



State Arts Agency Resources for Creative Placemaking Practitioners

National Assembly of
State Arts Agencies
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Creative placemaking is a cornerstone of equitable, healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities. But securing the money, materials, time and talent needed is no easy task. Placemaking practitioners have been described as agile “knitters” who must weave together many different strands of support in order to sustain creative placemaking efforts.

One useful—and sometimes overlooked—strand of support comes from [state arts agencies](#). Each of America’s 56 state and jurisdictional governments has established an office dedicated to the arts. These agencies provide grant funding and technical assistance to help localities, nonprofit arts organizations, civic groups and artists to empower economic and community development through the arts. If you are new to creative placemaking—or are a placemaking veteran looking to amplify your work—the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) offers the following ideas for connecting with your state arts agency.



Grant Funding

Some state arts agencies offer grant programs dedicated to creative placemaking. When present, these programs are engineered around best practices for creative placemaking. More frequently, however, **state arts agencies consider placemaking as one eligible activity within grant categories more broadly designed to support local arts development.** General grant categories that have been tapped by creative placemakers include:

- **Project support:** These awards can take the form of dollars for placemaking initiatives or project components such as planning, convening, marketing, youth engagement activities, public art, performances, exhibitions, cultural district development and more.
- **Operating support:** General operating support grants help to sustain the programs and administration of organizations with the arts as their primary mission. Applicants usually must be incorporated as nonprofit 501(c)(3)s or units of local government in order to be eligible. New applicants or small organizations may be directed to an entry track to help them prepare for ongoing multiyear funding approval.
- **Artist grants:** Artists are integral to creative placemaking and state arts agencies fund them in a variety of ways. Relevant grant categories may include artist fee support, community based or school based residencies, professional development, apprenticeships or fellowships.

Even if a state arts agency does not offer a dedicated placemaking program (or use the phrase “creative placemaking” in its guidelines), project support or artist grants often are nimble enough to

Grant Application Tips

Familiarize yourself with your state's grant guidelines. Because taxpayers' dollars are used to fund all state arts agency grants, the processes may differ from those used by foundation or corporate funders.

- Adjudication is often open to the public and accountability reporting is required.
- Be prepared to apply through a centralized online grant system.
- Write your application to help a panel (usually a combination of arts experts and lay citizens) visualize your strategic aspirations as well as your practical tactics.
- Explain the public benefits of your work and describe your community engagement strategies—especially how your work makes the arts accessible and addresses equity for historically underrepresented groups.

If you have never before applied for a state arts agency grant, ask if the agency offers any consultations for first-time applicants. A little coaching can ensure that you are applying to the right programs, clarify requirements and yield useful tips on preparing your materials. Grants become available on a staggered calendar, so be certain to sign up for your state arts agency's electronic mailing list to receive funding announcements and bulletins about upcoming grant opportunities.

fit a component of a larger creative placemaking project, to fund a small community based activity in its entirety, or to jump-start what might evolve into a larger creative placemaking initiative over time. State arts agency operating support awards are particularly crucial to cultural groups serving as the anchor or coordinating organizations for creative placemaking.

Information Sharing

What other communities in your state have led successful placemaking efforts? What were the keys to their success? What's the best way to approach potential partners? State arts agencies can be a conduit for getting these and other questions answered. Through direct expertise or referrals to other arts and civic leaders, state arts agencies can provide information to help you hone your placemaking strategies and amplify the impact of your work.



Reach Out

State arts agencies want to hear from you. View [contact information for every state](#).

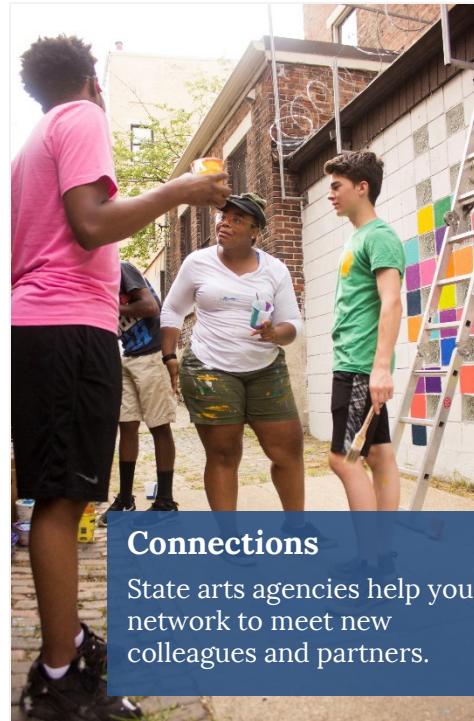
A strong base of evidence often is necessary to secure buy-in from policymakers, the business community or private foundations. State arts agencies can help with this, too, by pointing to research and data to help you make your case and by sharing methods for cultural asset mapping and other placemaking fundamentals.

State arts agencies also may be able to counsel you on measurement strategies useful for assessing—and communicating—the impact of your placemaking efforts.

Networking & Training

State arts agencies offer numerous opportunities to plug into networks valuable to creative placemakers. Virtual or in-person convenings are a popular way for artists, cultural organizations, community organizers and other placemakers to gain skills and meet prospective colleagues and partners. Additionally, state arts agencies routinely conduct outreach activities, such as grant workshops or community forums. Attending one of these events can offer important insights into how to successfully prepare grant applications and take advantage of the services a state arts agency offers.

As supporters of the arts and culture sector statewide—and as agencies of state government—state arts agency staff work with many arts organizations, artists, other state government agencies and local governments. Given the importance of partnerships in creative placemaking, a consultation with state arts agency staff could be a shortcut in facilitating useful relationships.



Connections

State arts agencies help you network to meet new colleagues and partners.

Getting Started

To learn more about creative placemaking in your state—or to seek counsel or financial support—[NASAA's State Arts Agency Directory](#) is a good place to begin.

Most state arts agency websites provide detailed guidelines and application requirements for potential grant applicants. State arts agency staff welcome phone inquiries, too. The "community development coordinator" or "community arts" position is a useful first point of contact for learning about potential professional development, funding or information available to support creative placemaking. Many state arts agencies also have staff designated to individual artist services, local arts agencies, or the folk and traditional arts. Other states organize staff contacts by geographic region. Any of these individuals can advise you on seeking a grant or lend their assistance to your program development or partnership-building efforts.

Mutual Benefits

Contacting your state arts agency may be advantageous to your own efforts, and those benefits can be reciprocal! Your state arts agency will appreciate learning about efforts under way in your community to strengthen people and places through the arts. Hearing your successes and

challenges will help the state arts agency propagate best practices, facilitate partnerships and elevate the importance of your work to policy audiences. To get the most out of your relationship, invite an introductory conversation with your state arts agency, forward any background materials you have describing your efforts to date, and check back regularly for news and updates.



Speaking of reciprocal value, don't forget to [advocate](#) for the arts in your state! Lending your voice to citizen advocacy efforts can help raise awareness of the arts and increase the pool of resources available to support creative placemaking and other arts development efforts.

Additional Resources

An abundance of resources exist to help creative placemaking practitioners learn about strategies and support systems. ([ArtPlace America](#), [PolicyLink](#), the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) and [Drexel University](#) offer good places to begin.) For a focus on public sector support, NASAA recommends:

- [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#) (NASAA)
- [State Arts Agency Roles in Creative Placemaking](#) (NASAA)
- [State Policy Innovations to Support Creative Placemaking](#) (Community Development Innovation Review)
- [Rural Prosperity through the Arts & Creative Sector](#) (National Governors Association)
- [State Cultural Districts Policy Brief](#) (NASAA)

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The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is the nonpartisan membership organization representing the state and jurisdictional arts councils of the United States. NASAA is a clearinghouse for research about government support for arts and culture in America, providing statistical data, policy analysis and information on exemplary practices. NASAA is grateful for our partnership with ArtPlace America, which supported the [Strengthening the State Arts Agency Support System for Creative Placemaking](#) initiative.



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