

## **Deputy Director Peer Group Meeting Notes – April 8, 2026**

Sylvia Prickett (NASAA) welcomed the group of 17 deputy directors, with a special welcome to Margaret Garro (NE) who is joining for her first DD Zoom meeting.

### **Checking in**

#### **Started with a quick round robin for big news and updates.**

Chandra Boyd (OK): Received budget last week which was good. They're now waiting for the governor's signature and for it to go through the bill process. They also received the rent cost for their now required annual lease payments as part of their FY27 state appropriations.

Sylvia: Here at NASAA the pause has come off for Arts Ed PDI and Folk Arts preconference funding and we have NEA Council approval of next year's cooperative agreement budget.

Kristin Burgoyne (MT): Learned that they no longer have to move and able to stay in the same space for another ten years (with some contingency).

#### **How are people feeling about their budgets?**

Jocelyn Robertson (ID): Budget was approved, lost about 4% statewide when they were expecting to lose 5%.

Sylvia Britt (CA): Had 5 million dollars restored to funding! Also, being in their 50<sup>th</sup> year, they are doing a lot of work around the anniversary of CAC.

Sara Leonard (RI): Budgets won't be finalized until June, but they did receive \$50,000 in the governor's recommended budget for an Arts and Health Incubator program. Also, \$115,000 that was previously cut was restored in the FY27 budget. Staff presented new guidelines for their general operating support program to the council at their March meeting which was received favorably. They're looking to have them approved in July.

#### **Sylvia: What changes were made to your guidelines?**

Sara Leonard (RI): They still have evaluation criteria focused on community engagement and responsiveness. But they realized that budget size was the best proxy measure they could look at to ensure that their funding represented the diversity of their cultural communities. Wanting to ensure the cultural diversity in the state was supported, they've put some structures in place regarding the number of awards that can be provided to organizations of different budget sizes. This will help ensure that even the smallest budget organizations are

protected and won't have to be evaluated next to big organizations. Essentially, they moved to a budget-based, tiered, flat funding model. Will share guidelines once approved.

Jocelyn (chat): Would love to see those final guidelines. They're evaluating grant programs right now with an intent to rewrite Gen Op specifically.

Andre Zhang Sonera (IN): Hosted the Final Four, D3, D2, D1 and NIT in Indiana and provided music activations over the weekend. Selected over 70 artists and groups and had over 168 musicians play throughout the weekend. The airport also did art activations, and they also utilized partnership with the Arts Council of Indianapolis to do sidewalk galleries.

Sylvia Prickett introduced Kim McCreary-Bourin (AZ) to the group.

### **José Herrera (AZ) facilitated a discussion on “Beyond the Appropriation: Expanding Funding Options for State Arts Agencies.”**

José: For context, Arizona used to be included in the general fund but was removed in the general recession in 2010. They receive a one-time a-year appropriation that is heavily fought for by champions. Last year they received a \$2 million one-time appropriation that makes up 44% of their budget. They also rely on NEA funding. The Arizona Corporation Commission also collects a fee of \$45 a year which they receive \$15 of, but it seems to be decreasing yearly. Currently, they have an endowment that is a little under \$2 million that generates about \$70,000. Their Endowment is housed in the Arizona Community Foundation, a private foundation not held by the state.

They want to be able to diversify their funding and are looking to generate ideas as a group.

Margaret: In Nebraska, the General Assembly approved taking \$5 million, of the governor's requested \$15 million (a full sweep), from their trust. The fund was an investment fund where they utilized the interest to fund a lot of their basic supporting grants.

#### *Discussion Questions*

**José: Have you worked with other state agencies (Health, Commerce, Tourism, Education, Transportation, etc.) to support arts-related efforts? What helped make the case that the arts connect to their priorities?**

Sylmia: Over the last three months has been going across county lines and talking with agencies like Aging to do a creative aging project together and is working with Corrections on an arts and corrections program. They aim to find symbiosis in the topical area.

**José: What are you doing to make sure your organization and staff who are doing the bulk of the work are compensated?**

Sylmia: Some of the programs are legislatively mandated. There is also a formal MOU. If they're not going to compensate then you ask for a resource. If they want us to own it, we need to be compensated. Ask if they can give you someone to work on it and ask what assignments they are going to do. If we aren't to be compensated, redefine what the lanes are and give them back ownership. Gave example of their work with Parks.

**Jose: There is a program that they are looking to align with Department of Corrections whose budget is about a billion compared to their \$4 million. But there is pushback from the department on coughing up any money. Thoughts on that?**

Sylmia: CAC receives \$8 million dollars from Corrections because there is so much energy in helping people in this way. They rearranged their priorities to find (?) the \$8 million, so it complements everything else they're doing. \$800,000 of that \$8 million goes to CAC's bottom line, funding two positions and overhead, and they run it as a contract. Be aware of all the little triggers that bring funding in and push it out.

Chandra (chat): They are currently working with Health for our Arts and Health Summit. They have a strong relationship with Commerce/Tourism (especially tied to public art). Education is a strong partner for their work in schools and has provided previous funding for Alternative Education arts programs. They have a solid relationship with Transportation tied to public art. As far as financial benefits, public art is a driver for bringing funds to the agency. In the past, we had a partnership with Veterans Affairs to support arts and military programs. Funding from other agencies is hit or miss. We currently receive annual funding from the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust to support Creative Aging, but that agency is under fire with the legislature and future funding is at risk.

Amy Cunningham (VT): They're a non-profit so they're able to fundraise in ways that other states might not be able to. Have had good collaborative partnerships with the Department of Aging and Living around Creative Aging, and with the Commerce agency. During COVID, they were able to pull on some economic development regrants by making the case that the creative sector was disproportionately impacted. With private funding, they have been able to cultivate three major donors, growing their re-granting by \$650,000.

Natalie Petersen (UT): Look at this conversation through a fundraising perspective. What's in it for funders and then find those overlap areas of what their needs are and what our needs are. Framing it from how we can help and meet some of their needs that they have. Why would they want to partner with you? What's in it for them? Lead with that.

Chandra (chat): What makes these partnerships successful is finding the arts champion at the agency director level. Many would not be as successful as they are without the agency head seeing the value and impact on their constituents and agency priorities.

André: Advises starting fresh and reintroducing themselves. “This is who we are, this is what we bring, what we provide.” Then, have them come over to propose what it would be great to collaborate on. Doing that this time of year, depending on when your fiscal year ends, is a great time while they have money they’re looking to spend. Gave the example of when he got to Indiana there was a lot of the American Rescue Plan funding for a lot of agencies and was able to say here’s what we can do as the Arts Commission and here’s how we can help you spend those funds.

Sylmia: There’s an opportunity to sell back the work to them. For example, saying you can pay us to write the procedure documents for you. Introducing yourselves to them is helpful to reestablish bounds.

André: Indiana’s trust works with the sales of license plates. \$25 out of each plate goes into a trust and then the interest generated from that is used for arts project support funds. Trying to figure out how to generate more interest and get more buy-in from stakeholders. It has been useful though, for example, they received a 33% cut in budget and were able to do a larger draw to keep programs afloat.

André posted link to plates, data and where NASAA has SAA’s plates listed:

<https://www.in.gov/bmv/registration-plates/license-plates-overview/license-plate-designs/>

[https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa\\_research/specialty-arts-license-plates/](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/specialty-arts-license-plates/)

Fiscal Year	Quarter	Interest	Sales Revenue	Plates Sold
FY25	3	\$41,488.88	\$27,850.00	1,114
FY25	4	\$51,321.94	\$34,825.00	1,393
FY26	1	\$46,785.20	\$33,675.00	1,347
FY26	2	\$41,402.59	\$28,750.00	1,150

Sara (chat): To the point about figuring out what matters most to leadership in other agencies: I also think that it’s both existential and strategic for us to be positioning the arts as part of the solution to all of the challenges our communities are facing. Because they are. But we need to be ready to make those cases in ways that are authentic to our terms but aligned with their terms. (And of course the arts community is impacted by all the challenges).

Natalie: Their sister division, Utah Historical Society, receives funding from license plate sales. And for the new Museum of Utah, the legislature pushed for that agency to establish

alternative funding sources for sustainability. Then when there got to be too much money there, they told them they were making too much and decided to use it elsewhere.

Sara (chat): Beware a checkbox on tax returns - we have one of those, but we don't get the funds until it crosses a certain threshold. So, to date they've always just been swept to GR!

Amy: **Do the license plates and other fee avenues create a vulnerability in the organizations general funding?**

Natalie: Yes - We were warned to be careful with it. If you start charging fees for services, then it may be a rationale to cut your base budget.

Kim: Our money comes from the Corporation Commission. Things like the license plates are often set up with verbiage that the money is used for grants and so can't be used for anything else. With that they were able to help the governor's office and office of budgeting to understand that this money has to just go out the door and can't be used for anything other than grants.

Margaret: Framing is important. It has to have a defined purpose with some measurables to add some protection.

David Markey (DC): Recently established a relationship with an organization called Fair Chance that provide capacity-building services to non-profits. They've received a three-year grant of \$4 million to work with them to establish a business council for the arts. While it's not direct funding, the hope is that it takes some pressure off.

Deane Shellman (WA)(chat): David, I would love to see a case study or something, with more specific info about how that's working.

David (chat): It's early days for us, Deane. We've pushed a survey out to our grantee community to determine what it is they need (e.g., money, advice, board members, volunteers etc.), but also what it is they have to offer to the for-profit world, e.g. using arts tools and strategies to build organizational culture etc. Next step is interviewing "prospects" in the for-profit world to see where there might be intersectionality.

José: **Has anyone explored the idea of sponsorships?**

Margaret: Their investment fund was structured this way where they also work with the Nebraska Cultural Endowment to get a match from private donors. This was attractive because the state was investing in it. There are some pros and cons and there's current reframing being done because people don't feel their funds are still protected.

Christy Costello (CO)(chat): We have a Business Committee for the Arts in Colorado, and they are also the state arts advocacy organization as of about 5 years ago. We work very closely with them. <https://cbca.org/>

José: **What about small donors? Do you solicit?**

Sylmia: They receive checks from small donors all the time. With the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, they've created a sponsorship platform where they have donation packages with various levels and are planning to make it long term. They don't solicit donations, but they come in randomly and are sent directly to their agency. They're also considering a Friends of the Arts.

Deanne(chat): In WA state we can accept donations, but we can't solicit them.

Jocelyn (chat): In ID we can accept donations but not solicit.

Amy (chat): We do solicit small donors (2 annual appeals a year) and sponsorships in Vermont. There used to be a more formal membership program, but we intentionally ended that about 7 years ago.

Anna Blyth (NM): They've struggled with this because the well is much smaller in NM and they don't want to compete with their arts nonprofits. They do some fundraising for Governor's Arts Awards so there're sponsors for that and maybe individual donors. Have had more success getting funding from other state agencies. They have a new Creative Industries division where some of their work intersects. The division has invested in a couple of their grants for folk arts this year and are interested in job training. Ask: Where is your point of intersectionality? What values do you share that benefit both of us?

Nora Johnson (PA)(chat): We are allowed to receive donations but are not allowed to solicit them (so we don't really see much \$ come in, in this way).

In recent years, as opposed to raising funds directly for us, we've been working to create external relationships with like-minded corporations and foundations to leverage what funds we do have.

Amy (chat): Agree with Anna's point; it's an important line to walk. We strive to strike a balance of soliciting from donors specifically focused on re-granting programs, especially for individual artists. We can be their "arts portfolio" in a way that has been compelling to them.

Kristin (chat): Same in Montana. There are also few large foundation funders in our region. Interesting...yesterday our ED met with the Governor and was challenged to fundraise \$1.5 million in the next year.

David (chat): **Do folx have relationships with their state lotteries? We just had a conversation with ours yesterday.**

André (chat): Hoosier Lottery reached out to us to help them with a “Corporate Social Responsibility Sponsorship Program” <https://hoosierlottery.com/corporate-social-responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility-sponsorship-progra/>. We help them identify larger arts organizations/events that are targeting 18+ over patrons. Unfortunately, it didn’t help the IAC directly, but is an opportunity of funding for our grantees

Margaret: Suggests befriending the legislature. Some of their revenue sources are associated with passed legislation. Examples are the sports arena tax and 1% for the arts. Encourages reaching out to legislature or state arts advocacy organizations where lobbyists are there and do the work. If you do receive those new funds, ensure they are designated with measurables.

Sylvia: **Chandra, you’ve listed many examples of how you’ve partnered with other agencies. Are there one or two that were particularly successful?**

Chandra: Some of them mentioned have not had a sustainable method to keep them going, for example their relationship with Veteran Affairs. It was strong when we had a champion at the agency, but now the legislature is in the process of dismantling it. You must diversify and find other opportunities.

Kristin (chat): I strongly recommend you all reflect and document whatever happens or lessons learned. Create a personal one-page document about it for each fiscal year.

José: **Can you go around an advocacy group that is not really working to create your own Friends of the Arts organization or similar? How has that worked for you?**

Christy: Had an advocacy group that just couldn’t manage staff or tasks, and they transferred the advocacy role to their Business for the Arts organization.

José: **How does the Business for the Arts differ from an organization that would be a Friends of the Arts? Why is it specifically Business for the Arts?**

Christy: They were an existing non-profit and it made sense because they already advocate to the business community. They don’t fundraise like a typical Friends of the Arts would.

Jocelyn (chat): We haven’t had an advocacy group in Idaho for many years but recently, a new 501c3 was established. We are very concerned about them working against our interests as they are based in our biggest city, Boise, and represent a more liberal sensibility which is in opposition to our state government politics.

Natalie: Another thing to consider is that Creative West will fund the advocacy organizations for states directly. So, check-in with them. Unsure of the other regional arts organizations' processes.

Christy: Creative West for the first time is having all the advocacy organizations and state arts agencies convene together.

José will be at this convening and will share a report out.

**Natalie: How do you approach fundraising without taking away from the organizations you fund? How do you navigate that?**

Anna: They've partnered with other state agencies. They'll be signs from these agencies that they need help spending money on things, and they'll bring ideas to align their goals to be successful. Part of it is demonstrating what things you can do. Also, looping people in to invest in this "cool" thing we've got traction on and then sharing measurables, successes and what a little funding can do.

André: Working to get a partnership with AARP because they have funding available. Say: "You have target areas, can you provide some of that funding, and we can make sure that there's programming happening in those target areas of the state that you want to reach?"

David: Met with Mid-Atlantic states last spring to talk about what they can do to leverage corporations. The approach being: "If you fund a program across these states, you can also amplify your name and brand across all ten."

**José: When you approach a business, do you have a list or menu of things they could be interested in funding? And then let them decide?**

Natalie: Has done that in previous development work, but not at UA&M.

David: They have not but have been scheduling informal interviews to get a sense of how they'd like to intersect and share what the arts community does. Essentially creating a compelling value proposition to pique their interest.

Anna (chat): As David is stating, an intro chat to begin the relationship by finding out their interests and then tailoring an ask to the party we are approaching based on what we think they would be interested in.

Natalie: When you're creating that kind of menu, consider the mission, where the organizations spend their money, what they've demonstrated interest in before and cater your menu to consider who's eating or who might want to.

## Wrap Up

The next virtual peer group meetings will be **June 18** at 2:30 pm ET, August **20** at 1:00 pm ET, and **December 2** at 2:30 pm ET. The peer group will also meet in person on **October 8** during Assembly 2026 in Washington, D.C.

NASAA reopened the poll seeking input from all DDs regarding future sessions. Please [fill it out](#) if you haven't already.

André will be helping to organize our Zooms, and with David will be helping set the agenda for the DD session in October at Assembly. If you're interested in being part of the Assembly planning committee, please let Sylvia know.

Thanks everyone for being here today.