

Across the United States, more than 4,500 local arts agencies (LAAs) support and enable arts and culture at the local level. The combined budgets of these agencies is more than \$1.4 billion. LAAs are intermediaries, serving artists, arts organizations, local residents, visitors and other partners. LAAs are found in rural, suburban and urban communities, and though each is a unique reflection of the community it serves, all exist to improve the quality of life in their communities by increasing public access to the arts.

Funding through the local
arts agencies program
1984-2016:

\$64.3 million

ADVANCING LEARNING: FOR ARTISTS AND K-12 STUDENTS

Local arts agencies devote significant resources to providing professional development opportunities for artists and arts administrators. Local Arts Agencies are also on the forefront of arts education collective impact efforts.

- 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 \$2.1 million to local arts agencies for these services.
- Local Arts Agencies are also helping to advance Collective Impact Initiatives in the Arts Education portfolio, promoting systematic change at the school district level. Examples include Big Thought in Dallas, the Right Brain Initiative in Portland, OR, and Creative Advantage in Seattle, WA.

FUELING CREATIVITY

Local arts agencies are often the source of cultural innovation at the local level, combining an awareness of larger national 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, in Colorado, Pueblo Arts Alliance's management of the Pueblo Creative Corridor has energized the city's downtown core through arts programming, coordinated marketing, and business incentives. 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, often with a dedicated revenue stream, and powerful advocates for the public value of the arts.
- For example, in Cleveland, OH, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture invests more than \$15 million annually in arts and culture, with funding generated by a voter-approved levy on cigarette sales. This public investment enhances constituent accountability and is a prominent focus of the agency's communication strategy. In many communities, a portion of hotel lodging taxes are invested in arts and culture through LAAs, such as the Houston Arts Alliance, which receives about half of its budget from the hotel occupancy tax and Broward County Arts Commission in Florida.



CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

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. They also function as the "go-to" expert spokesperson for the arts and cultural sector in their community.

- In creative placemaking programs such as the NEA's Our Town, local arts agencies are regular and critical collaborators, often serving as the lead or one of the two required partners.
- Local arts agency partnerships often 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 activity, local arts agencies help build bridges of understanding among diverse people, especially in areas that might historically lack arts and cultural programming. Examples include the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Council and the Crocker Art Museum. Together they are working on an arts master plan to connect the historically isolated cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, CA.

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

- Agencies such as the greater Pittsburgh Arts Council help the cultural sector learn how to make programs and venues more accessible to people with disabilities and to authentically engage with diverse community members through diversity and inclusion training.

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 Yoknapatawpha Arts Council in Oxford, MS, to the City of Boston Department of Cultural Affairs.

- 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.

