



## **Evaluation Summary**

### **Overview**

The NASAA 2024 Folk & Traditional Arts Preconference, hosted in San Juan, Puerto Rico, brought together professionals from state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and partner organizations to network, share insights and explore sustainability in the field. Evaluations provided feedback on session content, structure and key take-aways.

### **Demographics and Attendance**

Participants represented a wide range of professional experience and organizational types. Many were returning attendees, while some were first-time participants, and there was a mix of experienced and midlevel professionals as well as newcomers. In reviewing the survey results, the preconference steering committee noted that this mix is a marked change from prior years and may require different approaches to future convenings.

### **Key Themes and Feedback**

#### **Networking and Collaboration**

- Attendees valued the opportunity to connect with peers and deepen relationships. Structured and informal networking sessions were particularly appreciated.
- Many emphasized the need for more tailored content to address challenges faced by SAAs, especially those with limited folklife staffing.

#### **Sessions and Content Ratings**

- Overall ratings for sessions were positive, particularly for site visits and performances.

- The Frido Vargas performance and visits to La Goyco Community Center and El Batey de los Hermanos Ayala received high praise for showcasing cultural sustainability and engagement.
- Concerns were raised about the relevance of some sessions to SAAs, with calls for more practical, applicable content.

### **Site Visits and Cultural Immersion**

- Compared to prior NASAA Folk & Traditional Arts Preconferences, more site visits and interactions with local artists were possible at this particular preconference in Puerto Rico. Attendees remarked that these experiences were highlights, providing direct engagement with artists and communities.
- These experiences reinforced the importance of artist-centered programming and local context in cultural sustainability.

### **Professional Development and Future Topics**

- Suggestions for future topics included fieldwork methodologies, advocacy strategies, and sustainable funding models.
- Attendees requested more peer-led discussions and workshops focusing on practical skills and solutions for agency-specific challenges.
- Interest was noted in addressing climate change, disaster response and equity in program funding.

### **Takeaways and Recommendations**

- Strengthen focus on SAAs: Develop sessions that highlight challenges and successes specific to SAAs, including resource limitations and bureaucratic hurdles.
- Expand peer-to-peer learning opportunities: Include more time for small-group discussions, especially among peers at similar career stages; mentorship; and skill-sharing workshops.
- Incorporate practical applications: Ensure session content is actionable, offering strategies and templates that attendees can implement in their work.
- Balance structure and flexibility: Provide additional unstructured time for informal networking and reflection.
- Enhance physical/programmatic accessibility and comfort: Address logistical concerns, including appropriate audio amplification, adequate breaks, rest periods, and accommodations for heat and physical exertion during excursions.

## **Conclusion**

The NASAA 2024 Folk & Traditional Arts Preconference was widely regarded as engaging and impactful, with site visits and artist interactions standing out as highlights. However, attendees recommended adjustments to better align content with the needs of SAAs and to expand professional development opportunities. The feedback underscores the value of blending experiential learning with structured sessions and emphasizes the importance of fostering connections among peers.