

Nebraska

Nebraska Arts Council
Anne Alston, Education and Communities Manager

General Information

Organization Mission Statement

The mission of the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) is to promote, cultivate and sustain the arts for the people of Nebraska.

Arts Education Mission Statement

Arts education is addressed in NAC's core beliefs: Education in the arts is basic to lifelong learning.

Arts Education Program Overview

Arts education historically has been a high priority for the Nebraska Arts Council and continues to be so. NAC serves a large state with vast rural areas as well as urban centers, many of which are encountering changing demographics and economic stresses. Additionally, the state is home to more than 300 school districts in which local control has traditionally been strongly valued. Despite these challenges, NAC has established ambitious goals for arts education. Measures of success as outlined in the agency's strategic plan are for an arts curriculum to be present in every Nebraska School district, for every Nebraska student to have access to a quality arts experience and for every Nebraska community to value lifelong learning opportunities in the arts.

To these ends, NAC partners with statewide education leadership, advocates for state curriculum standards in the arts, supports increased professional development opportunities for educators, and works toward expanding learning opportunities in community settings. In 2008, NAC participated in the Education Leadership Institute, where key stakeholders strategized about challenges such as strengthening state arts standards and restoring an arts supervisor position at the state Department of Education.

Advocacy for arts education is supported by strong ongoing relationships with Nebraskans for Arts, Nebraska's state university system and the state's major cultural organizations. Efforts to work with parent-teacher organizations, school district administrators, educational service unit administrators and professional educator organizations have helped to expand participation in the Artists in Schools/Communities (AiS/C) residency program. NAC also works to foster relationships between schools and cultural organizations.

A component of the AiS/C program supports company residencies for performing arts organizations working directly with schools. In recent years, NAC has increased funding and technical assistance to schools in economically disadvantaged communities by tying grant matches to free and reduced-lunch statistics, and by partnering with granting foundations whose funds are directed toward low-income schools.

Grant Programs

Types of Arts Education Grant Programs

- residency program
- in-school arts education
- out-of-school-time arts education
- arts education program/project support for arts organizations

Groups Eligible for Grant Programs

- pre-K centers
- public schools
- private/nonparochial schools
- private/parochial schools
- regional/local arts agencies
- arts organizations
- non-arts organizations
- arts education alliance or similar statewide organization
- Home school groups may be eligible if they obtain 501(c)(3) nonprofit status or if they apply through a qualified fiscal agent.

Total Number of Arts Education Grants Awarded in Most Recent Fiscal Year

161 grants

Total Dollar Value of Arts Education Grants Awarded in Most Recent Fiscal Year

\$ 204,698

Additional Comments on Arts Education Grant Programs

Most of NAC's education related grants are open to proposals involving lifelong learning, pre-K, or out-of-school (community based) arts education. However there are not specific categories for these areas.

Major Initiatives & Partnerships

ArtsReach

In partnerships with the Lied Center for Performing Arts, Nebraskans for the Arts and the Nebraska Department of Education, this program serves majority-minority school districts in Nebraska. This program focuses on arts integration in schools. The mission of ArtsReach is to create a model program that empowers teachers, inspires learning and enables schools to successfully meet unique challenges.

Building Bright Futures

The Nebraska Arts Council has served as a consultant for Building Bright Futures, an Omaha based initiative intended to expand education, health care and career opportunities for children. NAC has surveyed area arts organizations and convened with arts education representatives from them. NAC has submitted proposals to Building Bright Futures based on feedback from many organizations and its own available resources.

Teammates

The Nebraska Arts Council has worked closely with Teammates, a youth mentoring program with affiliates in schools throughout the state, to develop arts related programming and to help identify teaching artists who can develop and carry out activities.

Prairie Visions

NAC partners with the Center for Innovation in Arts Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in this statewide program. It links resources of arts organizations, museum and higher education facilities with educators, art specialists and teaching artists. Its central purpose has been to work with teachers and administrators to make comprehensive arts education integral in Nebraska schools' curricula.

Artist Residency Program

Artist residency program is administered by the state arts agency office.

- Mandatory orientation is provided for artists.
- Optional training is provided for artists.
- Entities other than schools may apply to sponsor a residency.

Fee Structure for Teaching Artists

- \$180 per day
- There can be additional compensation outside of the fee structure. A travel per diem of \$50/day may apply. Sponsors are responsible for lodging when it is needed for a residency.

Additional Comments on Residency Program

NAC's Artists in Schools/Communities Program is one of the agency's best known and most popular granting programs. Residency proposals come from a wide array of schools and community organizations in some of the most rural areas of the state, as well as from more urban areas. A significant enhancement to the program in recent years has been to tie the grant match for school based residencies to free and reduced lunch statistics, increasing funding to schools in economically disadvantaged communities. The program also benefits from a selective application process for teaching artists and additional professional development opportunities that are available to the 85 artists on the roster.

Teaching Artist Roster Program

Teaching Artist Roster Basics:

- Out-of-state artists may apply for artist roster.
- A panel is used to select roster artists.
- Applications for roster are reviewed once per year.
- To retain eligibility, artists must reapply. (Check with the agency for details.)

Additional Comments on Teaching Artist Roster

Artists who remain active and obtain consistently favorable evaluations from sponsors do not need to reapply. Artists who do not lead an NAC-sponsored residency within a three-year period are required to submit modified application materials to remain on the roster. Instances in which NAC receives unfavorable artist evaluations or feedback about residencies are quite rare and are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Annual Events

Prairie Visions

Summer professional development institute for classroom teachers, arts specialists and teaching artists.

ArtsReach

Summer professional development institute for teachers and teaching artists.

Professional Development Services

Provision of Professional Development Trainings, Workshops and/or Institutes

- For classroom teachers, professional development is administered in partnership with another organization. NAC's education and communities manager has presented at teacher workshops/institutes for ArtsReach (described above) and attended a number of Prairie Visions Institutes, which are open to classroom teachers, art teachers, and teaching artists.
- For arts specialists, professional development is administered in partnership with another organization. NAC's education and communities manager has attended several Nebraska Art Teacher Association conferences in recent years, although no formal presentations were made. She also has attended some Nebraska Music Teacher Association conferences and presented on a few occasions.
- For teaching artists, professional development is administered by the state arts agency office. NAC sponsored workshops on arts integration with Deb Brzoska, of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, in March and June. Additionally, NAC is working with the Lied Center for Performing Arts to help identify teaching artists who will be involved in a new professional development effort through funding from the Dana Foundation.

Poetry Out Loud

Poetry Out Loud Administration

- in-house with contracted staff
- with partner organizations: NAC partnered in 2009 with Nebraskans for the Arts to help coordinate regional semifinals.

Poetry Out Loud Participation

- number of schools participating in Poetry Out Loud statewide: 34
- number of regional semifinals: three

Poetry Out Loud Resources and Activities

- evaluation
- documentation
- residency model
- teaching artist training
- other: An important component of Nebraska's statewide program has been teaching artist visits to participating schools. Teaching artists spend one or two days at a school, depending on the size, and lead workshops, classes or coaching sessions based on teacher requests. This has been particularly popular with rural schools in remote parts of the state, and has provided NAC with the opportunity to serve some communities for the first time.

Additional Prizes and Awards

- Regional semifinals coordinators each compiled their own student prizes, generally consisting of books and certificates. At the state finals, all students received poetry books (donated) and Barnes and Noble gift certificates (purchased by NAC's partner).
- Additional prizes were purchased and donated.

Partners, Funders or In-kind Donors That Support the Poetry Out Loud Program

Nebraskans for the Arts, Sheldon Art Museum, the University of Nebraska Press, the Backwaters Press, the Nebraska Writers Collective, the Norfolk Arts Center, the North Platt Community Playhouse

Resources & Publications

Publications and Media Resources Provided:

- other: PowerPoint presentation geared toward educators, focusing on NAC arts education resources

NAC's Web site and on-line newsletter both frequently feature Nebraska arts education initiatives, Poetry Out Loud and other education related grant news. These are not stand-alone publications but are integrated with other NAC news and information.

Evaluation & Assessment

Program Evaluation for Grantees

- Evaluation tools and frameworks are provided for grantees. There is a short program evaluation component to the grants workshops that is available to all grantees or potential applicants. Recently, the director of programs developed a program evaluation workshop that was presented to constituents in a variety of settings. These have not been limited to arts education grantees.
- Program evaluation is addressed in all NAC grant applications, as well as in final reports. NAC works a great deal with constituents via workshops and one-on-one to help them strengthen their evaluative tools and to understand it as a valuable way to improve programs and to help meet goals.

Methods of Self-Evaluation of State Arts Agency's Arts Education Program

- quantitative and qualitative grants data
- participation data
- financial data
- surveys and feedback forms
- focus groups and town hall meetings
- direct observations

Arts Education Staffing & Network Contacts

State Alliance for Arts Education

Nebraskans for the Arts (NFTA), a statewide advocacy organization, includes a strong and active education committee. (The Nebraska Alliance for Arts Education, formerly a stand-alone organization, merged into Nebraskans for the Arts two years ago.) NAC and NFTA share a strong relationship. NAC staff members are involved in various committees, with both the NAC director of programs and the NAC education and communities manager serving on the education committee.

Arts Education Program Staff, Job Title, FTE

Anne Alston, Education and Communities Manager, 1.0

Arts Education Coordinator's Split Responsibilities

- other areas of work: community development, community arts councils
- percent of time dedicated to arts education program: 70%

Staff Biographies

Since joining the Nebraska Arts Council staff in 2003, Anne Alston has coordinated agency programs and services directed toward arts education, including providing technical assistance, cofacilitating the Project Grant program with the program staff, grants administration duties, and achieving goals and objectives pertaining to arts education as outlined in the agency's strategic plan. She also coordinates grants, programs, and services directed toward Nebraska's community based arts organizations including Basic Support grants administration, providing leadership and technical assistance. She administers NAC's Artists in Schools/Communities Program, including recruiting artists, managing the review process, maintaining the roster of eligible teaching artists, coordinating professional development opportunities for artists and administering sponsor applications to the program. She manages the Nebraska statewide Poetry Out Loud program and participates in other agencywide services and project development. She is involved in education related initiatives with a number of partner organizations, such as Nebraskans for the Arts, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln.

Alston currently serves as the mid-America regional representative in the Arts Education Advisory Group, which works on behalf of education managers in state arts agencies nationwide. In recent years, she has served on grant review panels for the Iowa Arts Council, the Nebraska Volunteer Services Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. Prior to the Nebraska Arts Council, she worked in the education department of Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, coordinating various museum education and outreach programs, developing curricula for many classes, working with classroom teachers, managing interns and teaching art classes. She also headed the community outreach and art education programs at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts for a number of years. Alston is a graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

The small NAC staff often shares responsibilities for different programs as circumstances demand. The director of programs, Marty Skomal, was formerly the education manager and is still very much involved in education related matters at the agency, particularly with regard to state policy and advocacy efforts. The executive director, Suzanne Wise, is also a strong supporter of arts education and is involved in advocacy.