



## NASAA 2025 Executive Forum Evaluation

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) convened the 2025 Executive Forum in Omaha, bringing together a highly focused group of state arts agency and regional arts organization leaders. The forum was composed of approximately 64% executive directors/directors and 36% serving as deputy or assistant directors, underscoring the event’s emphasis on strategic leadership and peer exchange.

To inform future planning, NASAA distributed an electronic evaluation to participants following the forum. A total of 54 survey responses were received out of a potential 87 non-staff participants allowing for an excellent survey response rate of 62%.

Respondents overwhelmingly represented senior leadership roles within state arts agencies, providing a strong foundation for insights related to leadership development, sector challenges, and strategic direction.

This report presents key findings from the evaluation, including overall ratings, major takeaways, and participant feedback, alongside a comprehensive summary of comments to support ongoing learning and future Executive Forum design.

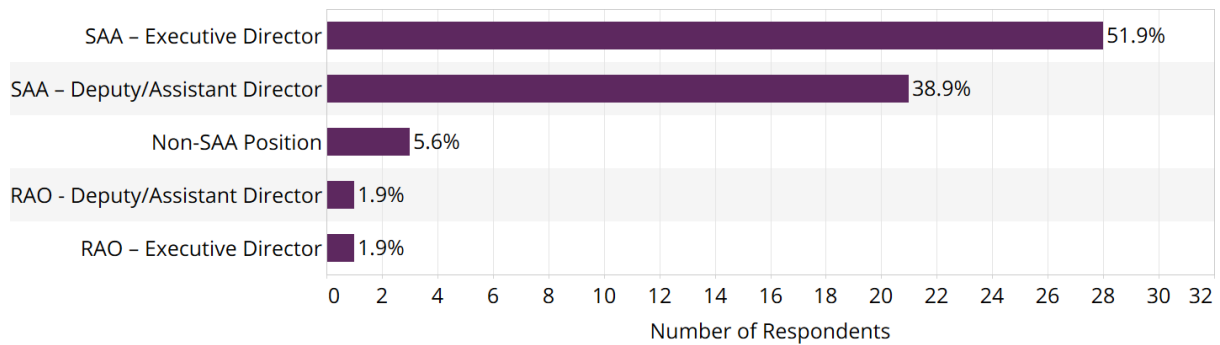
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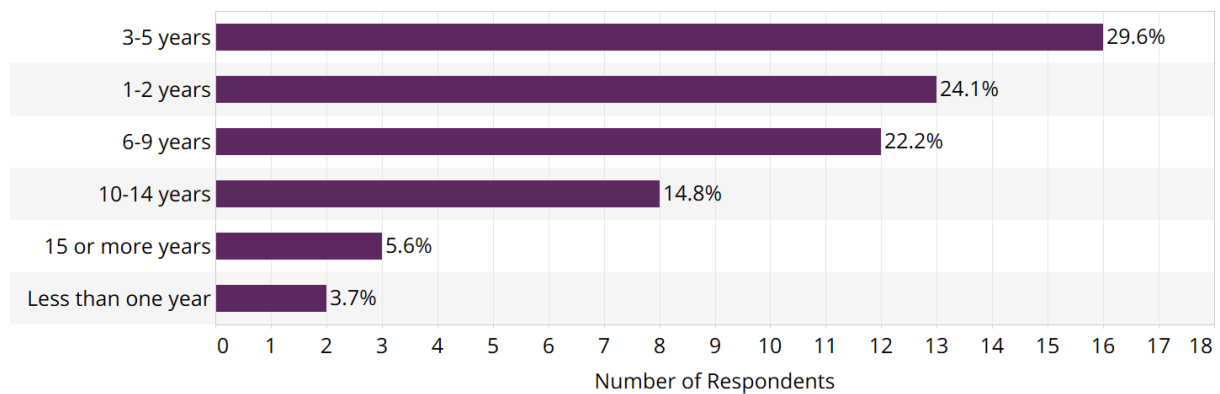
## About the Respondents

The respondent group consisted of 54 individuals with a response rate of 62%. Most respondents hold leadership roles within state arts agencies, with 51.9% serving as Executive Directors and 38.9% as Deputy or Assistant Directors, while only a small number represent regional arts organizations or other roles. In terms of experience, respondents are well distributed, though a majority have between 1 and 9 years in their current position, with the largest group (29.6%) reporting 3–5 years of service, indicating a mix of emerging and moderately experienced leadership within the field.

### What is your primary position? (Please select the one that best describes your position.)



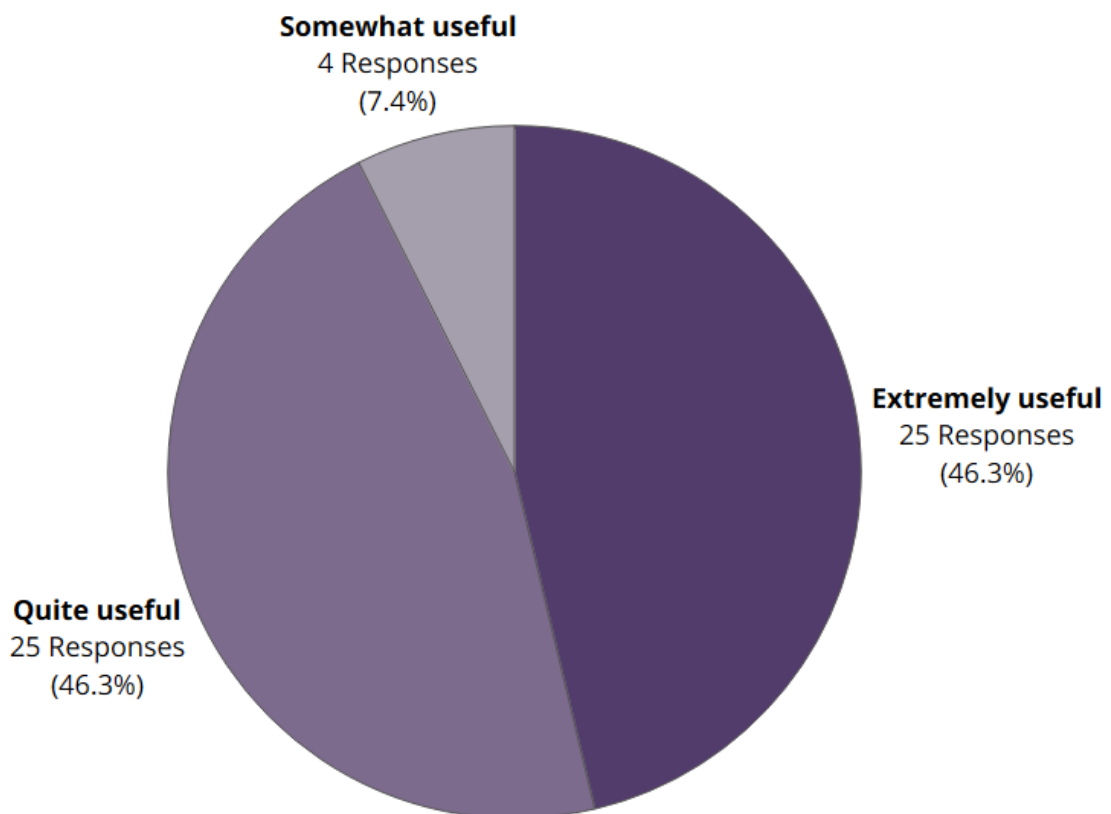
### How many years have you served in the above capacity? (Please select one)



## Overall Ratings for the 2025 Executive Forum

Overall, the Executive Forum was characterized as highly valuable, with most participants indicating strong satisfaction and rating it toward the upper end of the usefulness scale. Feedback trends show that both position and tenure had some influence on perception, but across groups the Forum consistently delivered meaningful insights, relevant discussions, and practical takeaways. Participants largely agreed that the meeting content was well-structured, engaging, and aligned with their professional needs, reinforcing its effectiveness as a leadership-focused gathering. Similarly, the Peer Session received positive evaluations, particularly among SAA Executive Directors and Deputy Directors, who rated it as a constructive and beneficial experience. The session was seen as fostering open dialogue, peer learning, and actionable exchange, contributing to its overall characterization as a worthwhile and impactful component of the event.

**Overall, how would you characterize the Executive Forum? (Please select one.)**



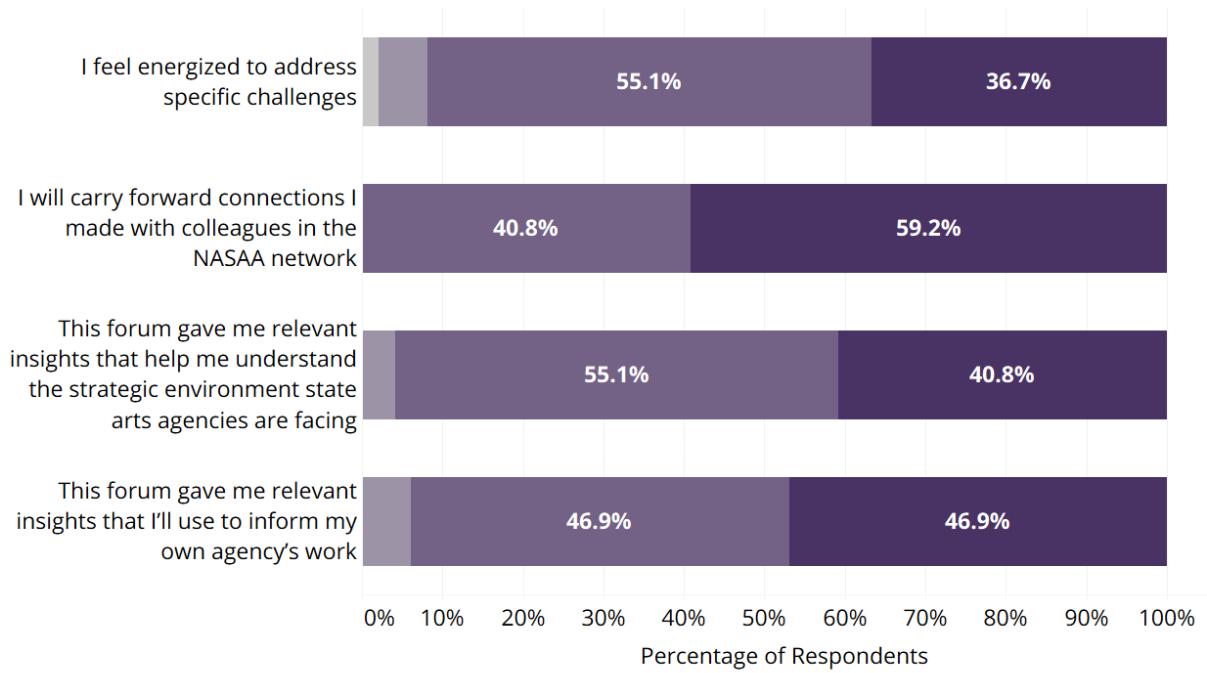
## Executive Forum ratings by position and tenure

(1 = Not useful 5 = Extremely useful)

What is your primary position?	Rating	Number of Responses
SAA – Executive Director	4.6	28
SAA – Deputy/Assistant Director	4.2	21
Non-State Arts Agency Position	4.0	3
RAO - Deputy/Assistant Director	4.0	1
RAO – Executive Director	4.0	1
Total	4.4	54

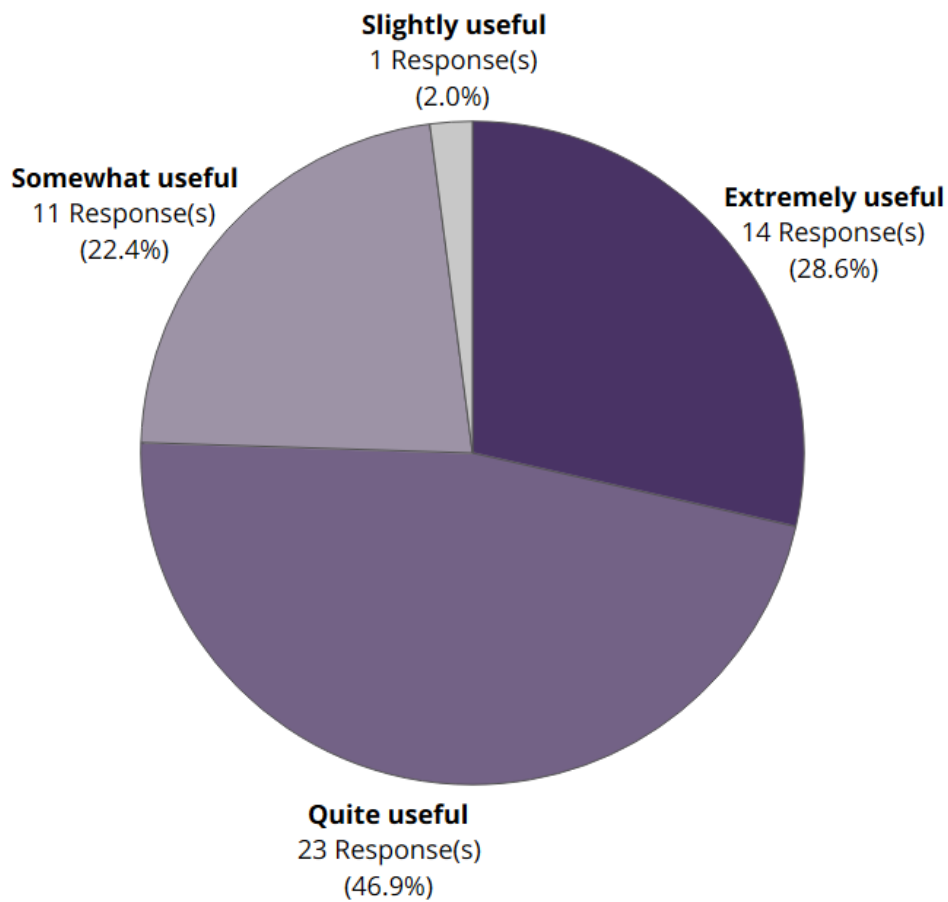
How many years have you served in the above capacity?	Rating	Number of Responses
1-2 years	4.7	13
6-9 years	4.5	12
Less than one year	4.5	2
3-5 years	4.4	16
15 or more years	4.0	3
10-14 years	3.9	8
Total	4.4	54

**Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements as they relate to this meeting.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

**Overall, how would you characterize the Peer Session you attended?  
(Please select one.)**



**Peer Session ratings by SAA Executive Directors and Deputy Directors**

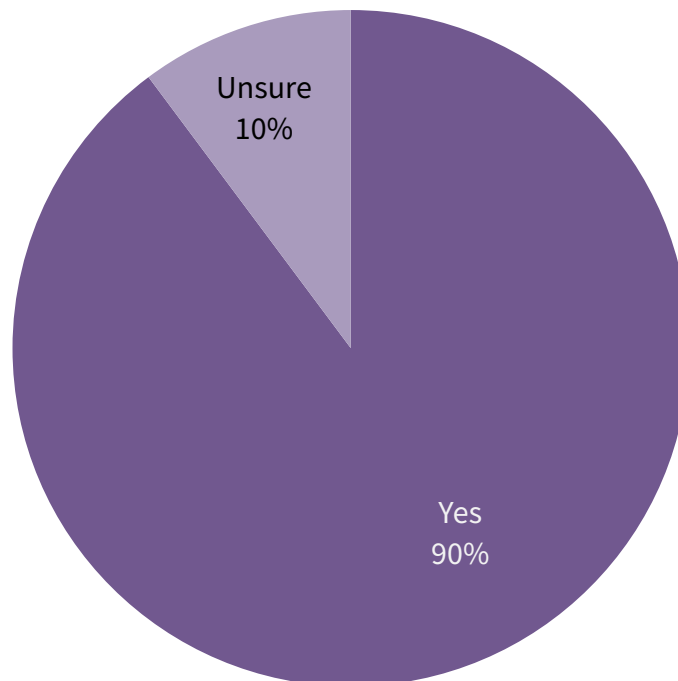
(1 = Not useful 5 = Extremely useful)

What is your primary position?	Rating	Number of Responses
SAA – Executive Director	4.3	28
SAA – Deputy/Assistant Director	3.6	21

## Takeaways from the 2025 Executive Forum

Respondents highlighted a wide range of practical and strategic takeaways from the forum, particularly in areas such as advocacy, partnerships, decision-making, and program development. Many emphasized the value of peer exchange—learning from other states, sharing common challenges, and building a trusted national network—as one of the most impactful aspects. Participants also reported increased confidence, renewed energy, and a stronger sense of purpose in navigating current challenges. This is reflected in overall sentiment, with nearly 90% indicating the forum will help strengthen their agency, citing both actionable ideas and the critical role of connection, support, and shared learning.

**NASAA’s mission is to strengthen state arts agencies. Do you feel that this forum will help you strengthen your agency?**



### What about this meeting could have been improved?

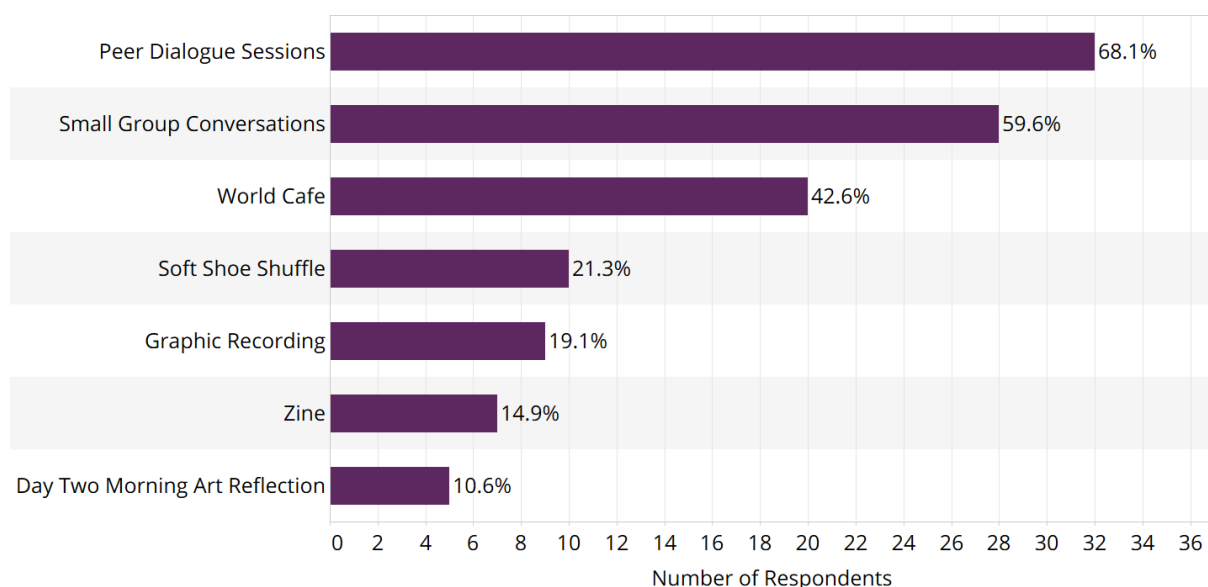
Feedback on areas for improvement was generally modest but highlighted several consistent themes: participants expressed a desire for less prescriptive facilitation and fewer icebreakers in favor of deeper, more sustained conversations and peer-driven discussions, with some noting that sessions could feel rushed or overly structured.

Many called for more balance in pacing, including additional downtime to reflect, more social or networking opportunities, and better integration of excursions and local experiences into the core schedule. Practical suggestions included providing clearer facilitation instructions in some sessions, offering more tangible takeaways (such as resource materials or participant lists), and improving logistics like room comfort, Wi-Fi, and availability of snacks. A number of respondents also recommended incorporating outside perspectives and ensuring content better reflects varying levels of experience, while overall sentiment remained positive, with most critiques focused on refining an already strong format.

## Forum Facilitation

Responses show a clear preference for interactive, conversation-driven formats, with Peer Dialogue Sessions (68.1%) and Small Group Conversations (59.6%) emerging as the most favored facilitation structures by a significant margin. World Café also resonated with a substantial portion of participants (42.6%), reinforcing the value placed on structured yet participatory dialogue. In contrast, more creative or reflective formats—such as Soft Shoe Shuffle (21.3%), Graphic Recording (19.1%), Zine (14.9%), and Day Two Morning Art Reflection (10.6%)—received more limited support. Overall, the pattern indicates that participants prioritized direct peer exchange and practical discussion over artistic or experimental activities, highlighting a strong preference for formats that maximize engagement, relevance, and real-time knowledge sharing.

### What was your favorite facilitation structure from this Executive Forum (Please check all that apply.)



## **Do you have any feedback for our facilitators?**

Feedback on the facilitators was overwhelmingly positive, with participants frequently describing them as thoughtful, well-prepared, creative, and effective at guiding meaningful conversations while maintaining a supportive, “zen” tone. Many appreciated the variety of engagement strategies, structured yet flexible approach, and responsiveness to participant input, noting that the sessions felt intentional and progressively well-designed. At the same time, some constructive feedback emerged: a desire for slightly more energy at times, clearer directions in certain sessions (especially peer discussions), and a better balance between activities and open dialogue, with a few participants feeling the experience was occasionally over-facilitated or included elements that felt less directly useful. Overall, facilitators were seen as highly skilled and impactful, with minor adjustments suggested to enhance clarity, pacing, and practical applicability.

## **Feedback for NASAA and the Executive Forum**

Respondents expressed strong appreciation for NASAA’s leadership, emphasizing the organization’s role as a trusted source of guidance, data, and connection in a complex and shifting environment. Key needs for the coming year include continued advocacy support, timely and transparent communications, stronger data and research, and more opportunities for peer exchange and cross-sector collaboration. Many also highlighted the importance of practical tools—such as messaging frameworks and policy guidance—to navigate emerging challenges. Overall feedback underscores the forum’s significant value, with participants describing it as energizing, affirming, and essential to their effectiveness as leaders, while reinforcing NASAA’s central role as a stabilizing and unifying force in the field.

## **What's something you need from NASAA in the next year?**

Responses highlight a strong desire for NASAA to continue serving as a steady, trusted source of guidance, connection, and advocacy in a time of uncertainty. Participants emphasized the need for clear, consistent messaging—particularly around federal developments and the NEA—alongside robust, up-to-date data to support decision-making and advocacy efforts. Many also called for expanded opportunities for peer connection, cross-sector collaboration, and access to external expertise on emerging issues like AI and demographic change. Practical requests included more advance planning information, resource sharing, and tools such as talking points and messaging guides. Underlying these needs is a clear appreciation for NASAA’s leadership and a

desire for continued support, transparency, and community-building to help agencies navigate evolving challenges.

### **What else would you like to communicate about your experience at the forum?**

Participants described the Executive Forum as a valuable, energizing, and deeply meaningful experience, with many calling it one of the most important professional gatherings they attend. Feedback consistently emphasized the strength of the community—highlighting a welcoming, supportive environment that fosters connection, validation, and renewed motivation, particularly for those who often feel isolated in their roles. Attendees praised NASAA staff for their thoughtful planning, effective facilitation, and ongoing commitment to the field, noting that the Forum provided both inspiration and practical learning while keeping participants fully engaged throughout. The opportunity for in-person connection, informal conversations, and shared problem-solving was especially valued, with many expressing gratitude, a desire for more frequent or longer gatherings, and strong enthusiasm for future forums.