

Interagency Working Group on Arts, Health, and Civic Infrastructure

Quarterly Meeting

December 11, 2024; Hybrid format

Recording available upon request

AGENDA

1. Opening remarks
 - a. Rear Admiral Brandon Taylor, Department of Health and Human Services
 - b. Jen Hughes, National Endowment for the Arts
2. NEA and group report-back and updates
3. Federal and local “bright spot” presentations
 - a. Nisha Sajnani, PhD, Founding Co-Director, Jameel Arts & Health Lab; Assoc. Professor & Director, Program for Drama Therapy at NYU Steinhardt
 - b. Sunil Iyengar, Research and Analysis Director, National Endowment for the Arts.
4. Group discussion
5. Next steps

OPENING REMARKS

Jen Hughes, NEA: As the first year of the Interagency Working Group for Arts, Health, and Infrastructure (IWG-AHCI) draws to a close, the National Endowment for the Arts expresses gratitude for the leadership from Chair Jackson and Secretary Basara that created and facilitated this space. Rear Admiral Brandon Taylor will be taking the mantle of HHS co-chair of the IWG-AHCI, and we look forward to continuing the momentum created by this group moving into the second year.

Rear Admiral Brandon Taylor, HHS: After 27 years in uniform with the United States Public Service and with a personal love and appreciation for the arts, Rear Admiral Taylor expresses his excitement to be a part of the group.

GROUP HIGHLIGHTS AND UPDATES

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

- Jen Hughes, **NEA:** The NEA is pleased to announce that the contract for IWG-AHCI support and additional work has been awarded, with a public announcement to follow shortly.
 - Additionally, the NEA [announced the awarding](#) of \$1.35 million to 9 Arts, Health, & Well-Being demonstration projects across the country. The projects will inform how the arts and health sectors can better adopt and integrate arts and cultural practices in ways that help better meet their mission in serving the health of communities and people.
- Heather McDonald, **OJJDP, DOJ:** The Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention hosted their [first national conference](#), with a session focused on engaging the arts titled “Engaging the Arts Across the Juvenile Justice System.” With

presentations from NEA program directors, Texas Women's University, and nonprofit Spy Hop, the session provided a lively discussion around how the arts can help, as well as tactical solutions and grant opportunities to advance the work. The gathering was also mentioned in a recent [NEA blog](#) reviewing the year's progress with interagency collaboration.

- The upcoming FY 2025 grants will be available soon, which will be distributed to the group for awareness and support in highlighting.
 - Heather also joined EPA webinars, and the recordings were shared with DOJ colleagues for their awareness.
- Jennifer Todd, **DoEd**: Please share any grant announcements or technical assistance opportunities for K-12 education with Jennifer Todd and/or Simon Earle so it can be shared on the [Arts Education Center website](#).
- Maggie Jarry, **SAMHSA, HHS**: SAMHSA recognized [Bereavement and Grief Awareness Week](#) (first week of December) with a new website and materials, and several webinars that will be released soon. The role of arts can support the bereavement and grief process, and SAMHSA would like to raise it as a potential topic for future IWG-AHCI meetings.
- Lindsay Campbell, **Forest Service, USDA**: The Forest Service arts program (formerly Urban Field Station Collaborative Arts) is being renamed NaturePLACE Collaborative Arts Program. The 7th cohort of artists will be embedded with scientists and land managers in 2025, with open calls in 3 of the locations. The team will share the call for artists once available; the theme this year is "Nature Connects Us."
- Otho Kerr, **NY Fed**: As a new member to the IWG-AHCI, Otho Kerr of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York expressed the importance of the equitable chance to participate in and benefit from the economy, and the role of arts in creating and supporting vibrant and productive communities.
- Faith Hill, **DOT**: The FHWA expresses thanks to the NEA for the connection to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. During a call, the NASAA shared cross-sector partnership survey results about (in)formal relationships between State arts organizations and State DOTs, which FHWA can use to inform case studies development.
 - FHWA is also developing a research problem statement with several local DOTs for the National Cooperative Highway Research Program to synthesize current arts practice in transportation planning, public involvement, and project development.
- Courtney Kay, **DHS**: DHS presented their upcoming grant program at the Arts Education Partnership Meeting and can provide a briefing and send grant program information to anyone interested. The Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program will be coming out in April, with an information session in January.
 - At the end of December, a piece on social connectedness resource and research, which will be forwarded to the group once published.
 - In January, DHS will host a CP3 101 event to learn more about the program.

"BRIGHT SPOT" PRESENTATIONS & GROUP Q&A

Arts & Social Connection, presented by Nisha Sajnani, Founding Co-Director, Jameel Arts & Health Lab; Assoc. Professor & Director, Program for Drama Therapy at NYU Steinhardt.

- Prior to joining NYU, Dr. Sajnani worked as the Director of Community Health at the Post-Traumatic Stress Center in Connecticut, where it was found that the biggest difference between toxic and tolerable stress is the presence of supportive relationships and resources. This led to work in trying to support folks before they made it to the Center via schools, which led to a reduction in incident rate, an overall increased sense of safety and sense of belonging in schools.
- At NYU, one of the programs offered is a 12-week drama therapy group called Breaking Ground that allows students to work with transitional housing centers and studies the impact on well-being, loneliness, creative self-efficacy, and perceptions of social support and connection.
- Dr. Sajnani also helped found the Jameel Arts & Health Lab to measurably improve health and well-being through the arts with a focus on underserved and underrepresented communities, by generating and leveraging scientific evidence, access and opportunities for arts engagement across the US and world.
- Focusing on social connection, Dr. Sajnani reviewed three tiers of work, including:
 - Current research being conducted that is informing a first-of-its-kind global study regarding murals in hospitals, and a partnership with The Lancet on an arts & health series that is in progress.
 - Outreach via a globalization campaign with 'celebration' as the focal strategy by harnessing the enthusiasm for the work into convenings and gatherings sharing learnings and ways to progress.
 - Policy efforts are initiated at local, national and international levels to support informed policy decisions in arts and health sectors and lifting up the arts as a public health good. This is done by summarizing areas of interest and making recommendations to inform policymakers, funders, and practitioners. Particular topic areas of interest include climate change and resilience, and youth mental health and social isolation.

Research, Data, and Knowledge-Sharing, presented by Sunil Iyengar, Research and Analysis Director, National Endowment for the Arts.

- The NEA is working to cumulatively build the research and data infrastructure in the federal government for arts, health, and civic infrastructure research:
 - Research Grants: there will be two new research opportunities in January, and the NEA Research Labs works to advance knowledge in these topic areas;
 - Data Collection: NEA has partnered with a variety of data collection teams in agencies including HUD, HHS, and DoEd to include arts-related questions;
 - Special Initiatives: there are a variety of special initiatives in collaboration with other agencies including Creative Forces, Sound Health Network, and a new MoU with the WHO.

- Two large studies will be coming out in early 2025, one based on arts education and academic and social/emotional outcomes, and the other based on arts participation and social/civic engagement.
- The NEA [just released findings](#) indicating art-goers (participants who attend some kind of art-related activity or event) tend to participate in more social activities, see friends and family more often, and report receiving more social and emotional support than those who do not participate in the arts.
- The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) has been working with the NEA to build a learning cohort of arts and health grantees and provide a synthesis report of lessons learned. A [policy strategy sampler](#) was also just released on health and civic infrastructure.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Following the presentations, space was provided for questions and reflections:

- Maggie Jarry, **SAMHSA, HHS**, asked if there was a qualitative or quantitative difference if a person contributed to or just consumed a mural in the hospital. There may be room for technology and development of expression in encouraging and allowing participation in the mural-creating process.
 - Nisha Sajnani: Producing the mural provided a higher value, but there is interest in determining the influence of those consuming the mural afterwards.
- Tremayne Youmans, **HUD**, asked a clarifying question to Dr. Sajnani about the partners to Breaking Ground. It was helpful to have housing experts who felt strongly about the role of the arts in the conversations in order to demonstrate the value.
- Donna Faraone, **VA**, notes that while the VA is adept at providing therapy, it is not so easy to identify and connect with art partners. Funding is available for those looking for employment in this area, and the VA is willing to partner with a local partner with grant money to support opportunities to expand this work. In particular, there is a need for supporting the transition from military to veteran status.
 - The [De-Cruit group](#) is a partner working in this space.
 - Victoria Sams, **NEH**: One of the NEH's Dialogues on the Experience of War grantees is based at NYU Steinhardt as well: [Helping Veterans Heal | NYU Steinhardt](#). This is the project: [NEH Award AV-279589-21, New York University](#)
- Katie Morton, **HUD**, notes that the Choice Neighborhoods program strives to create 'neighborhoods of choice,' relevant to the American Housing Survey question.
- Mindy Eisenberg and Kathy Hurd, **EPA**, note that while their offices do not work generally on climate change resiliency work, they do address the topic locally through issues like flood mitigation, water quality, and restoration activities through programs including their new Artist-in-Residence program.
- A final question was posed to the group on what IWG-AHCI can focus on moving into the second year of the group:

- Maggie Jarry, **SAMHSA, HHS**: Social prescribing is a topic with a lot of practical questions around financing, partnerships, etc., so it would be helpful to have space to discuss and learn, conduct a literature review, and any additional helpful information.
- Donna Faraone, **VA**: Practical applications of the group could include a small, collective project for the IWG-AHCI to collaborate on and learn from, and to leverage the federal resources available.
- Lindsay Campbell, **Forest Service, USDA**: Having smaller sub-groups or breakouts of the main IWG-AHCI could help dig deeper into some topics and get into line-level implementation in a way that is not currently possible in the larger group.
- Katherine Bray-Simons, **NEA**: New member Maxine Hillman of the Department of Energy has joined the meeting, and along with the EPA and Forest Service, is working on an Artist-in-Residence program that may be an area for connection.
- Courtney Kay, **DHS**: Exploring the grants and financial opportunities for the arts at a federal level would be helpful, as well as bringing law enforcement into arts grants programs and vice versa.

NEXT STEPS

- The next quarterly meeting will be in February, with date and location to be confirmed. Attendees are encouraged to consider what updates they could bring to the next meeting.
- The NEA will be beginning work with the IWG contractor and reaching out to the group with news and requests soon.

RESOURCES SHARED

- SAMHSA: [Coping with Bereavement and Grief](#)
- NEA: [National Endowment for the Arts Announces Arts, Health, and Well-being Demonstration Projects](#)
- NEA: [Sending Off 2024—A Bumper Year for Cross-Agency Collaborations through the Arts](#)
- OJJDP: [OJJDP national conference on youth justice reflects on progress, looks to future](#)
- NEA: [New Research Explores Arts Engagement and Social Connectedness](#)
- CommunicateHealth: [Arts on Prescription: A Field Guide for US Communities](#)

ATTENDEES

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Additional Guests

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