



**Communications Managers/PIOs Peer Session**  
September 23, 2022

**Notes**

**Icebreaker**

Approximately 25 people wrote brief responses to the question, "How are you feeling?" on sticky notes that were posted on an easel. This activity helped the group understand where everyone was coming from, and that no matter how you felt, at least one of your peers felt the same way. The room was advised to think about strengths through the lens of weaknesses and what talents and experiences each person brought to the cohort.

**Activity**

Everyone in the room was asked to introduce themselves and state their current challenges, e.g., "What keeps you up at night?" Responses included:

- strategic planning
- overwhelm
- constant shifts
- keeping the arts covered in media
- implementing a CRM
- serving/reaching rural communities
- making website and data presentations clear
- multiple projects
- last-minute deadlines
- always saying yes

**Presentation from the National Endowment for the Arts**

[Sonia Tower](#), Director of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, Office of Public Affairs  
[Elizabeth Auclair](#), Assistant Director of Public Affairs (Press), Office of Public Affairs

Representatives from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) spoke about their [storytelling products](#) and encouraged state arts agencies to use NEA content—podcasts, articles, and videos—to fill out their own social media feeds. They stressed the importance of communicating the American Rescue Plan's impact, stating, "make you sure you *show* it, don't just tell it" (e.g., show an organization that benefitted from funding). NEA noted the challenge of "meeting this moment" and wants to hear stories about the sector recovering ("rebuild, retool, reimagine, reframe"). Tagging the NEA is the easiest way for them to find your stories and messages.

Key messages:

- how all Americans can live "artful lives" (there are many ways to engage in the arts)
- arts at the intersection (e.g., advancing community issues like health, transportation, etc.)
- How can we work together to build a healthy arts ecosystem? (NEA, RAOs, state arts agencies, organizations, artists)

## **Regional Arts Organizations (RAOs)**

Representatives from the six [regional arts organizations](#) (RAOs) took turns describing their RAO, its constituency, and its current plans and activities. These included:

- leveraging artists
- increasing transparency
- strengthening relationships with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or people of color) organizations
- deepening accessibility
- getting beyond traditional labels/categories
- preparing for emergencies
- making content more digestible
- expanding equity
- improving online application tools
- launching "creativity news desks"
- solidifying relationships with the press

## **State Arts Agencies**

[Eric Heidle](#), Communications Specialist, [Montana Arts Council](#)

Eric presented on Montana Arts Council's quarterly print newsletter, and why keeping a print option was important for their largely rural population that has limited Internet access.

[Andrew Truscott](#), Communications and Marketing, and [Leeann Wallett](#), Community Engagement, [Delaware Division of the Arts](#)

Andrew and Leeann from [Delaware Scene](#) spoke about the process of building and maintaining their statewide arts events calendar (as well as a job bank and artist opportunities), with a focus on reducing workload for artists.

## **Closing**

Attendees planned to keep in touch and connect via their strengths in the months ahead.

## **Coordinators**

[Justin Nigro](#), Operations and Public Affairs Director, [Ohio Arts Council](#)

[Margaret Keough](#), Director, Marketing and Communications, [Mid-America Arts Alliance](#)