



Hearts of Practice 2026 Convening Evaluation

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, convened Hearts of Practice: Promoting Statewide Strategies in the Arts and Health on February 12–13, 2026, in Washington, D.C. The convening served as the culminating event of a year-long Arts and Health Professional Learning Community (PLC), bringing together state and jurisdictional arts agency staff, regional arts organization leaders, federal partners, researchers, and health-sector colleagues to advance shared strategies at the intersection of the arts and health.

A total of 49 responses were received from 89 potential participants for an excellent survey response rate of 55%. State arts agency staff comprised the largest share of respondents, complemented by meaningful participation from regional arts organizations and a smaller cohort of cross-sector partners.

This report presents key findings from the evaluation, including overall ratings, session-level feedback, intended actions, and participant reflections, alongside a synthesis of open-ended responses to support ongoing learning and the design of future arts and health gatherings.

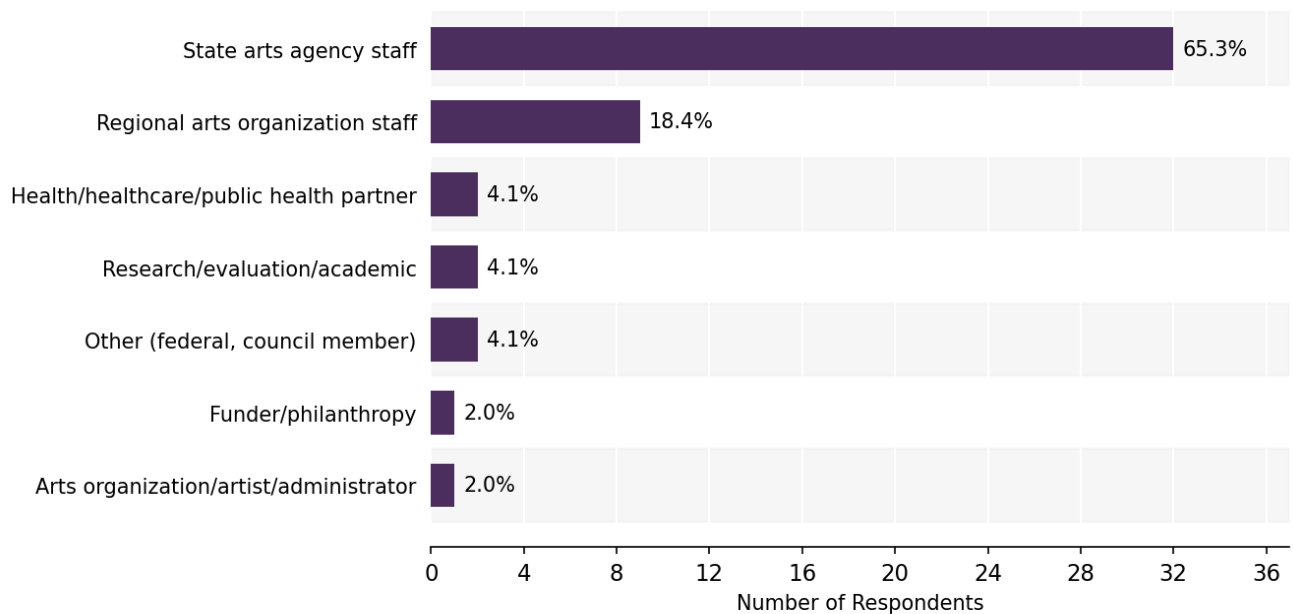
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About the Respondents

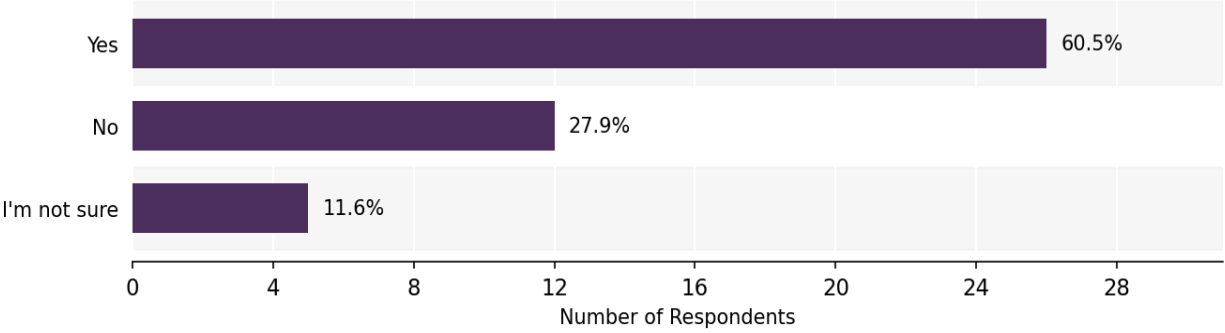
A total of 49 responses were received from 89 potential participants for an excellent survey response rate of 55%. State arts agency staff made up the clear majority of respondents at 65.3%, followed by regional arts organization staff at 18.4%. The remaining respondents represented a meaningful cross-section of partners such as, health/healthcare/public health colleagues, researchers and academics, federal and state council members, a funder, and practicing arts administrators.

Which best describes your role?



Roughly three in five respondents (60.5%) confirmed they had participated in one or more of the online meetings or webinars hosted as part of NASAA's Arts and Health Professional Learning Community over the previous nine months. About 28% indicated they had not participated, and 12% were unsure—a useful signal that some convening attendees came in fresh to the convening. One respondent noted candidly that they had been unaware of the PLC meetings prior to the in-person event, suggesting opportunities to strengthen onboarding and communications between the PLC's virtual and in-person touchpoints.

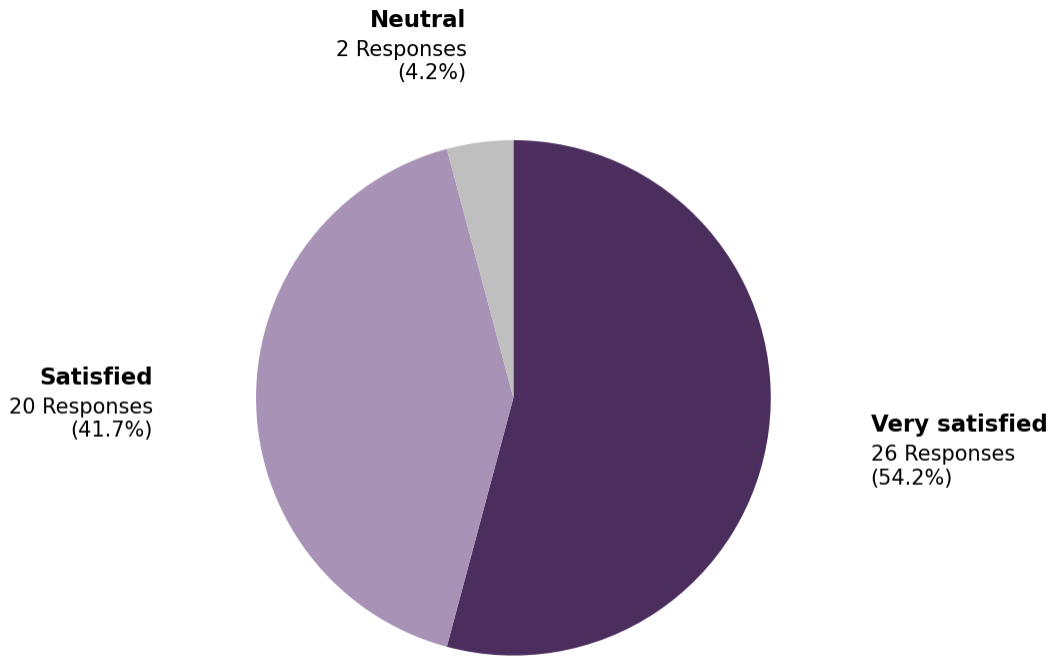
Did you participate in any of the online meetings or webinars as part of NASAA’s Arts & Health Professional Learning Community over the past nine months?



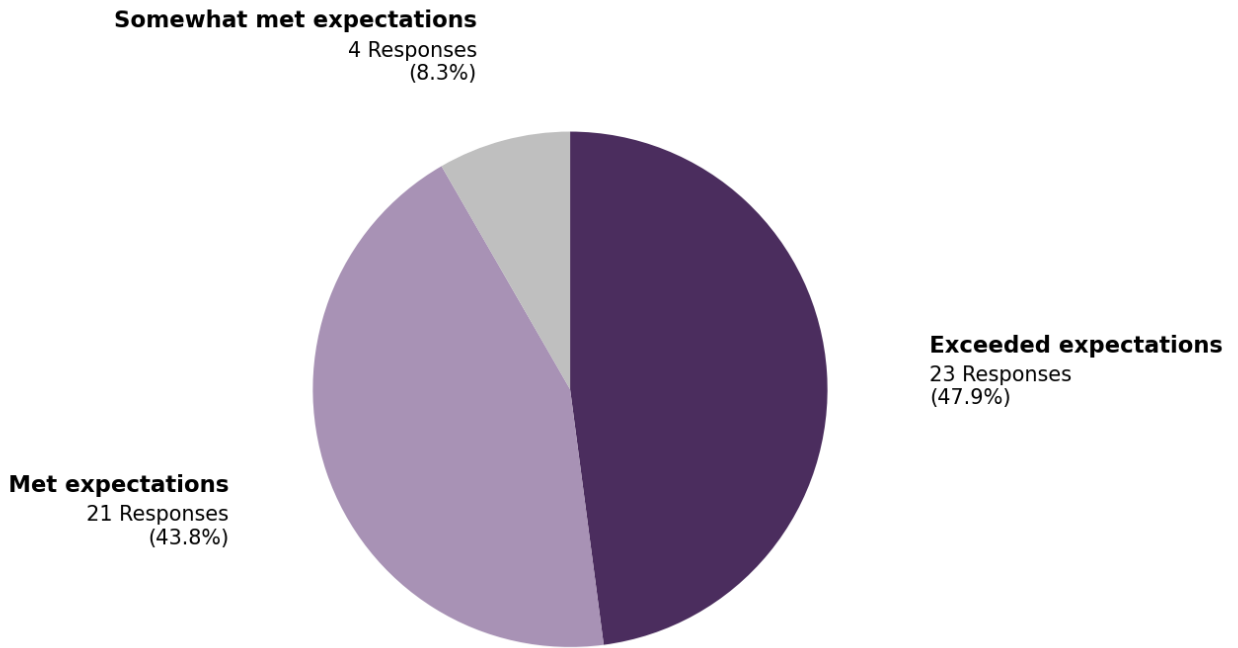
Overall Ratings for Hearts of Practice

Overall, Hearts of Practice was characterized as highly valuable. Nearly all respondents (95.9%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the convening, with a majority (54.2%) selecting the highest rating of "very satisfied." Only two respondents indicated a neutral response, and none were dissatisfied. Expectations were similarly met: 91.7% of respondents said the convening either met or exceeded their expectations, with 47.9% saying it exceeded them. These topline results suggest that the convening landed strongly with its intended audience and that the PLC’s yearlong arc culminated in an experience that participants found meaningful, timely, and worth the investment of travel and time away from their agencies.

Overall, how satisfied were you with Hearts of Practice?

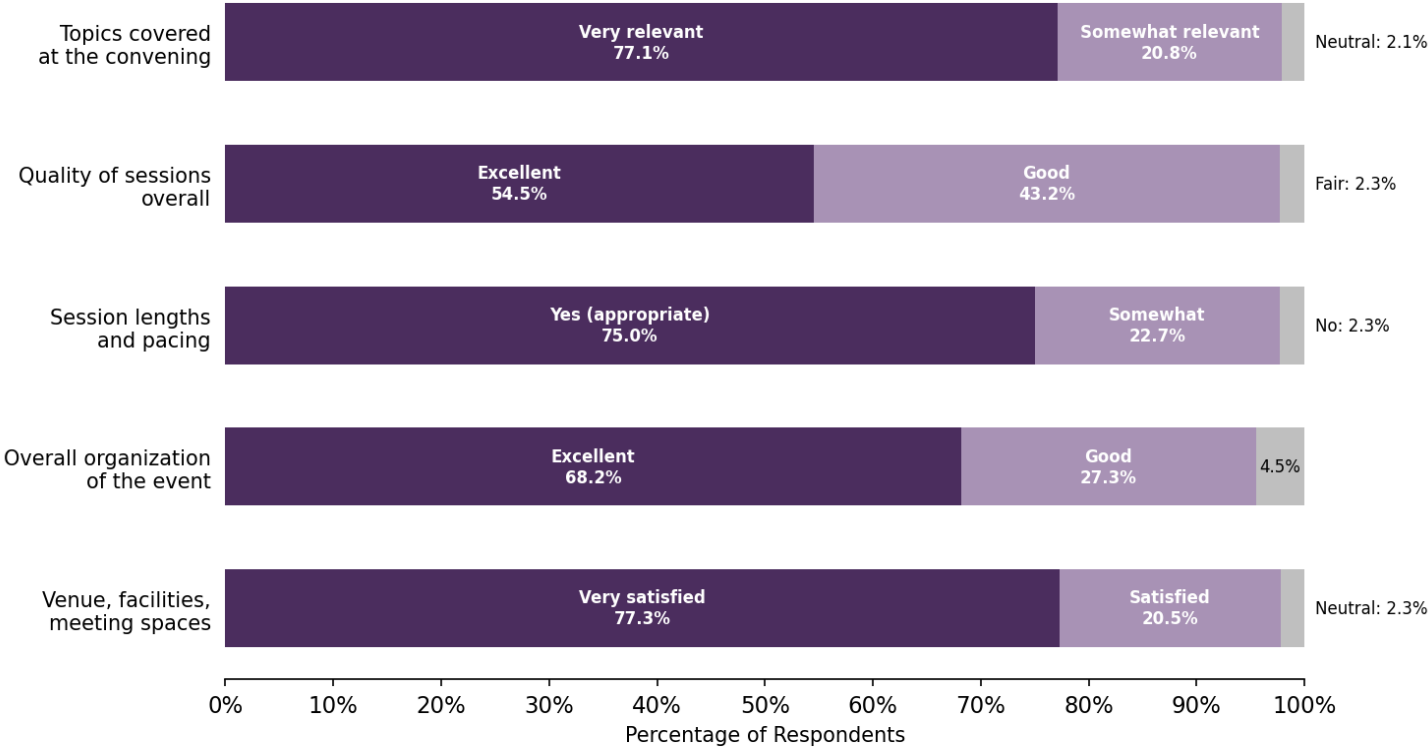


To what extent did the convening meet your expectations?



Beyond overall satisfaction, respondents also rated the substance and execution of the convening. Topic relevance was rated especially highly (77.1% "very relevant"), and 97.7% rated the quality of sessions overall as "good" or "excellent." Session pacing drew slightly more mixed feedback—75.0% answered that lengths and pacing were appropriate, and 22.7% said "somewhat." Open-ended comments indicate the most common pacing concern was that Thursday felt dense, with limited unstructured time between sessions. Logistical execution was a clear strength: the venue and meeting spaces drew "very satisfied" responses from 77.3% of respondents, and the overall organization of the event (registration, schedule, communication) received "excellent" marks from 68.2%.

Topic relevance, session quality, pacing, organization, and venue



Overall satisfaction by respondent type

(1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied)

Respondent type	Avg Rating	Number of Responses
State arts agency staff	4.4	31
Regional arts organization staff	4.7	9
Health/healthcare/public health partner	5.0	2
Research/evaluation/academic	5.0	2
Other (federal, council member)	4.5	2
Funder/philanthropy	5.0	1
Arts organization/artist/administrator	5.0	1
Total	4.5	48

Overall satisfaction by PLC participation

(1 = Very dissatisfied 5 = Very satisfied)

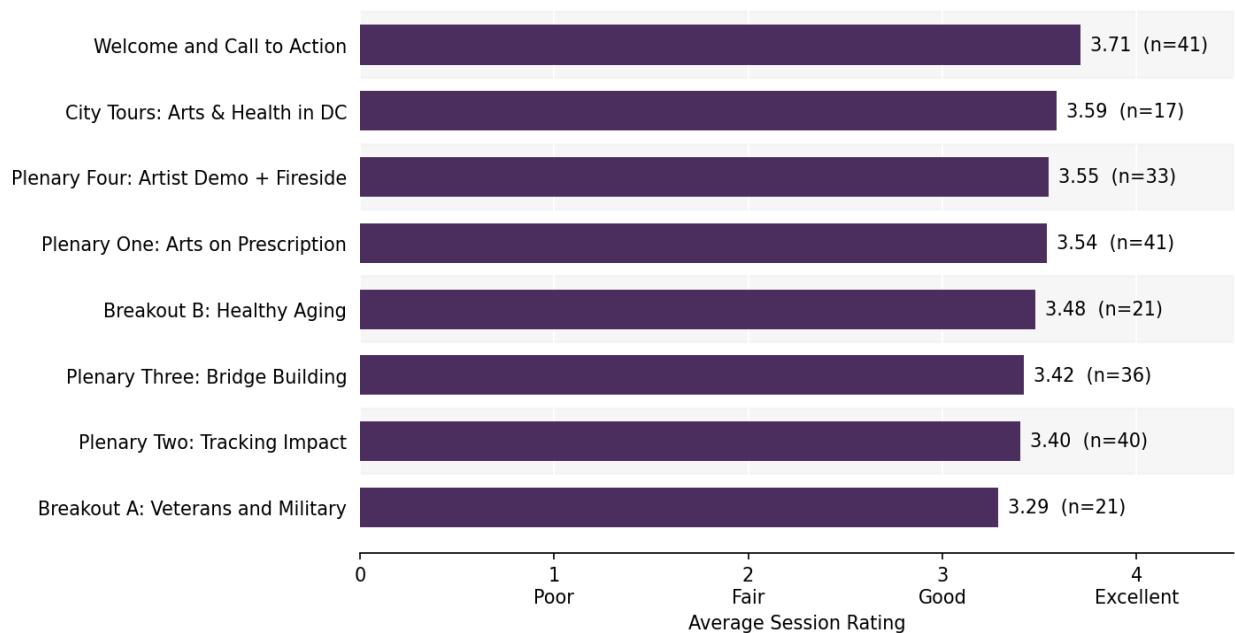
PLC participation	Avg Rating	Number of Responses
Yes	4.4	26
No	4.8	12
I'm not sure	4.8	5
Total	4.5	43

Average overall satisfaction was 4.5 on a five-point scale, with all subgroups falling at or above 4.4. Cross-sector partners and regional arts organization staff registered the highest average ratings, while state arts agency staff averaged 4.4. Respondents who had participated in the year's online PLC sessions and those who had not both rated the convening highly, with non-PLC participants registering slightly higher averages, possibly reflecting a fresh-eyes effect or differing baseline expectations.

Session-Level Feedback

Every session of the convening earned solid marks. On a four-point scale (1 = Poor, 4 = Excellent) and excluding "did not attend" responses, all eight sessions averaged between 3.29 and 3.71, indicating that respondents who attended a given session generally rated it between "good" and "excellent." The Welcome and Call to Action—featuring NASAA President Pam Breaux, NEA Chairman Mary Anne Carter, and a keynote from David Skorton, CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges—drew the strongest average rating (3.71). The Friday City Tours, Plenary Four (Artist Demonstration, Fireside Chat, and Next Steps), and Plenary One on Arts on Prescription followed closely behind, all averaging at or above 3.54.

Average session ratings



Open-ended comments on most-valuable sessions reinforced these patterns and surfaced themes that cut across the agenda. Plenary One on arts on prescription was repeatedly cited as practically useful—respondents from states without existing infrastructure noted that hearing how partners, roles, and financing fit together gave them a "socket" into which to plug their own next steps, including the early scaffolding of a logic model. Plenary Two on Tracking Impact, anchored by Dr. Tasha Golden, was singled out for reframing evaluation as inspiring rather than burdensome and for offering concrete tools and resources. The Friday City Tours, particularly the visit to the Smith Center for Healing and

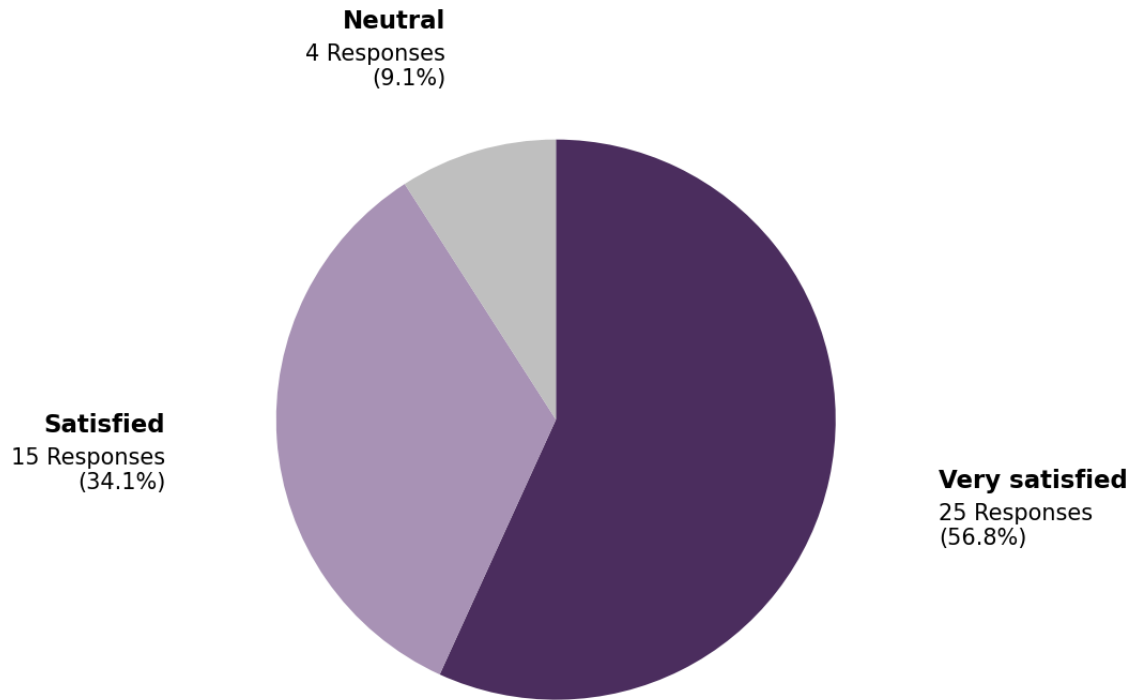
the Arts, generated positive feedback: participants described an experiential writing workshop that brought attendees to tears and modeled the kind of arts and wellness practice the convening was discussing. The Plenary Four artist demonstration by Life Pieces to Masterpieces was described as grounding, motivating, and a "perfect" closing element.

A smaller set of comments offered constructive critique. Several respondents noted that the convening relied heavily on a single learning format and would have benefited from greater variety in facilitation, more visual or printed materials to anchor learning, and more time for active, peer-driven work. A few participants observed that the social prescribing plenary at times felt close to a single-vendor showcase, and recommended emphasizing that arts on prescription can and does happen through many models.

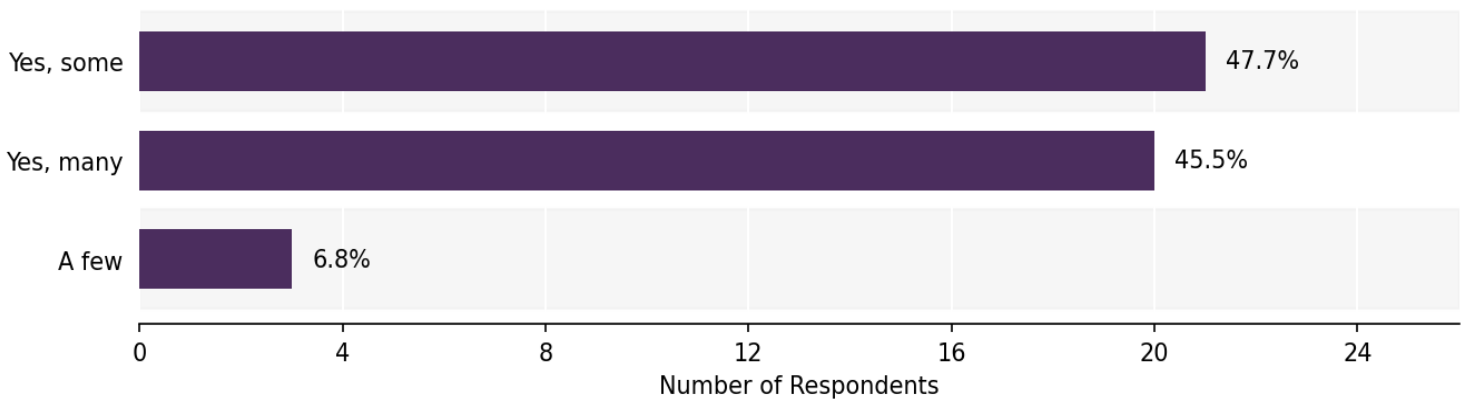
Networking and Peer Exchange

Peer connection emerged as one of the convening's strongest assets. Roughly 91% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with opportunities to connect with peers, and 93% indicated the event helped them build "some" or "many" useful professional connections. Open-ended responses reinforce the picture: participants described in-person time as the single most valuable element after a year of virtual PLC meetings, with several noting that hallway conversations, shared meals, and the intimacy of the Smith Center experience produced the kinds of relationships and insights that virtual convenings cannot reliably create.

How satisfied were you with opportunities to connect with peers?



Did the event help you build useful professional connections?



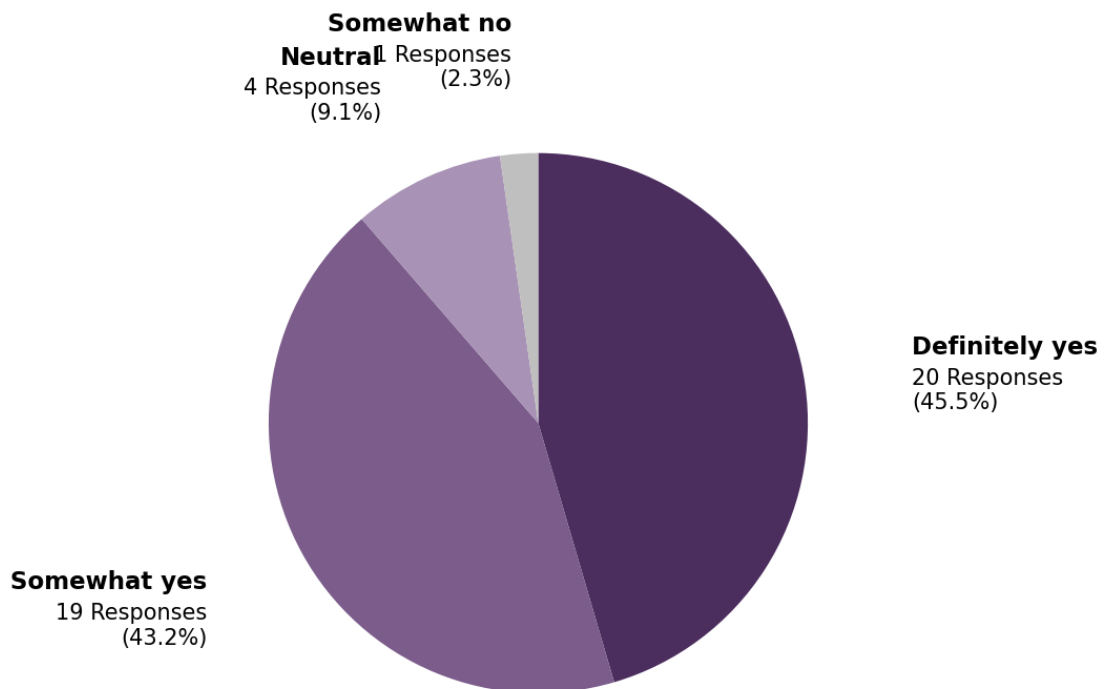
Respondents nonetheless offered a clear and consistent ask for future gatherings: more lightly structured time. Specific suggestions included topical affinity tables (creative aging, veterans, social prescribing, evaluation), structured peer matching for newer state arts agencies, rotating seating across breakouts, an attendee directory or "contact sheet,"

opportunities for table-level moderation with a notetaker, and small reflection groups embedded between plenary sessions. Several respondents from rural or smaller-staffed agencies asked specifically for peer exchanges that pair them with similarly-resourced colleagues rather than only with larger states. A handful of participants also recommended a longer overall format to accommodate both the depth of content and the connective tissue between sessions.

Equipping the Field: Actions and Next Steps

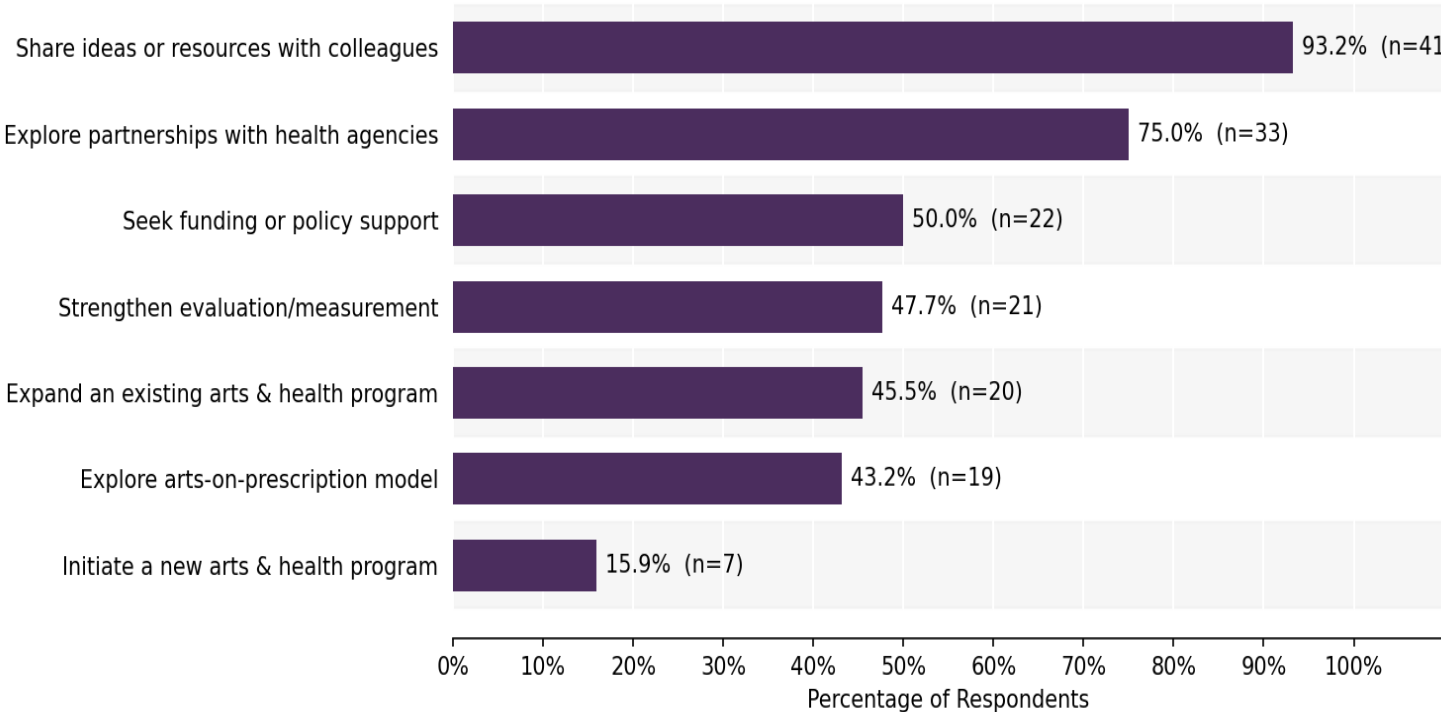
A central purpose of the convening was to leave participants better positioned to advance arts and health work in their states and regions. Respondents indicated that the convening met this aim: 88.6% reported feeling "definitely yes" or "somewhat yes" better equipped to support arts and health work after attending, with 45.5% selecting the highest response. Only one respondent answered "somewhat no."

Do you feel better equipped to support arts and health work after attending Hearts of Practice?



Asked what concrete actions they planned to take, respondents pointed first and most strongly to peer-facing follow-through: 93.2% intend to share ideas or resources with colleagues. Three quarters (75.0%) plan to explore partnerships with health agencies and organizations, and roughly half plan to seek funding or policy support (50.0%), strengthen evaluation and measurement (47.7%), expand an existing program (45.5%), or explore an arts-on-prescription model (43.2%). Sixteen percent intend to initiate a new arts and health program. Together these responses suggest the convening is most likely to translate into deepened cross-sector partnerships, stronger evaluation practice, and significant peer-to-peer transmission of what was learned.

What actions do you plan to take as a result of attending? (Select all that apply)



When asked what would most help them advance their agency’s arts and health work over the next twelve months, respondents converged on a consistent set of needs: continued peer learning opportunities and a sustained Arts and Health PLC; concrete tools and shareable assets (one-pagers, talking points, messaging frameworks, case studies, citation-backed bullet points on cost and impact); a curated directory of attendees and a national listserv; mentorship pairings between more and less experienced state arts agencies; an inventory or "resource map" of existing trainings and certifications relevant to arts in clinical settings; and continued attention to funding pathways—including how federal

funds reach the states and how to build sustainable partnerships when health-sector partners are stretched. Several respondents asked for more bite-sized, role-specific resources for staff who are not the lead on arts and health work but need a working understanding of it.

Feedback for NASAA and the Arts and Health PLC

Respondents expressed strong appreciation for NASAA's leadership of both the convening and the year-long Professional Learning Community, and were direct about wanting the work to continue. Many described the convening as one of the most affirming and useful professional gatherings they attended, and the most-requested forward-looking action across the open-ended responses was a clear ask: continue the PLC, and consider extending or deepening it.

When asked what arts and health topics NASAA should explore next, respondents identified several clear priorities. Cross-sector partnership-building was the most consistent theme, with specific interest in how to find and engage champions in insurance, healthcare systems, hospitals, primary care, addiction services, and government health agencies; how to develop MOUs and subcontracts with clinical providers; and how to build partnerships in rural areas where healthcare organizations are stretched. Implementation of arts-on-prescription models drew sustained interest, particularly the operational nuts and bolts and pathways for engaging insurers. Creative aging—including expanding diversity within creative aging programming and connecting with councils on aging—surfaced repeatedly. Other topics included arts and health for veterans (with attention to neuroinclusive practice and TBI/PTSD considerations), arts and mental health, addiction and recovery, youth wellness, and First Nations health. Across topic areas, respondents asked for deeper exploration of evaluation versus research, training and certification pathways for artists working in clinical settings (including motivational interviewing and trauma-informed care), funding models, and creative advocacy approaches that can engage legislators and local officials.

Respondents also offered structural suggestions for how NASAA might design the next phase of this work. Many called for more active, hands-on workshop formats—building state plans, code-switching across sectors, working sessions with deliverables—in contrast to a panel-heavy structure. Several asked for goal-oriented working groups that go beyond the connective function of NASAA's existing affinity groups, particularly for staff at smaller

agencies who do not have internal capacity to convene topic-specific working groups. Multiple respondents asked NASAA to bring representatives from the sectors arts agencies are seeking to work with—health, insurance, hospitals—directly into future convenings, so that conversations about cross-sector collaboration include the cross-sector partners themselves.

Closing comments captured a tone of gratitude, momentum, and clear appetite for what comes next. Respondents repeatedly thanked the NASAA team, the NEA, and Hearts of Practice colleagues for an experience that combined practical learning, inspiration, and the kind of in-person connection that anchors a community of practice. The clearest message in the evaluation, taken as a whole, is that the field is ready for the next chapter of NASAA and NEA's arts and health work.