

▲ A REPORT TO THE FIELD · 2026

Promoting Statewide Strategies in the Arts and Health

What 70+ state and jurisdictional arts agency (SAA) and regional arts organization (RAO) staff across more than 36 states learned about building durable arts and health infrastructure—and the partnership opportunity it opens.

70+

SAA & RAO STAFF
CONVENED IN A
YEAR-LONG PLC

36+

STATES & REGIONS
REPRESENTED
ACROSS THE WORK

6

PRIORITY
RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE NEXT PHASE

Promoting Statewide Strategies in the Arts and Health is the field's first cross-state synthesis of **how state arts agencies and regional arts organizations are building durable arts and health programs**—and what funders, health care partners and policymakers can do to accelerate the work.



▲ SECTION 1 · RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Arts infrastructure is health infrastructure.

The evidence base for the arts in health has matured across populations and disciplines. The integration of arts into health planning is gaining traction across federal agencies, state and local governments, and select health systems.

80%

higher unadjusted odds of healthy aging among U.S. adults over 50 who attend cultural events at least once a month.

BONE ET AL., 2023 · EPIARTS LAB

14–31%

lower mortality risk over 14 years among UK adults aged 50+ engaging with the arts, independent of demographic and health factors.

FANCOURT & STEPTOE, 2019 · BMJ

48%

lower odds of developing depression for older adults attending cultural venues monthly—a clear dose-response effect.

FANCOURT & TYMOSZUK, 2019 · BJPSYCH

"Access to the arts is the number-one way that we can impact health in our communities."

JILL SONKE · EPIARTS LAB · UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CENTER FOR ARTS IN MEDICINE

▲ SECTION 2 · THEMES

Five threads of state-led practice

01 ▲

ARTS ON PRESCRIPTION

SAAAs are building infrastructure for arts prescribing. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland and Wisconsin operate statewide programs.

02 ▲

HEALTHY AGING THROUGH THE ARTS

Many states have built capacity for sequential arts learning for older adults—backed by NASAA & E.A. Michelson Philanthropy investment.

03 ▲

VETERANS & MILITARY COMMUNITIES

The National Endowment for the Arts Creative Forces anchors a national infrastructure that state programs like ArtsWA's Wellness, Arts and the Military build on.

04 ▲

CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

SAAAs are forging institutional ties with health departments, hospitals, academic health centers and insurers.

05 ▲

RESEARCH, EVALUATION & CASE MAKING

Agencies are producing rigorous evidence and building communication capacity for sustained public investment.

▲ SECTION 3 · RECOMMENDATIONS

Six priorities for the next phase

Recommendations from the year-long PLC and the *Hearts of Practice* convening, organized roughly from infrastructure building to policy advocacy.

01 BUILD THE ARTIST WORKFORCE.

Across every theme, the availability of trained teaching artists in health settings was a limiting factor. SAAs can build credentialed local rosters, fund health care-specific training and connect practitioners with national networks. Vermont's training of 50+ teaching artists in four years offers a replicable model.

02 DEVELOP SHARED METRICS & EVALUATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

The field needs shared outcome measures so programs across states can contribute to a common, policy-credible evidence base. Indiana's Lifelong Arts research, Minnesota's evaluation toolkits and New Jersey Performing Arts Center's iterative design offer instructive approaches.

03 SUSTAIN & DIVERSIFY REVENUE.

Grant funding is a catalyst, not a permanent base. Mass Cultural Council's CultureRx-with-insurers and Pennsylvania's Music Therapy Collaborative with the Hospital Association demonstrate the path from grants to health care payment systems.

04 BUILD COLLABORATIONS WITH ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTERS.

Nearly every state hosts an academic health center positioned to partner on research, training and clinical implementation. The American Association of Medical Colleges also sees this as a priority.

05 EXPAND ACCESS TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES.

Cultural humility, community codesign and partnerships with community based organizations are not add-ons. They are prerequisites for programs that expand access rather than replicate existing barriers.

06 ADVANCE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE INVESTMENT.

The nonpartisan appeal of arts and health programming—documented across veterans services, creative aging and substance use recovery—creates legislative opportunity. As more SAAs develop strong programs with compelling outcome data, the conditions for investments improve.

▲ SECTION 4 · HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Built to be put to work

The full report, **A Guide to Promoting Statewide Strategies in the Arts and Health**, is designed as a working document, with three pathways showing the most direct ways to use it.

▲ FOR

STATE ARTS AGENCIES & REGIONAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

- ▲ Use the state agency highlights to identify peer programs to learn from in each thematic area.
- ▲ Adapt the recommendations as a planning framework for staff, board or strategic discussions.
- ▲ Cite the recommendations and evidence base in proposals to state legislatures, governors' offices and state health agencies.
- ▲ Use the cross-sector partnership models to approach state departments of health, hospital associations and aging services partners.

▲ FOR

FUNDERS & PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

- ▲ Identify high-leverage investment areas. Workforce development, evaluation infrastructure, payment-system pathways and academic partnerships are fieldwide priorities.
- ▲ Use the state level case studies to assess geographic strategy, replication potential and existing public-sector co-investment.
- ▲ Connect with NASAA to coordinate funder strategy across states and align with federal partners.

▲ FOR

HEALTH CARE PARTNERS & PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES

- ▲ Engage the state arts agency in your state as a partner with a statutory mandate, statewide reach and grant-making infrastructure.
- ▲ Adapt the arts on prescription, creative aging and veterans models to your patient populations and clinical contexts.
- ▲ Use the evidence base and clinical research models to make the case for arts and health work within your institution and to payers.

AN INVITATION TO PARTNER

State arts agencies and regional arts organizations have public mandates, statewide reach, cross-sector relationships, grant-making capacity and an understanding of how cultural participation strengthens community life. NASAA welcomes collaborations with funders, health systems, academic researchers and policy partners ready to translate evidence into infrastructure.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES

1100 H Street NW, Suite 640
Washington, D.C. 20005-5538

Ryan Stubbs
Chief Program and Strategy Officer

nasaa-arts.org/research/arts-and-health