

Interagency Working Group on Arts, Health, and Civic Infrastructure

Quarterly Meeting

September 26, 2024; Hybrid format

Recording available upon request

AGENDA

- Opening remarks from Interagency Working Group Chair Agency Representatives, **Ana Mascareñas, Counselor to the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services** and **Ascala Tsegaye Sisk, Deputy Chair, National Endowment for the Arts**.
- NEA and group report-back on updates since last meeting.
- Federal and local “bright spot” presentations from **Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager, City of Oakland** and **Mindy Eisenberg, Associate Division Director, Oceans, Wetlands and Communities Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**.
- Group discussion upcoming work, and operationalizing arts and culture.
- Next steps.

OPENING REMARKS

Ana Mascareñas, HHS: As the daughter of a Chicano muralist and a long line of California farmworkers, I believe in the inspiration and connection between the arts, social justice, and how we spend our time and service of others.

Ascala Tsegaye Sisk, NEA: This working group provides a way for us to work outside of what our day to day makes room for. The NEA is committed to being a partner and a resource to our federal partners, and the way that art and culture creativity can be integrated into the work and programs you may be working on. The NEA is here as a thought partner and wants to support new and creative programs.

The NEA is also in the process of rolling out a [new pilot program](#) around arts and health related to the Surgeon General’s notice on loneliness and social connection. It will involve culture and the importance of civic infrastructure, bringing about healthy places and supporting the health and well-being of individuals. As we design and experiment in the form of the pilot, it will be helpful to hear from you what will be helpful for you to understand about what is happening. We look forward to sharing more with you in our next meeting.

GROUP HIGHLIGHTS AND UPDATES

Jen Hughes, Senior Advisor on Partnerships, Expansion, & Innovation, opened the discussion with a prompt for any updates since last meeting:

- Clark Wilson, **EPA**: The Office of Water conducted a ‘Soak Up the Rain’ webinar series focused on equity, where speakers discussed green infrastructure and design, protecting children and older adults, workforce development through native seed propagation, and indigenous knowledge and how it can protect rural landscapes. The capstone of the series will be about artists as trusted messengers to underserved communities and supporting these communities in utilizing BIL and IRA funding. Registration for the upcoming meeting focused on Green Infrastructure, Climate Resilience, and Indigenous Knowledge on October 17 at 2pm ET is available [here](#).
- Heather McDonald, **OJJDP, DOJ**: The OJJDP is about to announce their second cohort of the Arts Programs for Justice-Involved Youth. The announcement will be sent to the group once public. Heather’s office also connected with the Department of Homeland Security about arts programs. There will also be a first-ever [National Conference on Youth Justice](#), which will include a workshop celebrating the opportunities and highlighting NEA awardees working in the justice space.
- Faith Hill, **DOT**: DOT recently had a collaborative effort with NEA colleagues. DOT has a [new FAQ](#) (see Q.5.) around eligibility for federal funds for public involvement, which has been updated to include explicit language around the eligibility of arts and cultural organizations. DOT also strives to seed upcoming course materials and case studies with culturally aware engagement examples, and ensuring existing communities are well-served and addressing long-standing needs and history.
- Kortne Edogun-Ticey, **ED**: The Deputy Secretary participated and provided remarks at the 2024 AEP Annual Convening about specifications around leveraging federal funds to increase access to the arts. DoE will be releasing a colleague letter about the use of Title 1 funds in supporting the arts, which will be sent to the group once public.
- Victoria Sams, **NEH**: The NEH is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the [Landmarks of American History and Culture program](#), which brings educators together to one place to study the significance of that place for American culture and History. The program takes place across the US and territories.
- Erika Svendsen, **USFS, USDA**: The Forest Service will have its seventh cohort of the [Urban Field Station Collaborative Arts Program](#) this winter. The USFS has begun publishing lessons learned, and just published the first trans-disciplinary art paper on the impacts of the program. The program will expand to its first non-urban participant in the Coconino National Forest.
- Maggie Jarry, **SAMHSA, HHS**: September is [National Recovery Month](#), and SAMHSA has the first ever [Gallery of Hope](#), and online expression of recovery through visual arts. SAMHSA announced the inaugural [Trailblazers in Advancing Recover \(STAR\)](#) awards honoring recovery champions and leaders.
- Courtney Kay, **DHS** [shared in writing]: On September 16, in partnership CISA’s School Safety Task Force, DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships held a forum about creating a culture of violence prevention in K-12 education communities. Panelists discussed how to cultivate positive, safe, and inclusive learning environments, strategies to implement and enhance bystander reporting programs, and available resources. The forum emphasized the role

of community wellness in targeted violence prevention. On October 8th, DHS Center for Prevention Programs, with the Partnership the Arts Education Partnership is hosting a [101 session](#) to learn how the [Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships \(CP3\)](#) is using the arts to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. And the Eradicate Hate Summit will be held from October 21-23; [registration is now open](#).

"BRIGHT SPOT" PRESENTATIONS & GROUP Q&A

[Belonging in Oakland](#) and [Cultural Strategists in Government Program](#), presented by Roberto Bedoya, Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland, California.

- In 2018, as the Cultural Affairs Manager for the city of Oakland, Robert Bedoya helped develop Oakland's first cultural plan 'Belonging in Oakland.' With the assignment of operationalizing belonging in the city, Bedoya looked into the social and civic systems that create belonging in communities. One of the strategies Bedoya employed was hiring 'cultural strategists' to support the program.
- 'Cultural strategists' are thought partners who have the task of supporting their department make policy arguments via a demonstration project. The projects could be works of art or a performance, but their primary role is to move policy forward.
- Bedoya encouraged his departments to think differently about how they were engaging the public and bringing in public opinion, which was already a required part of the development process. Oakland has a rich history of cultural activism and self-defined cultural strategists, so the city was able to explicitly request cultural activists for their support in engagement with the public. This was done as a public-private partnership utilizing foundation funding.
- Bedoya puts forward 'civic trauma' as something government agencies need to address. He also notes that government is risk-averse, while cultural strategists are risk-takers, and can help build trust with the community.
- Oakland is now in their third round of embedding cultural strategists into City Hall.

[EPA's Artist in Residence \(AiR\) Pilot Initiative](#), presented by Mindy Eisenberg, Associate Division Director, Oceans, Wetlands and Communities Division for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

- This program was launched on January 30th of this year by former Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox at the White House and NEA Summit. Five of the six pilot location representatives were able to attend. EPA wanted to emphasize its commitment to working with local partners to ensure our drinking water is safe, and to restore and maintain our oceans, watersheds, and aquatic ecosystems.
- The pilot is intended to:
 - Bring innovation and creative problem-solving to local watershed projects,
 - Increase community engagement in understanding and addressing local environmental challenges;
 - Deepen community relationships and connections with natural resources;

- Elevate the voices of underrepresented communities; and
- Document lessons learned on how arts and culture can be integrated into their place-based partnerships.
- There are six pilot locations across the US, varying in size, complexity, and experience working with artists. Each of the six are located within EPA's Urban Waters Federal Partnership locations, and five of the six in National Estuary program locations, because they focus on communities with environmental justice concerns, and to leverage mechanisms in place to get funding quickly to the pilot areas.
- Arts and culture have been a part of the program in the past, but not so embedded in the program and community as with the AiR program. It is an 18-month pilot with a grant of \$200,000 per location to provide an equitable stipend for the artists. EPA has developed two guidance documents, a Funding Guidance and a Roles and Timeline document for expectations. EPA developed a SharePoint site for partners and artists. The call for artists is not limited by artistic discipline or project type, but the art must address water quality or adaptation to climate change and seek to increase public engagement. There will be a Pilot Coordinator to support those with less experience, as well as training workshops.
- Next steps will include finishing the workshops and developing a communications plan to amplify calls for artists. EPA hopes to have an IPA on board in January and announce the cohort of artists and getting to work in the spring.

Following the presentation, the group asked:

- Jen Hughes, NEA: How should government be thinking about tapping private/foundation funds to support this kind of work?
 - Bedoya notes that – at the local level – private-public partnerships are difficult, and that many foundations do not want to give money directly to the city. There are limitations to who the city can approach that informs their approach.
- Maggie Jarry, SAMHSA, HHS: Maggie shared the example of a local park in Tucson that was established to honor the memory of a child. The park became a wider place of gathering for grieving families and is another example of creative public-private partnership with the county to honor the memory of community members.
 - Bedoya notes that you need a cultural strategist to bring poetics into policy making. One of the main benefits of a cultural strategist is to help widen civic imagination, and to help ensure that the rigidity of policy and the fluidity of culture can enmesh, and that there is space for new ideas and knowledge.

Group Discussion Highlights

- NEA noted that there is a wide network of [State and Regional Arts Agencies](#) that could be useful to leverage for promoting EPA AIR, and other collaborations that take place at the State or Regional level.
- USFS, USDA: The US Forest Service also has an AiR program which differs slightly from the EPA, doing place-based work is transformative, and USFS is looking forward to the lessons learned

and unexpected impacts of the program. Erika also notes that a smaller-scale model focusing on the process has also been successful, as a way of conceptualizing different ways of working.

- Mindy, EPA: One of the ways the pilot is unique is the level of resources provided for the program; EPA was able to secure an OGC opinion that particular funding through the National Estuary program is allowable costs for Artists in Residence in the future.
- Nancy Weiss, LoC: The Library of Congress has been discussing folklorists, and how to bring them into the American Folk Life Center's process of community engagement and workforce development, and would like to dive further into case studies about it.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Sunil Iyengar, NEA: Are there any signs of workforce preparation for this type of role? Is it policy experts learning about the value of arts and culture, or training artists in how to do this type of work?
 - Mindy Eisenberg: The pilot has not focused on the workforce element, and the artists being tapped for the program will have more experience working with communities. The host programs have workforce development programs, which help get people into STEM and the environmental field that might not have considered it otherwise.
 - Roberto Bedoya, City of Oakland: As agencies imagine how they can employ arts and culture in programs, Roberto argues for using 'cultural strategists' as a workforce in addition to 'artists', which will help open the frame of what is meant by artist.
 - Cindy Barger, EPA: The EPA is hearing 'cultural strategist' and similar terms as pilot locations are searching for artists for the program.
 - Ben Stone, NEA: There are currently no schools or organizations training artists for these roles because there aren't enough roles available, so the only option is via on-the-job training. Ben also notes that there are many creative people embedded in agencies across the country that don't feel empowered to bring their creative side to work, but that is something that can be encouraged.
- Maggie Jarry, SAMHSA, HHS: The element of belonging that comes through is that of 'participation', and that developing a way for communities create together is vital for the health of people and communities.
 - Robert Bedoya, Oakland: Robert stresses the importance of a good project manager, and a good translator of the bureaucratic processes for artists and cultural strategists to ease their transition into the process.
- Tremayne Youmans, HUD: There is an opportunity in developing closer and better relationships with residents through more creative means. HUD also has a large workforce development emphasis, and Trey was curious about the term 'cultural strategist' and if there is a way to make it more appealing to a broader audience.
- Heather McDonald, OJJDP, DOJ: Even if large wins aren't possible, there is still a way to effect change in a smaller scale. For example, Heather was able to influence the selection process for their artist program to bring cultural strategists in rather than just product artists.

NEXT STEPS

- The next quarterly meeting will be on December 10, with a calendar hold to come. Attendees are encouraged to think about what they could bring to the next meeting.
- NEA will be bringing in a contractor for the working group to help support the work. The application closes on October 4, and is available on the [NEA website](#). Please share with potential contractors.

RESOURCES SHARED

- [Arts and Health Caucus Report, Jameel Arts & Health Lab](#)
- [City of Oakland Cultural Plan: Belonging in Oakland](#)
- [EPA 'Soak Up the Rain' series and upcoming webinar registration link](#)
- [NEH Celebrating 20 Years of Landmarks of American History and Culture Program](#)
- [SAMHSA National Recovery Month](#)
 - [2024 SAMHSA Gallery of Hope](#)
 - [2024 SAMHSA Trailblazers in Advancing Recovery \(STAR\) Award Winners](#)
- [Mystic River Watershed Association Call for Artist-in-Residence](#)
- [NEA Arts, Health, and Civic Infrastructure call for contractor](#)
- [OJJDP 2024 National Conference on Youth Justice](#)
- [US Forest Service Urban Field Station Collaborative Arts Program](#)
- [Use of DOT Funds for Public Involvement](#)

ATTENDEES

General Services Administration:	Jennifer Gibson, Ph.D.
Institute of Museum & Library Services:	Anne-Imelda Radice Cyndee Landrum
Library of Congress:	Nancy Weiss, Kaminstein
National Endowment for the Arts:	Ascala Tsegaye Sisk Ben Stone Bianca Nelson Carolyn Bartley Jen Hughes Katherine Bray-Simons Michelle Hoffman Sunil Iyengar
National Endowment for the Humanities	Victoria Sams, PhD

U.S. Department of Agriculture	Erika Svendsen
U.S. Department of Commerce	Claudia Nierenberg Chip Walker
U.S. Department of Education	Simon Earle, PhD Kortne Edogun-Ticey, Ed.D. Jennifer Todd
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Jennifer BornemannRafael Campos Maggie Jarry, M.Div., MS Ana Mascarenas Shannon K. McDevitt, MD, MPH Erin McDonald, PhD, MPP
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Michelle Beasley Kara Griffin
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Tremayne "Trey" Youmans
U.S. Department of Interior	Rachel Brown
U.S. Department of Justice	Kara McDonagh Heather McDonald
U.S. Department of Transportation	Heather Edmunds Faith Hill
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	Donna Faraone, MPA Marc Zaremski
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Clark Wilson Mindy Eisenberg Cindy Barger Kathy Hurd
Guest Speaker	Robert Bedoya, City of Oakland