

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Action Plan Highlights: Fiscal Year 2017 Midyear Report

October 2016 – April 2017

Organized around NASAA's [strategic plan](#), this document highlights key activities and accomplishments during the 2017 membership year to date.

Goal 1: Develop resources, relationships and public policies that advance state arts agencies.

1A. Represent state arts agency interests to federal decision makers.

- *New in '17* NASAA mapped our inroads to **presidential transition teams**, identifying key messages and messengers to convey the importance of the arts to the new administration. With the assistance of the Indiana Arts Commission, NASAA communicated quickly with **Vice President Mike Pence**. We also secured a face-to-face meeting with **First Lady Karen Pence** to renew her understanding of state arts agencies and to supply information relevant to her chief area of interest, the arts and health care.
- NASAA made contact with the **House and Senate appropriations subcommittees** overseeing National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) appropriations. We underscored the importance of the arts, the accomplishments of the NEA and the crucial role played by the 40% set aside for states and regions.
- NASAA took a strategic approach to countering **threats to the NEA's future**:
 - Starting in the fall, NASAA prepared state arts agencies for a full continuum of policy scenarios through frequent [status reports](#) and phone/web briefings.
 - *New in '17* Immediately after the election, we issued [Three Simple Ways to Advocate for the Arts](#), urging state arts agency grantees and council members to begin laying the groundwork for effective advocacy efforts.
 - *New in '17* NASAA helped to convene the CEOs of 21 national arts service organizations in December and January. The meetings renewed strategic conversations about shared policy goals and affirmed the importance of coalition advocacy efforts through the Cultural Advocacy Group.
 - As the winter progressed, NASAA helped state arts agencies respond to media inquiries and constituent concerns, fielding scores of calls and providing talking points specifically designed to debunk misconceptions about government funding for the arts.
 - *New in '17* In February, NASAA released a trio of new advocacy tools to help state arts agencies and their constituents make the case for federal and state arts support: [Fact vs. Fiction: Government Arts Funding](#), [You Can Shape Policy](#) and [Five Essential Arts Arguments](#). We also propagated succinct, shareable advocacy messages through NASAA's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.
 - *New in '17* In March, when the White House proposed eliminating the NEA for FY2018, NASAA moved swiftly to engage congressional decision makers and [mobilize member advocacy](#). We proactively conveyed [NASAA's position](#) to Congress, the media and the arts community. We also strategically recruited influential individuals to carry our message to key appropriators.

New in '17

- Following the President's proposed midyear [cuts to the NEA budget for FY2017](#), NASAA clarified the impact of the proposal on state arts agencies and activated another wave of advocacy to [oppose the reductions](#).

New in '17

- NASAA worked across party and sector lines to broaden the base of support for the arts. We made contact with key thought leaders in the policy and philanthropy realms, gathering allies who may help us reframe public-sector debates about the future of the arts.

New in '17

- NASAA met regularly with senior **NEA leadership**. We developed a productive working relationship with the **White House representatives** assigned to the NEA and supplied information on the state-federal partnership and top issues of concern to states.
- As a cosponsor of national **Arts Advocacy Day**, NASAA played an active role in developing consensus policy positions and leading training sessions for attendees. We also participated in **WESTAF's annual advocacy summit** in Washington, providing briefings, data and talking points to advocates from 13 western states.
- [Federal Updates](#) from NASAA provided **timely policy information** for state arts agencies. Regular Legislative Alert e-mails notified members about congressional actions affecting state arts agencies and their constituents.

1B. Foster support for state arts agencies among key policy audiences.

New in '17

- NASAA established a relationship with the [Rural Policy Research Institute](#) (RUPRI), the nation's leading source of policy expertise and information on **rural economic development**. Together, NASAA and RUPRI began discussing opportunities to embed creative placemaking in rural development policy at the state, regional and federal levels. NASAA participated in the [Next Generation Rural Creative Placemaking Summit](#) in Iowa in October.
- CEO Pam Breaux joined representatives from RUPRI and the **U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Agency** to support [The Art of Community: Rural SC](#) initiative of the South Carolina Arts Commission.
- NASAA joined representatives from RUPRI, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of Development Organizations and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in a working group to advise the **Delta Regional Authority** board of directors on a new creative placemaking initiative. The initiative will provide training and funding in support of creative placemaking in states within the Mississippi Delta region.
- NASAA played a leadership role in the **Arts Education Partnership** (AEP), operated by the [Education Commission of the States](#). AEP is helping states ensure that the [arts are part of new education plans](#) being developed by states in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- NASAA managed the [National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards](#) for the **President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities**, recognizing outstanding after-school creative youth development programs. A stirring White House event celebrated [12 U.S. awardees](#) for 2016 and included an [International Spotlight](#) award for creative youth development efforts in Cuba.

1C. Strengthen the advocacy practices of state arts agencies.

- NASAA expanded our **Practical Advocate** series and streamlined the [Advocacy Tools](#) section on our website.
- NASAA's **state legislative tracking system** pinpoints bills affecting state arts agencies, their resources or their constituents. To date, NASAA has monitored 114 arts related bills

introduced during states' 2017 legislative sessions. We initiate contact with states facing significant legislation to provide technical assistance and policy guidance and to synchronize our work with the media.

- NASAA provides **hands-on support during advocacy crises** occurring at the state level. So far this year we have provided in-depth assistance to two states facing major legislative threats (due to severe budget reductions and restructuring). We briefed agency leaders on issues, provided tactical advocacy advice, offered comparative data, drafted talking points and supported positive communications efforts. NASAA is strictly guided by our members in this work, avoiding the imposition of a D.C. agenda on state level decisions.
- NASAA connected regularly with **state arts advocacy organizations**. NASAA distributed funding and policy alerts and fulfilled numerous information requests from citizens' groups. NASAA also provided **on-site advocacy coaching** to citizen advocates in Connecticut, West Virginia and Nevada.
- NASAA participated in the **WESTAF symposium**, The Status and Future of State Arts Advocacy.
- To support state arts agencies' federal advocacy efforts, NASAA updated our annual [NEA Arts Investment Fact Sheets](#). Customized for all state arts agencies, these sheets distill key statistics and talking points about federal support for the arts and state arts agencies and show state and federal grant making by congressional district.

Goal 2: Increase the knowledge and skills that state arts agencies use to serve the public effectively.

2A. Maintain a comprehensive fact base about state arts agencies.

- NASAA provided authoritative data on **state arts agency budgets**. NASAA's [State Arts Agency Revenues, Fiscal Year 2017](#) report provided analysis of all revenue sources and included appropriations, state rankings, line items and trends over time.
- NASAA maintains comprehensive information on **state arts agency grant making**. Using the latest Final Descriptive Report data from all of the states, NASAA generated maps and statistical analyses showing the distribution and impact of more than 20,000 awards.
- We issued an overview of state arts agency **staffing trends**, highlighting findings from a 2016 survey of [state arts agency staffing and compensation](#).
- At the request of the NEA, NASAA produced **state fact sheets** summarizing the demographics of each state, jurisdiction and region. These sheets, which also include a succinct state and federal funding history for each agency, are used by NEA Partnership Agreement panels every January.

2B. Facilitate members' use of information for planning, decision making and case making.

- NASAA fulfilled 313 **information requests** in the first half of the year. Naturally, a high volume of these requests concentrated on federal funding uncertainty, but we also answered many questions about state arts agency programs, policies and operations. Most inquiries come from members. Nonmembers, including the NEA, advocacy groups, consultants and students also request information. Every inquiry received a customized response.
- In April we launched the new [Creative Work Force State Profiles](#), an on-line tool members can use to mine state level information on employment in the arts and culture sectors. Produced in cooperation with the NEA, the profiles draw from the U.S. Bureau of

New in '17

Economic Analysis Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account. The interactive dashboard allows users to explore arts jobs and compensation data along with key industry statistics and trends over time.

- NASAA's other **interactive data tools** help members use information in dynamic ways. We refreshed our [Per Capita Appropriations map](#), the [Per Capita Ranking Estimation Tool](#) and our [Appropriations Explorer](#). These tools are popular with members and advocates alike. NASAA also promoted our [Grant-Making Explorer](#). This interactive on-line tool graphs a decade of data on grant dollars awarded by state, discipline and type of grantee.
- Mississippi hired NASAA to conduct a **customized constituent survey**. NASAA designed and administered the survey to yield insights into the diverse needs of grantees, educators, artists and allied groups. The agency is using the results to inform its new strategic plan.

New in '17

2C. Provide analysis of current trends and key issues affecting state arts agencies.

- To help state arts agencies consider **alternative funding streams**, NASAA revised our [State Arts Agency Dedicated Revenue Strategies](#) report. This policy brief addresses funding secured from special taxes, gaming, license plates, tax checkoffs, bonds, cultural trusts and private contributions.
- Thoughtful **curation of research relevant to state arts agencies** is one of NASAA's trademark services. We shared research on diversity, equity and inclusion; state budget forecasts; the arts and medicine; and military partnerships, to name just a few topics of note.
- NASAA supplied state arts agency data to major **cultural research efforts** under way by other national organizations, including the American Alliance of Museums, the Brooklyn Academy of Arts, The Sustain Arts Project at the Foundation Center, the National Center for Arts Education at Southern Methodist University and Dance|USA. NASAA also collaborated with Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA) to publish an [article on government arts funding trends](#) and to present on GIA's annual [webinar](#) on public and private arts support.

2D. Deliver educational programs that strengthen members' knowledge and leadership skills.

- Nine members engaged NASAA to **lead sessions** at statewide conferences or **conduct briefings** via Skype or webinar. Topics included arts funding trends, fundraising, advocacy, cultural district development and mindfulness.
- NASAA **web seminars** engaged 221 participants from 42 states in sessions on Addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Innovations in Public-Sector Grant Making and After the Election. [Session resources](#) for all NASAA webinars are available on-line.
- The **NASAA 2017 Leadership Institute** will convene in Portland, Oregon, October 11-13. Hosted by the [Oregon Arts Commission](#), the institute will convene the top decision makers from state arts agencies for [two days](#) of leadership development sessions, networking opportunities and action learning excursions. This year's program will focus on building public will and crisis leadership skills.
- Site selection was completed for **NASAA Assembly 2018**. All state arts agency staff and council members are invited to Baltimore, Maryland, in fall 2018!

2E. Catalyze state arts agency innovation, evaluation, improvement and change.

- [State to State](#), a monthly column in the NASAA Notes newsletter, profiled 22 **innovative state arts agency initiatives**. Examples of recently featured programs include efforts in

Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio and Mississippi to [fund underserved counties](#); New Mexico's [arts and military convenings](#); Arizona's [Next 50](#) initiative and Colorado's [Music Strategy](#).

New in '17

- To support state arts agency consideration of **diversity, equity and inclusion in grant making**, NASAA developed a suite of analytic tools to help state arts agencies better understand which communities their funds are reaching. The tools help members to visualize the distribution of their awards by various demographic factors, including race/ethnicity, income, age and disability status. These tools, pilot tested with four states so far, will be made available to the entire membership this summer.

New in '17

- NASAA conducted a scan of **governor's arts awards programs**. A new [strategy sampler](#) describes how such programs are structured and ways that they can help state arts agencies attain a variety of policy and publicity goals. A related [bento box](#) features especially notable program design strategies.

New in '17

- NASAA advised the NEA, state arts agencies and Americans for the Arts on the expansion of the [Creative Forces: Military Healing Arts Network initiative](#).
- NASAA helped states comply with **new federal reporting requirements**, including the collection and use of details on activity locations and beneficiary groups.

Goal 3: Sustain a strong Assembly to support the work of state arts agencies now and in the future.

3A. Keep state arts agencies informed and connected with one another.

- NASAA welcomed many **new or interim executive directors** to the state arts agency network. Since October, we've welcomed new or interim executives in 10 states, nearly 20% of our membership. Each new leader receives onboarding consultation from NASAA. We also supply advice and information to councils undergoing transition.
- NASAA issued Report to Councils in [December](#) and [March](#). Specifically designed for **volunteer leaders**, this report offers highlights of NASAA activities and serves as a handy insert in council meeting materials.
- The [For Council Members](#) web page gives appointed state arts agency leaders **streamlined access** to a "short list" of pertinent NASAA resources.
- NASAA used our [Facebook](#) page to promote the good work of our members and share news of note with the state arts agency community. Especially popular items included our 2017 per capita arts funding map (garnering a total post reach of more than 10,600 people) and our advocacy alert on NEA elimination (with a total reach of more than 13,000 people). Help widen our network by liking our page yourself!
- Monthly issues of the [NASAA Notes newsletter](#) shared current news and resource alerts useful to state arts agencies and their constituents. [Past editions of NASAA Notes](#) and a comprehensive log of [recent NASAA communications](#) are available on-line.
- NASAA maintained **listservs** for executive directors, deputies, accessibility coordinators, public information officers, grants officers, arts education managers, community development managers and folk and traditional arts managers. Our membership community uses these listservs to share news and ask colleagues for advice.

3B. Engage state arts agencies in the work of the Assembly.

New in '17

- NASAA's Governance Committee is developing a new **policy on diversity, equity and inclusion** to guide NASAA's current and future work. The policy draws on extensive dialogue with the membership, and every state and jurisdiction was invited to weigh in on the draft.

- **Member participation** in other aspects of NASAA's work has been extensive: 53 member agencies were active as board or committee volunteers, event faculty, conference attendees, donors and/or information users.

3C. Develop and maintain the financial, human and operational capacities required to serve and advance state arts agencies.

New in '17

- NASAA is developing a fresh **strategic plan** to take effect in 2018, so outreach and drafting have been major undertakings in recent months. Highlights since October include:
 - establishing a [strategic planning hub](#) to solicit member input and make our efforts transparent to members
 - conducting a [longitudinal assessment of information requests](#) and a [benchmarking analysis](#) comparing NASAA to 41 other nonprofits
 - inviting state arts agency feedback and ideas through a [membership opinion poll](#) that garnered responses from nearly every state and jurisdiction
 - casting a wide net for diverse perspectives through [interviews](#) and [forums](#) that engaged advocates, regional arts organizations, arts thought leaders, donors, government associations, NASAA staff, and individuals in the business, rural development, education, health and philanthropy sectors

New in '17

- Our **comprehensive website overhaul** is another major area of emphasis. NASAA is redeveloping [nasaa-arts.org](#) to offer more intuitive user navigation, streamline our content, enliven our design and comply with industry best practices. The site will feature improved mobile compatibility and make back-end maintenance more efficient through a content management system.

- **Contributed support** for NASAA remains strong. Since October 1, NASAA has received \$25,075 in [donations](#) from 97 individuals, with gifts ranging in size from \$5 to \$5,000. NASAA has secured \$57,500 from foundations, corporations and the state of Oregon to support our 2017 Leadership Institute.

New in '17

- The Development Committee reviewed and endorsed NASAA's 2017 fundraising plan. This plan is grounded in the recommendations that came out of last year's committee work, which included an in-depth **analysis of NASAA's contributed income** from corporate, foundation and individual sources, as well as an extensive prospect-research project. Those findings are informing fundraising goals and tactics for 2017 as well as longer-term fundraising strategies connected to a new strategic plan.

- We **sustained core revenues** from federal cooperative agreements, our NEA National Services grant and member dues.

- NASAA's Audit Committee completed the search and selection of a new auditing firm and supervised a successful **annual independent audit** of our finances and internal controls.

- We implemented NASAA's **investment policy** guiding the management of our board-designated operating reserve.

- The Executive Committee and NASAA's attorney revised NASAA's **Employee Handbook**.

New in '17

- NASAA is **addressing staff transitions**: We hired a new development manager and currently are recruiting an operations manager and a special assistant to the CEO.

- NASAA conducted **evaluations** of [Assembly 2016](#), the 2016 Arts Education Professional Development Institute and our web seminars. We also analyzed metrics relating to our website, email open rates and Facebook engagement. We draw on these resources to inform annual action planning and ongoing performance improvement.