

**2009 State Arts Agency Executive Directors Retreat  
June 8-10, 2009 – Bigfork, Montana**

**DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS**

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**STATE-LEVEL ADVOCACY**

- There is a strong need to put a “face” on arts jobs. (See “[Stimulus Funding](#)” discussion below).
- Resource shortages have increased the need for advocacy and also have intensified relationships with state-level advocacy groups. Where good working relationships and collaboration potential exists, this environment has catalyzed a lot of good work together. And where advocacy organizations are weak or where tensions exist, this environment has highlighted those problems.
- State arts agencies and advocacy groups can strategize to play different roles. Sometimes they can trade “good cop” and “bad cop” roles or provide political cover for one another.
- A good working relationship needs to be in place *prior* to a time of crisis.
- State arts agency staff have varying restrictions on advocacy/lobbying. Even in those states with relatively few limitations, however, the most persuasive voices come from the community – citizens groups and arts organizations who can tell “impact” stories about the importance of the state arts agency.
- Trade associations in your state (such as the restaurant groups, wholesalers, education associations, etc.) can provide good models of what organized political clout can look like.
- Several state arts agencies expressed concern about Americans for the Arts contacting policy leaders in their states without consultation with the state arts agency and/or providing incomplete information or advice to advocacy captains. Several positive comments about AFTA's national advocacy role were made also.

## **NEA UPDATE (John Ostrout and Andi Mathis)**

- Recent successes have helped to reinforce the value of the state-federal support system: American Masterpieces, Poetry Out Loud, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).
- The NEA is in the process of tightening crediting requirements. The new requirements will take effect with new Partnership Agreements in July 2009 and will instruct grantees to remove NEA credit (logo and language) once NEA-funded projects have concluded. The new crediting documentation will include examples of language that can explain the relationship between SAA funding and NEA funding.
- The NEA is also working on ARRA crediting requirements. The principal distinction that the agency hopes to achieve is its support of jobs – not the organization or the program receiving the funds. The NEA will issue guidance on this as soon as it is available.
- ARRA reporting requirements will be released to the field shortly. The NEA has received guidance from OMB and is preparing instructions that will clearly define for SAAs what information must be collected in what format. Quarterly reports will be due from SAAs starting in October. The NEA plans to convene state conference calls to review the requirements.
- The Partnership Agreement guidelines have been revised to eliminate redundancies and to align narrative questions with the review criteria used by panelists. One criterion (related to underserved communities) has become embedded/integrated into the other criteria. Supplemental materials also will be limited in the future.
- The Folk and Traditional Arts Infrastructure Initiative has been renamed the Folk and Traditional Arts Partnership. This Partnership Agreement component is still optional and grants will continue to be awarded on a competitive basis. SAAs asked what would follow Patrice Powell's September 2008 report that the program was undergoing reexamination. John Ostrout indicated that it was time for a strategic discussion about the next phase of folk and traditional arts support. Jonathan Katz emphasized that the decisions made about the program affect all states – not just the 30 that receive the funds. A reexamination should involve NASAA leadership and NEA leadership. Katz said that NASAA would initiate that conversation during the summer.
- The NEA states office is happy to arrange visits between SAAs and any NEA discipline office. It is very helpful for SAA leaders to visit the NEA and to communicate/reinforce the value of states.

## **THE STATE-FEDERAL ARTS SUPPORT SYSTEM**

How can state arts agencies establish a purposeful, collaborative relationship with the new NEA leadership? What are some messages that it will be important to convey to Chairman Landesman and his staff?

- Cultivate a strong relationship between NASAA – representing all of the states – and the new chairman.

- Key messages should address the unique access and equity roles fulfilled by federal and state funding for the arts. Communications should also touch on how:
  - State arts agencies are a resource for achieving federal goals.
  - State arts agencies help the NEA to reach the entire country. SAAs fund and provide services to every community, not just selected cities or disciplines.
  - Congress is highly supportive of state arts agencies and the designation of the 40%.
  - Consulting state arts agencies provides a quick way to get a well-rounded perspective (considering all disciplines, budget sizes and geographies) on issues or the potential effects of different policies or initiatives. If the NEA is considering certain actions, state arts agencies can help to predict – and to mitigate – many challenges.
  - Flexibility of funding is a top priority for SAAs. SAAs welcome collaborative initiatives and work hard to help address federal goals, but are best positioned to be of assistance when the funding streams are flexible and can accommodate differences among state arts environments and delivery systems.
  - As SAAs undertake multiyear strategic plans required by both the NEA and their state governments, the priorities determined through these public planning processes must be respected.
- Additional communications advice included:
  - Distill key messages down to one page. Communications – in writing and in person – need to be conveyed quickly and concisely.
  - Tap Landesman’s expertise on working with the commercial sector.
  - Get very specific about what state arts agencies have done for the theatre field.
  - SAAs can invite Landesman to visit, increasing the reach and impact of his travel.
  - SAAs can help Landesman get to know Congress by making introductions, hosting him in key districts, accompanying him to meetings, etc.
- Landesman has a reputation as a catalyst for change. What would he like to see changed? What would state arts agencies like to see changed? This might be a fruitful area of dialogue.
- NEA communications orienting Landesman will emphasize the track record of collaboration, citing Poetry Out Loud and ARRA funding as examples. Everyone needs to instill confidence in the state and regional system and also to emphasize the advocacy power of the states.

State arts agencies need to continue to cultivate strong relationships with their congressional delegations, whether or not reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts will be considered within the next year or two. Issues that are likely to arise include:

- Continued funding for the endowment’s programs.
- The portion set aside for states and regions. Focused documentation and communication of the impact of the 40% will be needed to ensure its continuation and flexibility.
- The prospect of a locals program or locals set aside. Americans for the Arts already has lobbied Congress for this during the ARRA consideration. The NASAA membership must

be prepared to engage in policy deliberations about the NEA leadership and/or funding role in this area, and its relationship to the federal-state arts support system.

All state arts agencies are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the existing federal policy designating 40% of NEA grant dollars to states and regions. (See the [legislation](#), especially section 5g starting on page 7.) That legislation frames the federal-state partnership and the growth of the state and regional set-aside over time:

Year	State and Regional Allocation
1967	Federal-state partnership program officially begins. <b>\$2 million</b> designated to states. Dollar amounts allocated annually until 1975.
1975	Dollar allocation to states and regions changed to a percentage of NEA grant funds: <b>20%</b> from 1975-1990.
1991	Increased basic state grant percentage, plus addition of underserved component for a total of <b>30%</b> of NEA grant funds.
1993	<b>35%</b> of NEA grant funds.
1997	<b>40%</b> of NEA grant funds.

## STIMULUS FUNDING

- State arts councils are **among the first agencies** to develop stimulus funding plans at the state level, demonstrating the leadership and nimbleness of SAAs within state government. Some SAAs are the only agency in their cabinet/department to receive stimulus funding, which has further increased the credibility and visibility of the arts and of SAAs.
- **Managing constituent expectations** has been extremely challenging. Despite efforts to work with a very focused applicant pool, applications and funds requested have far exceeded available dollars. Although the limitations on applicants are justifiable, many organizations not eligible for funding have expressed dismay about the restriction of eligibility, from both states and the NEA, to organizations with prior funding histories.
- Many states have taken **geography** into consideration in making award decisions, ensuring that all legislative districts and underserved counties/communities are represented among the awardees.
- **Defining and discerning “need”** has also been a challenge. ARRA applicants have described dire consequences (layoffs, program reductions, cancelled grant projects and even organizational closure) if ARRA funding cannot be secured. Are these statements accurate? Are they hyperbole? Is “need” a valid funding factor and can it be compared across organizations? “Need” is rarely a criterion for state arts agency funding; most states adjudicate other funding on the basis of public impact, management excellence, artistic excellence, community involvement, etc. Although most state arts agencies have emphasized other adjudication criteria (such as the organizational benefits of the job to be preserved, reporting capacity, management strength, etc.), many panelists have still struggled with the issue of need.

- **The sustainability and long-term impact** of ARRA funding is hard to predict, given the small amounts of funding available and how thinly it will be spread across the country.
  - Numerous states (including OK, ND, NE AZ and MA) included questions about sustainability on their grant applications. Several other states will focus on near-term (rather than long term) impact, viewing ARRA funding as “bridge” money to be used until other resources return.
  - Other states expressed concern about any kind of short-term investment in human resources, noting that effective sustainability and capacity initiatives typically span multiple years, incorporate strategic planning/training components and include extensive preparatory work.
  - Some elected officials and members of the public may be predisposed to view ARRA funding of any kind as wasted money. So some SAA directors are being cautious about how much impact they claim and how loudly they claim it.
  - Other states view ARRA funding as a golden opportunity to make the connection between the arts, employment and economic productivity. Being able to successfully associate the ideas of “the arts,” jobs” and “economic recovery” may be the most important outcome of the initiative.
- **Audit activity** is expected to be extremely heavy. Some state arts agencies already have had state auditors contact them to arrange reviews of their award processes and financial systems. State arts agencies are being very careful to ensure that all ARRA grantees are able to stand up to extra scrutiny, provide additional reporting and demonstrate good financial controls.
- State arts agencies have had mixed results in organizing efforts to apply for **other sources of stimulus funding**. The California Arts Council convened several agencies to try to encourage applications incorporating the arts for transportation funds and community development block grants. Although these conversations did not result in additional funding, it was beneficial to position the state arts agency as a convener. The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) has been designated as the pass-through agency for one organization to receive \$1 million in higher education stimulus funding. The TCA itself will not receive any of those funds.
- State arts agencies are considering how best to “**put a face on arts jobs**” supported with ARRA funds. Some (including NM and MT) are considering photographic documentation. Focusing on the job funded (rather than the individual funded) and the work accomplished during the funding period may be useful ways to minimize risk and emphasize the arts work force as a whole. Some states (such as WA) are planning to dedicate some portion of their agency’s ARRA money to document this.
- See [ARRA Talking Points for State Arts Agencies](#) for messaging tips.

## STANDING UP TO STRESS

### Sources of Stress

Managing change  
Managing uncertainty

Burnout  
Bureaucracy

State restrictions  
Multiple roles  
Managing councils  
Managing ideas from “left field”  
Staying relevant

Constituent expectations  
Managing people  
Staff stress  
Technology  
Lack of Support

### **Tactics for staying connected...**

Participate in ED retreats  
Maintain contact with peers  
Don’t go it alone: build a strong staff team  
Tap helpful council members for their support  
Share big decisions

### **Contending with burnout...**

Make time to see friends and family  
Try an e-mail diet  
Clarify roles  
Put boundaries around working at home during evenings or weekends  
Try a change of scene – work away from the office  
Identify manageable priorities and stick to them  
Engage in a physical activity (biking, yoga)  
Remember to get enough alone time and do things that feel affirming  
Dress in drag at work

### **Navigating bureaucracy and state restrictions...**

Call on peers to brainstorm solutions and get moral support  
Write thank-you notes  
Be proactive about building goodwill (baked goods help)  
Document all actions and decisions  
Consider consultation with your state attorney general (AG) can be an ally  
Don’t take rules at face value – do your research  
Resist participation in the bureaucracy  
Take risks and stand up to the system when necessary  
Pick your battles

### **Juggling multiple roles...**

Change staff roles as needed to address the environment  
Share your needs with staff  
Let some things go  
Make sure at least two people in the office are trained to perform core functions  
If you can’t delegate, do less  
Think creatively about interns, fellows and other human resources

### **Managing councils...**

Let “ideas” die of their own accord  
Be proactive about orientation and education

Identify good advocates and allies on your board  
Consider adopting “rules of conduct” for problematic groups  
Arrange seating (to separate troublemakers and place staff where they can help)

**Managing staff...**

Hold regular staff meetings  
Hold short/focused staff meetings (in the kitchen, 1-minute limit on speaking, everyone must stand)  
Encourage office humor and a healthy sense of play  
Reinforce staff bonding through shared experiences (arts projects, potlucks)  
Hold meetings with individual staff members frequently (every 2 months)  
Get training on managing “next generation” workers  
Encourage group ownership and shared problem-solving  
Share information as it comes in – keep staff in the loop