitment to addressing DEI and support the OAC’s prioritization of it. Almost all respondents (92.8%) indicated that diversity, equity and inclusion was an area they were addressing; two-thirds indicated that it was a top priority. More than three-quarters of respondents (76.6%) agreed that the OAC should continue to prioritize DEI.

Chart 1. Is your organization currently prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion?
Survey Observation 6: Rural and Appalachian organizations are less likely to see themselves as a part of DEI work. Geographic equity, specifically support to rural communities, has been identified as an area of focus by the OAC. This can be seen through the prioritization it has given for the Equity GAP Project, alongside support to BIPOC, low-income, and disability communities. This can also be seen through its existing outreach efforts and the Fund Every County initiative. Survey respondents who indicated that they served rural or Appalachian communities were less likely to respond affirmatively to the DEI related questions compared to overall responses and to the other priority areas of focus. They were less likely to identify DEI as a top priority and more likely to state that they were not addressing DEI. However, a strong majority—nearly 67%—of rural and Appalachian groups believe that DEI should be a priority of the OAC.

Table 5. Is your organization currently prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>BIPOC</th>
<th>Rural or Appalachia</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Disability-Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is one of our top priorities</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is an area we are addressing</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is not something we are currently addressing</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Do you believe the OAC should continue to prioritize equity as a strategic goal?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>BIPOC</th>
<th>Rural or Appalachia</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Disability-Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree or strongly agree</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree or strongly disagree</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opinion</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Observation 7: There is consensus that the OAC should increase financial support for small organizations. When asked what actions would make the OAC a more equitable grant maker, the most frequently selected action was to increase financial support for small organizations. (It is important to note that small was not defined by a specific budget number.) This was either the most or second most frequently selected option by organizations serving each of the four priority areas of focus. When analyzing results by budget, it is striking to note that the majority of all respondents selected this option, regardless of their own budget size. In the charts below, actions selected by more than 50% of respondents are highlighted in green.

Table 7. What actions do you think would make OAC a more equitable grantmaker? All responses compared to priority areas of focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>BIPOC</th>
<th>Rural or Appalachia</th>
<th>Low-Income</th>
<th>Disability-Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase $ for small orgs</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplify/Streamline application</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to provide capacity building support</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce cash matching requirements</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase $ for underserved orgs</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase $ for underserved artists</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase technical assistance for new applicants</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly report on grant demographics</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevate DEI within criteria</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. What actions do you think would make OAC a more equitable grantmaker? All responses compared to organizations grouped by budget size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>&lt;$50,000</th>
<th>$50,000-$250K</th>
<th>$250K-$2M</th>
<th>$2M+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase $ for small orgs</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplify/Streamline application</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to provide capacity building support</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much was learned by conducting a 360-degree examination of the OAC's operating support grants. That learning alone can be a valuable asset for informing the agency's understanding of its DEI context and building the agency's knowledge base. However, the OAC expressed a strong desire to put the knowledge to use by defining actions the agency can take toward the goal of improving the equity of its funding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To this end, there are 22 recommendations presented here, 16 specifically regarding the GOS programs and an additional 6 about the agency as a whole. These recommendations, along with the rest of the report, are intended to provide a starting point for discussion with OAC staff. It is important to realize that many of these recommendations are interconnected and that implementation is a long-term process.

These recommendations are informed by the research process described in Appendix A: Methodology. The Selected Findings section highlights the data that directly informed these recommendations; comments illustrate the reasoning for these recommendations. Note that these comments are drawn from organizations reflecting on their experience with the OAC. Many of these organizations have never received a GOS grant and so details of their feedback are regarding project grants; comments that are applicable to GOS are shared.

Define Directions

**Recommendation 1: Continue the practice of providing multiyear general operating support.**
Constituent dialogues and a scan of best practices in arts grant making affirm that flexible, multiyear funding is one of the most valuable forms of support that the OAC can offer. This practice should continue, given the desire from constituents and staff.

**Recommendation 2: Frame the trajectory to GOS as a capacity-building goal.**
Some constituents expressed a desire to move into the type of stable, multiyear relationship that general operating support can offer—and OAC staff expressed a desire to
facilitate this transition. However, many other project grantees did not articulate this goal and were unaware of whether they were eligible. Furthermore, a "path to GOS" as a desirable capacity building goal is not explicitly stated in the agency's communications or program guidelines. The OAC can communicate that this progression is, indeed, something beneficial that organizations can elect to work toward. Policy structures, budget allocations, technical assistance strategies and other program supports can all be aligned toward that end-goal.

**Recommendation 3: Establish an ongoing equity focused work process.**
The OAC's equity aspirations are evident. But in order to enact impactful change, it is recommended that the OAC commit to an action plan—a process of establishing specific goals and action steps, with designated responsibilities and regular progress reviews. In the review of grant-maker equity assessments and other related publications, the development of specific goals and tools to measure progress was very important to ensure both small-scale improvements and large-scale progress. They served to focus energies, solve technical challenges and catalyze understanding of complex culture change issues. Most importantly, these written goals and action steps hold funders accountable to their values and, in the case of government agencies, to the public, who has entrusted the agency with funds.

**Policy, Guidelines and the Application Process**

**Recommendation 4: Simplify the application process.**
Adjusting the application process to be simpler and less burdensome was one of the most frequently cited changes that would encourage organizations to apply for GOS. It was also one of the most frequently cited actions to make the OAC a more equitable grant maker. Organizations serving the priority areas of focus tend to be smaller in budget size. Among survey respondents, the majority of those organizations had budgets of less than $250,000, which implies that simplifying the application for organizations in that range would be particularly impactful. Some suggestions for simplifying the application:

- Do not collect data that will not be used (see the recommendation regarding application and final report data collection).
- Allow the same application to be considered for multiple programs.
- When a question is added to the application or final report, remove an existing question.
- Allow organization information to carry over from prior grant applications.
- Consider collecting more information at the report (rather than application) stage.
- Eliminate questions that are also asked in the Cultural Data Profile (note that currently organizations with budgets less than $50,000 do not need to complete this).
**Recommendation 5: Increase award amounts for small-budget organizations.**
Increasing financial support for small organizations was one of the most frequently cited actions to make the OAC a more equitable grant maker. This finding holds true even when segmenting responses by budget—that is, the majority of large-budget organizations also felt that financial support for small organizations should be increased. It is important to note that small was not defined by a specific budget number, but the survey data implies that less than $250,000 may be the appropriate threshold. In interviews and survey comments, many organizations expressed the limitations of a small award size:

- "We got a grant for I think $3,000 and, in this day and age, it's good, but it's not as good as it could and should be."
- "Since the grant sizes have not changed...have to change the programming to stay in budget."
- "Unless I could receive a considerable sum over multiple years, it is not worth the effort required [for a small organization] to apply and report."
- "Overall, I would like to see an easier way for us to get funding in every county for arts. We are the only group [in our community] and we struggle with funding but pinch every penny."
- "We have been in a position where the Arts Access grant award amount is not quite enough to make a significant impact in supporting our operations, but our income doesn't yet qualify us for the Sustainability grant."

**Recommendation 6: Reduce the cash match requirement.**
Reducing the cash match requirement was one of the most frequently cited changes that would encourage organizations to apply for GOS. It was also one of the most frequently cited actions to make the OAC a more equitable grant maker. In interviews and survey comments, many organizations described their issues with a cash match:

- "Increase the amount we can get without the requirement for a cash match, an in-kind match is easier"
- "The match can be really difficult to find for a small organization. Could there be a different sort of formula for the match instead of 50-50 to make it an easier lift?"
- "Requiring a match discriminates, it is an unnecessary burden that complicates everyone's budgeting and it doesn't get you better outcomes."
- "...a match for such a small grant is ridiculous. The orgs bring a great deal of sweat equity to the project."
- "We have stopped applying for grants due to the imbalance of capacity that it takes to write the grant/final report, secure matching funds and the resulting funding we receive."
Recommendation 7: Allocate dollars between Arts Access and Sustainability judiciously.
Increasing award amounts to small organizations would need to be paired with an increase in funds to the Arts Access program. Without such an increase, the applicant pool will experience a more competitive process and the intentions of these recommendations would not be achieved.

Recommendation 8: Challenge the budget-driven funding formula.
The OAC's funding formula for determination of award amounts is highly complex. Like many other funding formulas used throughout state arts agency history, in addition to including elements relating to panel scores and available funds it indexes grant amounts to the budget size of the applicant. Larger organizations (which also tend to employ more staff, have larger programs and reach larger audiences) generally receive larger absolute award amounts under such systems, even if those awards represent a smaller portion of their total budgets.

NASAA's analysis reveals that this pattern is present in Ohio, with big organizations receiving significantly more award dollars than small groups. The four largest Sustainability organizations receive 20% of all funds allocated for operating support while comprising 1% of the grantee pool. OAC funding represents approximately 1% of these large organizations' budgets. In contrast, the 59 Arts Access grant recipients comprise 15% of the grantee pool and received 1% of available funds.

Smaller, under-resourced organizations are keenly aware of the funding imbalance and experience it as an equity gap. Even without an explicit question on this topic, they expressed frustrations about this in both the interviews and survey:

- "And when I look at grants that people like the museum and the symphony and the ballet got, they were much more money than an organization like ours receive. And yet they weren't as effective because they still weren't getting the number of minorities and underserved kids to be a part of their organization. And I often felt that they were getting those larger amounts of money that maybe our smaller organization could've received and would've been able to make it go much further than they were. Because they didn't have the inroads and the information and they didn't have, maybe, the attitude or the wherewithal or the willingness to listen and learn about something that was different but not deficient."
- "Lots of money goes to large Ohio organizations that don't need the money. There are many organizations who are doing the work on the ground and it seems like they are the ones fighting for leftovers."
- "It feels like big city arts groups are favored. There are more of them, they make up the majority of organizations that are funded, and they get large grants."
• "Sometimes judging seems biased in favor of larger organizations that have more access to monetary resources—especially with respect to corporate/business donations."
• "What is the most challenging is the fact that the large arts institutions have grant writers and departments, while the small organizations, that already have limited funding opportunities, often miss out on opportunities due to inexperience or lack of resources."
• "Create funding level policies based on need (more available for Appalachia initially) rather than having applications compete with all in the same category regardless of available local funds for arts projects."

Given that so many constituents—across the budget spectrum—support increased financial support for small organizations, now may be an opportune moment to consider alternatives to this system. Ohio would not be alone in this kind of change. A number of other state arts agencies have recently challenged their funding formulas in favor of flatter funding structures. Key questions to consider include:

• What can the OAC learn from colleague state arts agencies and NASAA about alternatives to budget-driven formulas?
• What would be the effect of different funding tiers, funding caps or award amounts? What scenarios should be run to understand the options and their potential impact?
• What kind of public input would be appropriate for a policy shift away from budget-driven award amounts?
• How could the politics of change be managed and the understanding and support of large organizations be secured?

Communications, Outreach and Assistance

Recommendation 9: Communicate more formally and frequently about eligibility for GOS.
The staff interviews and constituent feedback revealed that there is communication about whether and when project grantees may be eligible for GOS and there is also strategic guidance offered by staff. However, an information gap about eligibility and application on-years still exists regardless of budget size or population served. There is also confusion about whether GOS status impacts eligibility for other grant programs. Some suggestions for how to address this information gap:

• Include and emphasize this wherever grants information is communicated, such as the grants web page, guidelines and grant overview pamphlet.
• Proactively and regularly communicate to project grantees about whether and when they might be eligible for GOS programs.
• Consider different formats for communicating, such as a visual or an eligibility quiz.
Recommendation 10: Continue relationship-building efforts and support.

Even though there are strategies for rural (Fund Every County) and disability (ADA Coordinator/Art Possible contract) populations, many interviewed shared that their peer institutions did not know about OAC grant opportunities. Interviewees provided suggestions for improving these efforts.

- Create an easy way for anyone to recommend potential organizations to the OAC and follow up on these recommendations.
- Offer information sessions and workshops within the communities of focus.
- Work with existing grantees who are known conveners and connectors to serve as facilitator or possibly collaborator on a partnership application.
- Be explicit about naming programs intended for specific communities, perhaps through project examples, so that potential applicants know OAC programs are "for them."
- Recruit current grantees to provide support to peer organizations with the application process.
- Recognize that new applicants may not fit the typical profile of past applicants and that "because it is different, it does not mean it's deficient."
- Consider convening leaders of color together for these organizations to better connect with each other and for the OAC to learn more about them.
- Continue to practice a culture of listening, receiving feedback and building trust.
- Consider how to leverage current GOS grantees with people of color on staff.
- Read Deepening Relationships with Diverse Communities and identify potentially actionable ideas offered in that report.

Recommendation 11: Create more agency capacity for relationship building and equity efforts.

While OAC staff interviews revealed that there is time spent in the field, constituents expressed a strong desire to see the OAC out in the field even more through site visits, in-person outreach and other relationship-building efforts. This is highly intensive work and it requires time to be present in communities, earn trust, connect with organizations that are prospective grantees and support them through the funding process. Learning, practice and policy shifts connected to equity also require time and attention. Simply put, equity work takes time. OAC staff should consider how to build time for implementing these recommendations into work plans. They should also consider whether other activities can be shed, downsized or outsourced to allow staff to use their expertise for equity related activities.

Recommendation 12: Find ways to authentically identify organizations serving the priority areas of focus.

When asked whether they served populations in any of the four priority areas of focus, the survey responses implied that many organizations applied a fairly broad definition in their response. Additional text responses showed some resistance to the idea that there is value
In identifying these types of organizations (e.g., "we serve everyone," "everyone is welcome," or "humans").

Conversely, organizations that explicitly served these populations had mixed feelings about defining and labeling themselves as such. In the survey there were some FEC, BCD and ADAP grantees that did not identify as serving rural, BIPOC or disability populations. In the constituent interviews, this reluctance was revealed through body language and nonverbal reactions to questions. These labels do not encapsulate all that the organization does and organization leaders can be resistant to such simple categorizations. The OAC will need to find ways to authentically identify these organizations and/or provide opportunities for organizations define their own identities and the populations they serve. Options for getting started on this work include:

- reviewing definitions other state arts agencies use to define BIPOC and historically underserved groups
- mirroring questions about mission focus collected by DataArts on other OAC grant applications to provide more consistent information across the OAC grantee pool

Data Collection and Use
Changes to the OAC's data collection practices will allow it to evaluate how well it is doing toward its goals, telling its story and potentially reducing burden.

**Recommendation 13: Collect more specific panelist demographics.**
OAC staff interviews indicated an intention to create panels that were balanced across several demographics (e.g., experience, race/ethnicity, geography, disability). The OAC website also acknowledges this diversity goal, and survey comments indicated an awareness of this intention. In order to increase the quality and consistency of demographic data, the panelist data form should be updated to explicitly collect this information. This would allow the OAC to more formally track demographics, see trends over time and work toward any stated goals.

**Recommendation 14: Review and revise demographic data collected through applications and final reports.**
Ways that data collection processes could be revised and strengthened were identified through NASAA's data analysis, survey feedback and the document review.

- Revise and reduce organizational demographics questions to focus on data with the highest utility. Suggestions include updating the fields for total numbers of staff, board and volunteers to allow for download and reducing demographic categories to only those that will be used.
- Update questions about Appalachians so they are disaggregated from questions about racial demographics.
• Consider adding demographic questions about low-income and rural populations benefited.
• Support grantees in their ability to collect and report valid data on beneficiaries reached. This could include more explicit guidance within the application and final report, dedicated workshops on this topic, individual assistance for applicants, etc.

Recommendation 15: Establish appropriate funding metrics.
Once specific equity funding goals are established, appropriate metrics should be established to track progress toward these goals. These might include overall progress on successful entry into the GOS program, the success of dedicated entry points (e.g., the BCD program) or the attainment of certain demographic benchmarks (for instance, the proportionality of rural funding dollars with rural population percentages).

Recommendation 16: Adopt a practice of routine reporting on equity metrics.
This Equity GAP Project represents the first time the OAC had conducted a formal equity focused assessment of its grant-making practices. It need not be the last. A practice of regular analysis and reporting could help the agency communicate its success to stakeholders and chart its progress over time.

Overall Agency Policy
The focus of the Equity GAP Project is on the OAC’s general operating support programs. A number of recommendations outside of those two programs were surfaced that could eventually lead to more equitable funding within GOS and across other programs calibrated for underserved organizations.

Recommendation 17: Continue to model a culture of feedback and continuous learning.
Through the survey and interviews, constituents expressed gratitude for the OAC’s equity work to date, including the process of eliciting feedback. However, there were constituents who feared that this would be the only outreach they would see and that the OAC’s commitment to equity and listening to its constituents would not continue. The OAC should work in partnership with its constituents to become a more equitable grant maker and communicate its efforts to increase trust and constituent engagement.

Recommendation 18: Continue to bring an equity lens to the agency’s strategic planning.
Looking ahead, equitable grant making can continue to be a cornerstone of future OAC strategic plans. Insights gleaned from this assessment—and action steps originating from it—can shape operational action plans for the agency. As plans are being formulated, ongoing dialogue with constituents about equity issues and approaches can give the agency’s plans good aim while also reinforcing constituent confidence in the OAC’s approach.
Recommendation 19: Allocate funding across programs in a way that supports the OAC's equity goals.
The availability of grant funds in any given program is dependent on both the agency's overall budget and allocation across programs. Consider how program allocations can further the OAC's equity goals, including ensuring that Arts Access and programs for the priority areas of focus are well funded.

Recommendation 20: Evaluate the current entry points for rural, BIPOC and disability organizations.
Building Cultural Diversity, Fund Every County, and the Artists with Disabilities Access Program have the potential to serve as dedicated on-ramps to the GOS applicant pool of BIPOC, rural and disability-serving organizations. There is not currently data available to assess whether these programs have been successful in this effort. If the OAC determines that these programs should indeed serve as on-ramps to GOS, they should be evaluated and revised.

Recommendation 21: Develop an entry point or supports specifically for organizations serving low-income communities.
A dedicated effort for organizations serving low-income communities does not currently exist at the OAC. If there are equity goals established for this population, consider how they could be supported through a grant program, outreach effort or another type of initiative.

Recommendation 22: Continue to support equity work for constituent organizations.
Organizations expressed a desire for support in their own equity efforts. Suggestions based on the survey feedback and document review include:

- offering workshops and trainings at varied levels (introductory and more intermediate/advanced) and tailored for specific audiences (e.g., staff, board),
- developing a capacity-building program specifically for equity work, or communicating that the existing program can be used for equity work,
- offering scholarship opportunities for conferences or other professional development.

Additional Ideas for the Future
This analysis focused on general operating support grants because of their importance to the arts sector and prominence in the OAC's grant portfolio. However, it may be productive for the OAC to consider evaluating its other grant programs through an equity lens.

- Are there analysis approaches used for this project that could usefully translate to other OAC grant categories?
- If the agency were to conduct an equity assessment of its arts education, individual artist or traditional arts investments, what different research questions would be important to ask?
• How could or should equity focused evaluations be developed for nongrant services provided by the OAC?

One suggestion that came out of the research process was not articulated as a recommendation in this report: allowing GOS applications in any year. While this was acknowledged as a potentially useful shift by staff, it would require more capacity and is not likely realistic to implement with the current staff structures and time limitations.

**Descriptions of Appendices**

This project resulted in a considerable amount of data that not only is relevant to OAC grant policy but also can become an asset to other state arts agencies seeking to conduct equity audits of their own. Additional information is available through four appendices (see below) or by contacting NASAA.

**Appendix A: Methodology**

Multiple data collection methods were employed in order to provide a holistic perspective of the OAC’s equity strengths and weaknesses and to understand the practical actions that can be taken. Each method is briefly described in this appendix. Additional information is available from either NASAA or the Ohio Arts Council upon request.

**Appendix B: Ohio Arts Council Grant Awards Summary**

As a part of the information discovery process, the OAC shared grant recommendation summary sheets from the past four years, extracted from council meeting public records. These one-page summaries provide at-a-glance information on the scope of the awards being presented. NASAA compiled key data from each summary sheet and provided a high level analysis of the Arts Access and Sustainability funding streams.

**Appendix C: Quantitative Analysis Executive Summary**

NASAA conducted a statistical and geospatial analysis of OAC grant awards based on data supplied by the OAC and comparative benchmarking data from other state arts agencies. The findings informed the recommendations presented in this report. The complete Quantitative Analysis Technical Report is available under separate cover.

**Appendix D: Equity Audit Resources**

A scan was done of relevant audits, reports, case studies and literature reviews for other grant makers seeking to improve their equity efforts. In total, 26 resources were identified and consulted. This appendix contains an annotated bibliography of the resources that ultimately informed this research project.