

2025 Executive Forum

Deputy Director Peer Session Summary

November 12, 2025 in Omaha, NE

Deputy directors gathered to “talk shop” about a variety of issues they expressed a desire to discuss. The three-part session facilitated by Jessica Riehl included 38 deputies from state arts agencies and regional arts organizations, as well as four NASAA staff.

Part One: The session began with facilitator Jessica Riehl leading an interactive, full group activity around navigating complexity. It brought to light both the similarities and differences in the political environments deputies are operating in.

Part Two: Deputy directors broke into groups to discuss staffing and workplace issues. Conversations centered on five primary topics—recruitment and attrition, staff well-being, political acumen, performance challenges, and burnout.

Part Three: Groups divided to have more casual conversation around three topical areas—continuing commitment to equity / ensuring access for all, navigating different pressure points, and compliance strategies.