

NASAA Deputy Directors Meeting Summary – April 8, 2026

Prepared by NASAA's Amari Starks, drafted with AI assistance

Overview

Deputy Directors began with general updates and peer exchange, sharing current initiatives, partnerships, and challenges across their agencies. The conversation then transitioned into a facilitated discussion led by José Herrera (DD-AZ), focusing on funding opportunities for state arts agencies beyond legislative appropriations.

State Arts Agency Updates & Peer Highlights

Participants shared brief updates reflecting a mix of budget outcomes, program developments, and agency operations.

Several agencies reported positive or stable budget news, including funding restorations, flat budgets with minimal cuts, or new targeted investments (e.g., arts & health initiatives). Others noted that “no news” or unchanged funding was considered a favorable outcome in the current environment. Some agencies are still awaiting final legislative approval for FY2027.

Operational updates included facility stability (e.g., retaining office space), major event partnerships (Indiana’s cultural activities tied to March Madness), and internal program redesigns.

Also included were comments welcoming new members and reinforcing the value of peer exchange, with participants expressing interest in sharing resources and learning from one another’s approaches.

Focused Discussion: Funding Strategies & Partnerships

The conversation transitioned into a deeper, facilitated discussion on funding diversification and partnership strategies, led by José Herrera.

Key framing questions included:

- How are agencies diversifying funding sources?
- What models exist for engaging corporate or private partners?
- Are there effective ways to present funding opportunities (e.g., a “menu” of options)?

Key Discussion Highlights

Cross-Sector Partnerships

Agencies are actively building relationships with:

- Health departments (arts & health initiatives)
- Aging services and state libraries
- Tourism and commerce agencies
- Veterans Affairs and education departments

Success factors include:

- Identifying “champions” within partner agencies
- Aligning arts work with partner agency priorities and language
- Demonstrating how the arts contribute to broader policy goals

Corporate Engagement & Value Proposition

- Strategies discussed:
 - Framing partnerships around return on investment (ROI)
 - Leveraging multi-state or regional collaborations through RAOs
 - Conducting informational interviews with corporate leaders to identify alignment
- Participants emphasized expanding understanding of the arts beyond traditional outputs to include:
 - Workforce and skills development
 - Inclusive education environments
 - Community and social impact

“Menu of Opportunities” Approach

The group explored the idea of developing a customizable “menu” of funding opportunities for partners.

- Best practices include:
 - Aligning opportunities with a funder’s mission and giving history
 - Presenting clearly defined investment options tied to outcomes
 - Highlighting visibility and engagement benefits

Participants noted the importance of tailoring proposals to each prospective partner.

Funding Constraints & Structural Realities

Participants highlighted common structural limitations and challenges:

- Many state arts agencies:
 - Can accept donations but cannot solicit them, limiting fundraising capacity
- Additional challenges include:
 - Risk of “poaching” funding from SAA grantee organizations
- Alternative funding mechanisms discussed:

- Specialty arts license plates
- State lottery partnerships

Messaging, Advocacy & Positioning

Participants emphasized the importance of positioning the arts as essential to broader societal goals.

- Effective strategies include:
 - Aligning messaging with partner priorities (health, education, economy)
 - Demonstrating impact through data and storytelling
 - Identifying agency-level champions

Additional Insights

- Major events can present opportunities for arts integration and partnership development
- Documentation of partnership efforts was recommended

Looking Ahead

- Strong interest in continuing this conversation in future meetings
- NASAA will share resources, gather input, and support future convenings

Links Shared in Chat

- Indiana License Plate Program Overview:
<https://www.in.gov/bmv/registration-plates/license-plates-overview/license-plate-designs/>
- NASAA Specialty Arts License Plates Resource:
https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/specialty-arts-license-plates/
- Colorado Business Committee for the Arts:
<https://cbca.org/>
- Hoosier Lottery Corporate Social Responsibility Sponsorship Program:
<https://hoosierlottery.com/corporate-social-responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility-sponsorship-progra/>

Indiana License Plate Data

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

- Nebraska Arts Council – Cultural Districts Legislative Report (shared via chat PDF)