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Our nation is contending with generation-defining events. The COVID-19 pandemic, racial injustices, natural disasters and human conflicts have reshaped our reality. Even as our country aches from acute political, geographic and economic divides, we are reaching for hope and healing. America is a work in progress, and this is a time of reckoning and—most importantly—of renewal.

In such times, the arts restore our connections to each other, spark our revival and galvanize our resolve. They strengthen our communities, our economy and our well-being. The arts also can be a vehicle for civic discourse about hard issues, helping us understand the past, grapple with the present and envision a new future.
State arts agencies facilitate these benefits, but they face formidable challenges. They must respond to crises with resilience and creativity. They must assert their value and demonstrate a robust return on investment. They must help the creative sector adapt to new norms of cultural production and participation. State arts agencies not only support the arts, they also shape public policy. State arts agencies can be government’s better angels, finding new ways to assist communities and fulfill America’s promise of government that serves all people.

Because each state and jurisdiction is different, every state arts agency will find unique solutions to these problems. NASAA takes pride in helping all state arts agencies to flourish, honoring their distinctiveness and their commonalities. This strategic plan reflects our renewed commitment to NASAA’s core mission: to strengthen state arts agencies. With this framework as a guide for action, NASAA will equip state arts agencies to meet the challenges of today—and fortify them to thrive in the future.
WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

Arts and creativity make us stronger—as individuals, families, communities, states and as a country.

THRIVING FOR ALL
Arts and creativity help people and places to thrive, strengthening the economic, educational and civic fabric of American communities. State arts agencies ensure that all towns and rural regions—not just the largest cities or wealthiest areas—have access to these opportunities.
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

THE WORK OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES, SUPPORTED BY NASAA, EMPOWERS:

**STRONG ECONOMIES**
Arts and creativity are economic engines, putting people to work in many industries. They stimulate commerce and offer opportunities for young people, rural areas and creative entrepreneurs to prosper.

**THRIVING COMMUNITIES**
The arts promote connection by providing shared experiences, celebrating local culture and encouraging civic discourse. They tell our stories, helping us preserve and pass on cherished traditions and empathize with others. The arts also enliven our communities, creating desirable places for people to live, work, play and raise their families.

**GOOD HEALTH**
The arts reduce isolation and contribute to physical and psychological well-being. They facilitate healthy aging and provide effective therapies for injured military personnel, trauma survivors and people struggling with depression, anxiety or addiction.

**ESSENTIAL EDUCATION**
The arts boost achievement in academic fundamentals, setting young people up for success. Education that includes the arts teaches lateral thinking as well as the value of practice and persistence—essential skills for school, work and life.

**INSPIRING INNOVATION**
A creative workforce gives businesses a competitive edge by helping them engage customers, originate new ideas and find fresh solutions to problems. The arts exercise our creative muscles throughout our life span, igniting our imaginations when we’re young and facilitating meaningful learning and community engagement as we grow older.

**RESILIENT SPIRITS**
Intrinsic to the arts is the power to uplift us and help us perceive things in new ways. In the face of hardship and adversity, the arts are a force for recovery, understanding and healing. Through the arts, we express who we are as a nation today, and who we aspire to become tomorrow.
MISSION

STRENGTHEN STATE ARTS AGENCIES

NASAA EMPOWERS THE WORK OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES THROUGH:

**KNOWLEDGE**

NASAA provides authoritative data to support evidence based case making and decision making. Our research and professional development services inform and inspire state arts agencies, sparking new ways of working, serving the public and developing the resilience of our field.

**REPRESENTATION**

NASAA is a champion and advocate for state arts agencies, asserting the importance of the arts to decision makers. We shape public policy, foster multisection support for the arts and give state arts agencies a persuasive voice in influential national networks.

**COMMUNITY**

NASAA convenes and connects state arts agencies. Our professional community energizes the work of state arts agencies, unites our members around common goals and builds a shared vision for the future.

NASAA amplifies the expertise, influence, funding and vision that state arts agencies employ on behalf of every American. Through NASAA, state arts agencies achieve more together than they can alone.
VALUES

NASAA’S WORK IS GUIDED BY THESE ENDURING VALUES:

ACCESS FOR ALL
We believe the public sector bears a special responsibility to help all communities thrive through the arts. To this end, NASAA strives to reduce barriers and dismantle bias based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, geography, political affiliation or economic status.

SERVICE
NASAA programs are timely, relevant and responsive to the needs of members. Because every state and jurisdiction is unique, NASAA tailors our services to the needs of each member agency.

CREDIBILITY
NASAA earns trust by sharing factually accurate information and aligning our deeds with our words.

NONPARTISANSHIP
NASAA builds consensus around the arts and cultivates advocacy champions across the political spectrum.

EXCELLENCE
NASAA is recognized for the high caliber, creativity and professionalism of our services. We exemplify accountable stewardship of public resources, and rigorous evaluation spurs continual improvement.

TRANSPARENCY
NASAA is a member-driven organization that communicates clearly, openly shares information with our stakeholders and welcomes feedback.

COLLABORATION
NASAA initiates partnerships—across multiple sectors as well as within the arts field—to broaden our impact and expand support for the work of state arts agencies.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are bedrock values as well as action commitments for NASAA. In alignment with NASAA’s DEI policy, our framework encompasses:

DIVERSITY
Recognizing all dimensions of human identity and difference.

EQUITY
Providing the means for all people to realize fair and just treatment, benefits and opportunities.

INCLUSION
Engaging diverse individuals, communities and perspectives to ensure access, representation and belonging for all.

NASAA’s action plans enumerate activities we pursue to advance DEI each year. Annual progress reports document what we’ve accomplished, keeping us accountable and transparent. See page 9 for more information on DEI in NASAA action plans.
State arts agencies need savvy and agile leaders capable of addressing immediate crises without losing sight of their long-term goals. NASAA’s research and professional development services inform state arts agency practice and spur the continual development of our field.

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Supply authoritative facts about state arts agencies.

B. Facilitate members’ use of information for planning, decision making and case making.

C. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, improvement and change.

D. Deliver educational programs that boost members’ knowledge, leadership skills and resilience.
Our Assembly is an inclusive, welcoming community where members learn from each other and find common purpose. Connecting through NASAA also bolsters policy: the state arts agency community empowers our decisions, increases our influence and defines NASAA’s credibility as a representative policy voice.

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Keep state arts agencies informed through timely, relevant and accessible communications.

B. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking.

C. Promote the understanding and use of NASAA services.

D. Engage members in the governance, planning and advocacy work of the Assembly.

To strengthen state arts agencies now and into the future, NASAA must grow the financial and operational capacity to meet our members’ escalating demands for services. Fulfilling these objectives helps us attain all of NASAA’s goals.

**OBJECTIVES**

A. Develop and diversify NASAA’s revenues.

B. Develop NASAA’s human resources.

C. Improve NASAA’s operations and technology.

D. Evaluate our work and learn from the results.
Advancing DEI requires more than good intentions. It necessitates concrete actions and continual learning. NASAA addresses this by:

- offering services that help state arts agencies pursue DEI in their policies, programs and funding practices, and
- adopting policies and practices that strengthen DEI within NASAA.

Part of how NASAA embodies our DEI values is by recognizing and respecting differences that exist among state arts agencies. Although the commitment to helping all communities thrive is universally shared, each state and jurisdiction needs the freedom to tailor its tactics to its own geography, demographics, authorizing environment and operating realities—no universal formula will succeed everywhere. NASAA therefore offers a range of methods for advancing DEI. Listening and learning are important elements of our DEI leadership approach, which blends long-term strategy with situational improvisation to propel our field forward.

NASAA enumerates our DEI action commitments in action plans, seeking member input to guide services and activities. Specific DEI actions are interlaced within every goal in our action plan. For transparency and accountability, NASAA regularly reports on our DEI activities and accomplishments to our board and membership. See:

- DEI Activities Report
- Current Action Plan
- DEI Resources Hub
- NASAA Policy Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
State arts agencies are NASAA’s primary stakeholders, volunteers, advisors and ambassadors. Most importantly, state arts agencies are the owners of this Assembly, its originators, leaders and investors. State arts agencies created NASAA in 1968, and still count on their Assembly today to expand their knowledge and influence. Members share an equal stake in the goals of this plan—and share equal responsibility for building an association to achieve them. NASAA issues calls to action throughout the year and we urge state arts agencies’ full engagement in that work.
Collaborations beyond the state arts agency field are integral to NASAA’s success, and to the success of state arts agencies themselves. NASAA’s annual action plan identifies specific collaborations that can help us attain our objectives in any given year. Some relationships, however, have perennial importance. These partners include:

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**
NASAA represents state arts agencies to the NEA and fosters program and policy collaborations between the NEA and its state partners.

**ADVOCACY COALITIONS**
NASAA intersects with national and regional advocacy coalitions, state arts advocacy organizations and other networks advocating for the arts, the humanities and the creative sector. NASAA’s role in advocacy collaborations is guided by the needs and priorities of our member state arts agencies.

**POLICY NETWORKS**
NASAA connects with national organizations that shape the knowledge and actions of state policymakers. Through these groups, NASAA helps governors, legislators and other public officials understand the value of the arts and state arts agencies.

**CROSS-SECTOR NETWORKS**
Working with organizations in fields such as economic development, community development, education and health helps us broaden support for the arts and bring important insights back to the state arts agency field.

**REGIONAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS (RAOS)**
NASAA advocates for NEA funds that support the work of RAOs as well as NASAA and state arts agencies. We meet regularly with RAO leaders to identify shared interests and to synchronize efforts that benefit state arts agencies.

**ARTS SERVICE NETWORKS**
NASAA routinely collaborates and consults with leadership networks and organizations that focus on arts development and grant making.

State arts agencies also are strengthened by numerous state and local allies. NASAA serves as a resource to philanthropic partners, local arts organizations, government agencies, civic groups and others who work in concert with state arts agencies to advance the arts.

Citizen advocacy organizations, philanthropic partners, public agencies and civic groups work in concert with state arts agencies to advance the arts.
NASAA planning is evergreen—it is continually renewed and never stands still. We do this by combining strategic plans and action plans. Our strategic plan (this document) charts NASAA’s overall course. It sets forth our purpose, our long-range goals and the principles that guide our work, without an expiration date. Action plans are time-bound. They itemize the near-term steps we take to achieve our long-term goals. This tandem approach ensures that NASAA’s day-to-day priorities align with our strategic vision.

Action plans ensure the dynamic currency of NASAA’s work, helping us address new realities, opportunities or constraints. We invite feedback and input from every state and jurisdiction through an annual interview process, and a membership vote is taken to approve the action plan. The strategic plan is regularly assessed for relevance, too. The standard review interval is three years, but the board can initiate a planning cycle sooner or later as circumstances warrant. This plan, originated for 2018, reflects revisions made to attune the plan to new realities in 2023 and beyond.
EVALUATING OUR IMPACT

In keeping with our evergreen approach, planning at NASAA does not end when planning documents are approved. Rigorous measurement practices—fully transparent to members—continually refine our aim and improve our performance.

FIELD MONITORING
NASAA monitors a variety of indicators of state arts agency strength and capacity. These indicators help NASAA to track the stability and growth of our field.

PERFORMANCE METRICS
NASAA monitors a robust suite of operational performance metrics. The targets are informed by best practices among professional associations and monitored by the Planning & Budget Committee.

DATA MINING
We analyze information requests, member engagement and an array of communications measures. This active data mining informs action planning and provides real-time intelligence that NASAA uses to adjust tactics to address member needs.

PROGRAM EVALUATION
NASAA conducts evaluations of individual programs, using the results to guide future activities.
This plan—initially adopted in 2018 and substantially revised for 2023—was formulated through an inclusive process designed to shape our long-range goals, reach out to new stakeholders and surface insights that will help NASAA be smart in our day-to-day work. The participatory process was led by NASAA’s Planning & Budget Committee. We used a mix of methods to invite candid, diverse opinions and make sure every voice was heard.
FUTURE FORECASTING
As a first step in planning in 2017, we engaged the full membership in a dialogue about the future of our field. In 2017 and again in 2022, our board focused on changes affecting the success of state arts agencies. We also examined future forecasts for state government, the arts and professional associations.

SELF-ASSESSMENT
Staff and board appraised strengths and weaknesses—and considered what needed to change—for both state arts agencies and NASAA.

MEMBER INPUT
Because state arts agencies are NASAA’s primary stakeholders, member input was a keystone of our process. To develop the original plan for 2018 we conducted 84 member interviews, received 143 responses to our membership opinion poll, and engaged 29 board and committee members in developing plan drafts. Our 2022 revision included 83 interviews with executive and council leaders. It also reflects contributions from 30 additional board and committee members, plus invitations for all state arts agency and regional arts organizations to comment on the draft. Interviews with the executive directors and board chairs of each state and jurisdiction continue as an annual process.

CROSS-SECTOR PERSPECTIVES
We cast a wide net, reaching far beyond our membership to engage 83 outside advisors in our process when the plan was originated for 2018. We conducted 51 interviews (a mix of phone and face-to-face) with people representing the fields of economic development, government innovation, creative placemaking, community development, education, health care, agriculture and philanthropy as well as the arts. Face-to-face forums with associations serving state government, regional arts organizations and national arts service networks reinforced key relationships—and built new ties for the future.

DATA ANALYSIS
We analyzed 5,455 historical information requests and conducted a statistical benchmarking study comparing NASAA to 41 other associations serving state government or the arts. To inform fundraising and revenue diversification, we evaluated the success of NASAA’s past Annual Fund campaigns and conducted in-depth prospect research to identify foundations that may be likely candidates for future support. Budget forecasting and analysis of current information requests, contributions and foundation prospects continue as part of our action planning cycle.

THIRD-PARTY OBJECTIVITY
To ensure an unbiased assessment (and to expedite the work for 2018), NASAA engaged a consulting team to lead portions of our planning process. Artistic Logistics conducted interviews, facilitated forums and reality-checked our conclusions.

DRAFT REVIEWS
Members, nonmember planning informants and independent consultants offered revisions to the plan in draft form in both 2018 and 2022.

TRANSPARENCY
NASAA established a publicly accessible strategic planning hub on our website to share our findings and invite ongoing input.

The adoption of this strategic plan represents the beginning—not the end—of a process. Together, state arts agencies, NASAA and our partners will work to sustain the arts as an asset for individuals, families, communities and state governments across America. We invite you to join us.
PLANNING ENGAGEMENT

- **2017 Member Interviews:** 84
- **2022 Member Interviews:** 83
- **2017 Outside Advisors Engaged:** 83
- **2017 Opinion Poll Responses:** 143
- **2017 Statistical Benchmarks:** 41
- **Information Requests Analyzed 2017–2022:** 5,455

*Includes informants from the fields of government innovation, education, health care, economic development, rural development, community development and philanthropy.
THANKS!

NASAA is deeply grateful to the many individuals and colleague organizations who contributed their expertise, ideas and volunteer time to the creation of this plan.

NASAA Planning & Budget Committee
Ken May
(SC, 2017 NASAA Treasurer)
Amber Sharples
(OK, 2022 NASAA Treasurer)
Donna Collins (OH)
Christian Gaines (Western States Arts Federation)
Sue Gens (MN)
Karen Hanan (WA)
Stephen Hill (NC)
Elliot Knight (AL)
Liz Shapiro (CT)
Sandy Shaughnessy (FL)
Lorén Spears (RI)
John Strickland (WV)

State Arts Agencies
Alabama State Council on the Arts
Alaska State Council on the Arts
Arizona Commission on the Arts
Arkansas Arts Council
California Arts Council
Colorado Creative Industries
Connecticut Office of the Arts
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
Delaware Division of the Arts
Florida Division of Arts and Culture
Georgia Council for the Arts
Guam Council on the Arts & Humanities Agency
Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts
Idaho Commission on the Arts
Illinois Arts Council Agency
Indiana Arts Commission
Iowa Arts Council
Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission
Kentucky Arts Council
Louisiana Division of the Arts
Maine Arts Commission
Maryland State Arts Council
Massachusetts Cultural Council
Michigan Arts and Culture Council
Minnesota State Arts Board
Mississippi Arts Commission
Missouri Arts Council
Montana Arts Council
Nebraska Arts Council
Nevada Arts Council
New Hampshire State Council on the Arts
New Jersey State Council on the Arts
New Mexico Arts
New York State Council on the Arts
North Carolina Arts Council
North Dakota Council on the Arts
Northern Marianas Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture
Ohio Arts Council
Oklahoma Arts Council
Oregon Arts Commission
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
South Carolina Arts Commission
South Dakota Arts Council
Tennessee Arts Commission
Texas Commission on the Arts
Utah Division of Arts & Museums
Vermont Arts Council
Virginia Commission for the Arts
Washington State Arts Commission
West Virginia Commission on the Arts
Wisconsin Arts Board
Wyoming Arts Council

THANKS!

NASAA is deeply grateful to the many individuals and colleague organizations who contributed their expertise, ideas and volunteer time to the creation of this plan.
THANKS!

Regional Arts Organizations
Arts Midwest
Mid-America Arts Alliance
Mid Atlantic Arts
New England Foundation for the Arts
Western States Arts Federation
South Arts

Cross-Sector Perspectives (2017)
Jeremy Anderson, Education Commission on the States
Elizabeth Armstrong, National Association of Government Communicators
Mike Bartlett, National Governors Association
Jen Bokoff, Foundation Center / GrantCraft
Kelly Brown, D5 Coalition
John Brown, Windgate Foundation
Corina Eckl, National Conference of State Legislatures
Charles Fluharty, Rural Policy Research Institute
Michael Fraser, Assoc. of State and Territorial Health Officials
Barbara P. Glenn, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
Erik Hein, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
Doug Herbert, U.S. Department of Education
Maria Rosario Jackson, Kresge Foundation
Paula Kerger, PBS
Jeremy Liu, PolicyLink
Esther Mackintosh, Federation of State Humanities Councils

Cultural Leadership & Advocacy Perspectives (2017)
Jamie Bennett, ArtPlace
Alan Brown, WolfBrown
Janet Brown, Grantmakers in the Arts
Randy Cohen, Americans for the Arts
Maria López De León, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
Mario García Durham, Association of Performing Arts Professionals
Aaron Dworkin, University of Michigan
Guillermina Gonzalez, Delaware Arts Alliance
Heather Ikemire, National Guild for Community Arts Education
Grace Kewl-Durfey, The Association of American Cultures / Broward Cultural Division
Sherron Long, Florida Cultural Alliance
Bob Lynch, Americans for the Arts
Liz Merritt, Association of American Museums / Center for the Future of Museums

National Arts Service Organizations (2017)
Alternate ROOTS
American Alliance of Museums
American Composers Forum
Americans for the Arts
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Performing Arts Professionals
Chamber Music America
Chorus America
Dance USA

Future of Music Coalition
League of American Orchestras
Local Learning
National Alliance for Musical Theatre
National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures
National Council for the Traditional Arts
Network Theatre Ensemble
New Music USA
OPERA America
Performing Arts Alliance
The Recording Academy
Theatre Communications Group

Artistic Logistics (2017)
Lisa Mount
Kathie deNobriga
MK Wegmann

Design
KINETIK, Inc., Washington, DC

Photography
Cover | RedCan Invitational Graffiti Jam, Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, photo courtesy of Cheyenne River Youth Project
Page 2 | “Two Big Black Hearts” by Jim Dine, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, photo by Troy B. Thompson
Page 3 | Musician Desmond Mason, photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Gazette
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Page 6 | Ercilia Brazil at Española Valley Fiber Arts Center, photo by Diane Bowman
Page 7 | Native American Drum and Dance Ensemble (Sioux Nation), photo by Chad Coppess courtesy of the South Dakota Department of Tourism
Page 8 | Woodcarving photo by Austin Ramsey, Shreveport, Louisiana
Page 9 | MusicianShip program in Washington, DC, photo by Michael Harrison
Page 11 | 2019 People and Places convening, photo by Lise Metzger courtesy of the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations
Page 12 | Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, photo courtesy of Sheila Smith
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Page 15 | “Far East of the Blues” performed by Dancing Wheels, choreographed by Donald McKayle, photo by Russell Brown
Page 17 | “King Salmon” sculpture and photo by Ray Troll, photo courtesy of the Alaska State Council on the Arts