

Across the United States, thousands of local arts agencies (LAAs) provide a wide range of programs and services to help support and enable arts and culture at the local level. LAAs are intermediaries, serving artists and arts organizations, local residents, visitors and other partners. All strive to enhance the quality of life in their communities by working to increase public access to the arts.

**Funding through the local  
arts agencies program  
1984-2015:**

**\$62.6 million**

### ADVANCING LEARNING

Local arts agencies devote significant resources to providing professional development opportunities for artists and arts administrators.

- Professional development takes the form of conferences, workshops, technical assistance, and on topics such as organizational, financial, and social media management; civic engagement and cultural equity; and leadership development.
- Over the last 10 years, the NEA has awarded more than \$3.3 million to local arts agencies for these services.
- The St. Louis Regional Arts Commission received NEA support for the Neighborhood-Based Community Arts Training Institute, a cross-sector training of artists in all disciplines, designed to give artists and community partners the tools needed for successful arts-based community development.

### FUELING CREATIVITY

Local arts agencies are often the source of cultural innovation at the local level, combining an awareness of larger trends with a deep understanding of their community.

- Among the areas in which local arts agencies have led the way are in creating cultural districts, spearheading community cultural planning, and commissioning public art.
  - For example, The Shreveport Commons Cultural District in Louisiana is managed by the Shreveport Regional Arts Council and in San Jose, CA the Office of Cultural Affairs leads a city-wide cultural planning effort, and manages one of the nation's most innovative public art programs.
- Local arts agency innovation involves cultivating new funding models, developing arts education initiatives, and advocating for the public value of the arts.
  - For example, in Cleveland, OH, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture invested more than \$16 million in arts and culture in 2014, with funding generated by a voter-approved levy on cigarette sales. This public investment enhances constituent accountability and became a prominent focus of the agency's communication strategy. Creative Advantage in Seattle is a strategic partnership between the City's Office of Arts & Culture and Seattle Public Schools to restore arts education for every student by 2020.



## CONNECTING AND CELEBRATING

As a hub for their community's cultural life, local arts agencies nurture partnerships among local government, businesses, arts organizations, and many others to increase public access to the arts.

- In creative placemaking programs such as the NEA's Our Town, local arts agencies are regular and critical collaborators, often acting as the lead or one of the two required partners.
- Local arts agency partnerships extend beyond the arts non-profit sector to non-arts industries such as tourism, economic and community development, transportation, education, housing, and health and human services, among others.

- Through their programming, local arts agencies help build bridges of understanding among diverse people. For example, the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Council and the Crocker Art Museum are working together on an arts master plan to connect the historically isolated cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, CA.

Local arts agencies coordinate audience services for and among their constituents, helping them improve their marketing, box office, and audience development functions.

- Agencies assist with e-marketing and online audience engagement strategies such as the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and its PhillyFunGuide.com, a comprehensive online arts and entertainment events calendar.

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Local arts agencies often occupy a strategic funding position for local arts organizations by leveraging local grants as matching funds for an organization's NEA grant.

- This strategic funding position makes local arts agencies a trusted partner for many NEA grantees across all artistic disciplines.
- Local arts agencies share the knowledge gained from their funding position through technical assistance to artists and arts organizations.

The National Endowment for the Arts supports eligible local arts agencies by providing funds that are awarded through the agencies' own grant programs.

- Local arts agencies are able to design funding programs that are tailored to specific local needs and local community priorities.

## BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

As the most diverse of the NEA's partners, local arts agencies reflect and respond to the unique dynamics of their community, making them adept and informed collaborators.

- Local arts agencies work in small, rural as well as the most urban communities, ranging from the Churchill Arts Council in Fallon, Nevada, to the Office of Cultural Affairs in Atlanta, Georgia.

- Local arts agencies can be departments of local government (City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs), nonprofit organizations (Arts & Science Council, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, SC), or hybrids of the two (4Culture, King County, WA).
- In the early 1980s, the NEA launched a pilot Locals Test Program with three-year grants, at a minimum of \$150,000, which required a 2:1 match in new public dollars, helping launch many of the nation's leading local arts agencies.

