

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
FY 2018-2022**



**National  
Endowment  
for the Arts**  
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# NEA STRATEGIC PLAN IN BRIEF: AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## MISSION STATEMENT

To strengthen the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation.

## VISION STATEMENT

A nation in which every American benefits from arts engagement, and every community recognizes and celebrates its aspirations and achievements through the arts.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

### Goal 1. Support Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

#### **Objective 1.1 Honor and support artistic activities and traditions across the nation.**

Description: *The NEA nourishes, sustains, and elevates artistic and cultural traditions throughout America. In addition to its grantmaking, strategic partnerships, and leadership initiatives serving this objective, the agency awards two honorifics: NEA National Heritage Fellowships and NEA Jazz Masters.*

#### **Objective 1.2 Expand the portfolio of American art.**

Description: *NEA grantmaking supports the commissioning and creation of new works. Fellowships to creative writers and literary translators, and strategic partnerships such as the Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, also serve this objective.*

#### **Objective 1.3 Strengthen the cultural infrastructure of the nation.**

Description: *The workers, industries, organizations, and communities that produce artworks and arts experiences are vital to the nation's creativity and to its greater social, civic, and economic well-being. NEA-funded professional development opportunities for artists and cultural workers, artist residencies, publications, and convenings provide opportunities to connect cultural providers with other sectors and resources.*

### Goal 2. Cultivate Public Engagement with, and Access to, Various Forms of Excellent Art across the Nation

#### **Objective 2.1 Provide opportunities for the American people to engage with the arts.**

Description: *The NEA creates opportunities for the general public to participate in the arts as audiences through a variety of media. The agency supports projects that seek to engage the public directly with artworks across all artistic disciplines. Leadership initiatives such as Blue Star Museums, the NEA Big Read, and Shakespeare in American Communities also serve this objective.*

#### **Objective 2.2 Provide opportunities for the American people to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.**

Description: *The NEA funds arts learning opportunities across a spectrum of artistic disciplines, learning environments, and geographic locations. Projects range from live arts events with an educational component, to standards-based arts education activities for K-12 students, and community-wide approaches that realize a collective impact through arts education. Strategic partnerships and initiatives such as Poetry Out Loud, the Arts Education Partnership, and the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education are also critical.*

#### **Objective 2.3 Provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life.**

Description: *Arts and cultural assets and activities contribute to the flourishing of communities—whether urban or rural, or small, mid-sized, or large—across the nation. Through projects that integrate the arts with local economic and community development, the NEA funds opportunities for cultural providers to partner with different stakeholders and sectors to meet community needs. The NEA's Our Town program exemplifies this objective.*

**Objective 2.4 Support access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health.**

Description: *The NEA supports projects and activities that deliver creative arts therapies to patients and caregivers in clinical and non-clinical settings alike. Similarly, the agency supports arts programming that is integrated into healthcare settings or in health interventions. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the agency oversees Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network.*

**Goal 3. Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts**

**Objective 3.1 Inform and engage with the American people about arts activities and artists in communities across the country and their importance to the vitality of the nation.**

Description: *All Americans can benefit from knowing about the presence and contributions of artists, artistic practices, and arts organizations in their daily lives. Through a variety of traditional and social media, the agency curates and shares this information to encourage broader public discourse about the arts and their impact.*

**Objective 3.2 Expand and promote evidence of the value and impact of the arts for the benefit of the American people.**

Description: *Rigorous studies and analyses will provide researchers, arts practitioners, policymakers, and the general public with accurate, relevant, and timely information about the arts. Through its research agenda, including grants opportunities, studies, and datasets, the NEA fulfills this need.*

**Objective 3.3 Provide opportunities for the international exchange of artists, artworks, and arts activities.**

Description: *Fulfilling this objective, the enduring excellence of U.S. artists and artworks are showcased for audiences abroad; reciprocally, U.S. audiences benefit from opportunities to experience international artists and artworks in the United States. The NEA is a key point of contact for international cultural visitors and others who seek to learn about the U.S. infrastructure for domestic arts programs.*

**Goal 4. Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence**

**Objective 4.1 Be an effective and vigilant steward of public funds.**

Description: *Entrusted with the NEA's mission, the agency's employees strive to build and sustain public confidence in its business processes and procedures. To accomplish this objective, the NEA invests in efficient and effective systems to ensure that every dollar is accounted for. The agency demonstrates this competency through annual financial audits. The agency also ensures grantee compliance with regulations about the proper use of federal funds. In recent years, the NEA has consistently received annual letters of commendation from the Office of Government Ethics.*

**Objective 4.2 Be transparent and accountable to the public.**

Description: *As with all government agencies, the NEA must be accountable to the public by providing knowledge and information about its operations and decision-making. The NEA accomplishes this objective in part by fulfilling accessibility requirements for its website and printed materials, by maintaining and improving digital tools such as the NEA Online Grant Search, and by providing equitable access to agency opportunities in as simplified and streamlined a manner as possible.*

**Objective 4.3 Attract and maintain a diverse, creative, knowledgeable, productive, and motivated workforce.**

Description: *The NEA's workforce is at the heart of its ability to provide the American people with the highest level of service. The NEA identifies critical workforce needs; it recruits strategically and in compliance with government hiring principles; it provides workers with incentives such as training and advancement opportunities, as appropriate; and it develops and maintains policies and processes to ensure excellent performance.*

**Objective 4.4 Recruit and engage citizens as panelists who will make recommendations for NEA awards that meet the highest standards of excellence.**

Description: *The public has a significant role in the NEA review of applications seeking agency funds. Reflecting wide demographic and geographic characteristics, citizen panelists participate in the decision-making process for virtually all the NEA's awards. The NEA ensures that different viewpoints are heard at panel meetings, by experts and non-experts, enhancing the value of NEA grantmaking for all Americans.*



## **CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE**

Through strategic partnerships and award-making, ensure that NEA-funded activities reach a wide breadth of geographic locations and underserved populations across the country.

Description: The NEA makes it a priority to give historically underserved populations every opportunity to benefit from the projects it supports. The agency accomplishes this cross-cutting objective by ensuring that grants are awarded in each congressional district and by monitoring the presence of NEA-funded activities in urban versus rural areas and in high-poverty populations. This work is amplified and extended through the NEA's state and regional partnership agreements.

## **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The NEA Strategic Plan applies to all agency activities, foremost among them being grantmaking, but also activities such as leadership initiatives, convenings, strategic partnerships (with federal agencies, state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, and other public and private organizations), and the agency's internal operations.

# NEA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: 2018-2022

## MISSION STATEMENT

To strengthen the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation.

## VISION STATEMENT

A nation in which every American benefits from arts engagement, and every community recognizes and celebrates its aspirations and achievements through the arts.

### GOAL 1

Support Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

- OBJECTIVE 1.1** Honor and support artistic activities and traditions across the nation.
- OBJECTIVE 1.2** Expand the portfolio of American art.
- OBJECTIVE 1.3** Strengthen the cultural infrastructure of the nation.

### GOAL 2

Cultivate Public Engagement with, and Access to, Various Forms of Excellent Art across the Nation

- OBJECTIVE 2.1** Provide opportunities for the American people to engage with the arts.
- OBJECTIVE 2.2** Provide opportunities for the American people to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.
- OBJECTIVE 2.3** Provide opportunities for the arts to be integrated into the fabric of community life.
- OBJECTIVE 2.4** Support access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health.

### GOAL 3

Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

- OBJECTIVE 3.1** Inform and engage with the American people about arts activities and artists in communities across the country and their importance to the vitality of the nation.
- OBJECTIVE 3.2** Expand and promote evidence of the value and impact of the arts for the benefit of the American people.
- OBJECTIVE 3.3** Provide opportunities for the international exchange of artists, artworks, and arts activities.

### GOAL 4

Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

- OBJECTIVE 4.1** Be an effective and vigilant steward of public funds.
- OBJECTIVE 4.2** Be transparent and accountable to the public.
- OBJECTIVE 4.3** Attract and maintain a diverse, creative, knowledgeable, productive, and motivated workforce.
- OBJECTIVE 4.4** Recruit and engage citizens as panelists who will make recommendations for NEA awards that meet the highest standards of excellence.

## CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE

Through strategic partnerships and award-making, ensure that NEA-funded activities reach a wide breadth of geographic locations and underserved populations across the country.

EXPLANATORY NOTE: The NEA Strategic Plan applies to all agency activities, foremost among them being grantmaking, but also activities such as leadership initiatives, convenings, strategic partnerships (with federal agencies, state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, and other public and private organizations), and the agency's internal operations.

# Introduction

***“The arts... belong to all the people of the United States.”\****

As the premier arts agency of the U.S. government, the National Endowment for the Arts has established itself as a vital and sustaining force in American culture, committed to serving all Americans by bringing the arts into their lives, schools, and communities.

Over the past 50 years, the NEA has become the largest funder of the arts and arts education nationwide and, as a catalyst of public and private support for the arts, an essential institution. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA annually awards an average of approximately 2,300 grants and cooperative agreements exceeding \$117 million, funding the arts in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions, including rural and urban areas, and reaching civilian and military populations. The agency also exercises leadership through targeted support of key initiatives, research and evaluation, and domestic and international partnerships.

NEA grantees include nonprofit organizations; units of state and local government; federally recognized tribal communities or tribes; and, where permitted, individuals. The NEA awards dollar-for-dollar matching grants to support exemplary projects in the following areas:

Accessibility	Museums
Artist Communities	Music
Arts Education	Musical Theater
Dance	Opera
Design & Creative Placemaking	Presenting & Multidisciplinary Works
Folk and Traditional Arts	Research
International	State & Regional Arts Organizations
Literature	Theater
Local Arts Agencies	Visual Arts
Media Arts	

\*National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965, as amended.

All grant applications to the NEA are reviewed on the basis of artistic excellence and artistic merit. Applications generally receive three levels of review. First, they are evaluated by advisory panels composed of a diverse group of disciplinary experts and other individuals, including at least one knowledgeable layperson. Panels make recommendations that are forwarded to the National Council on the Arts.

The [National Council on the Arts](#), the NEA's standing advisory body, is comprised of nationally and internationally renowned artists, distinguished scholars, and arts patrons appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Council also includes non-voting Congressional members that are appointed by Senate and House leadership from both sides of the aisle. The Council reviews and votes to approve or reject the applications. Its recommendations for funding are sent to the NEA chairman, who reviews those applications and makes the final decision on all grant awards.

By law, 40 percent of the NEA's grantmaking dollars are awarded to the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and the six regional arts organizations (RAOs). These funds are administered through Partnership Agreements with the SAAs and RAOs—an investment that catalyzes arts projects in thousands of communities across the country. Partnership Agreements allow the NEA to build and sustain local capacity for planning, programming, evaluation, and communications.

Through these agreements, moreover, the NEA supports creation and implementation of statewide and region-wide plans for strengthening arts education and fostering the arts in underserved communities. Each plan reflects the priorities of the state's or region's citizens, whose views are solicited by each SAA/RAO through public hearings.

Together with the dollars that the NEA's grants routinely leverage, the agreements vastly extend the agency's reach and impact, aligning national leadership with local benefits. These partners are critical to the NEA's ability to fulfill its mission.

**Mission:** *To strengthen the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation.*

The NEA mission is based on an abiding conviction that the arts play an integral role in national life and public discourse. The first half of the statement refers to the NEA's deep-rooted investment in the artistic and creative assets of diverse places and people throughout the country. The agency is committed to helping organizations that seek to leverage these assets more effectively as part of a comprehensive strategy to integrate the arts into the fabric of community life.

The second half identifies the need to reach every individual with multiple channels for engaging with artistic excellence, thus improving the likelihood that Americans from all backgrounds will benefit directly from the NEA's activities.

The inspirational values of artistic excellence and creativity that define the agency's role within the federal government and the nation are articulated by the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, as amended. These "Declarations of Findings and Purposes" include:

- "An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future."
- "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts...designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants."
- "While no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the federal government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent."
- "To fulfill its educational mission, achieve an orderly continuation of free society, and provide models of excellence to the American people, the federal government must transmit the achievement and values of civilization from the past via the present to the future, and make widely available the greatest achievements of art."

The NEA's vision statement rests on those enduring claims. The arts allow Americans to dream of fresh possibilities and to expand their horizons as thinkers and citizens in a world of complex ideas and technologies, as well as to contribute to the cultural legacy of the nation. Access to imagination and artistic creativity is an inherent good; it also can awaken the potential for a better quality of life. Engagement with the arts will allow Americans to fully realize their creative and imaginative potential as individuals and as communities.

**Vision Statement:** *A nation in which every American benefits from arts engagement, and every community recognizes and celebrates its aspirations and achievements through the arts.*

### Consultation

This strategic plan is the result of thorough consultation with the agency's stakeholders. Early feedback on the strategic framework was collected from agency staff, state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, and arts associations. A representative sample of the agency's grantees was also consulted. Collectively, this feedback shaped the FY 2018 strategic framework. Members of the National Council on the Arts and the agency's leadership and its program and administrative staff were also engaged in shaping the strategic framework and identifying strategies that will guide the agency's work for the next four years.

As part of the agency's efforts, and as required by statute ([5 U.S.C. § 306\(d\)](#)), the NEA has also consulted with Congress, including majority and minority views from the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations (Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittees), the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

# Strategic Goal 1

## Support Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Throughout its history, the United States of America has exemplified ingenuity and inventiveness in such diverse fields as science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, commerce, and information technology. But our nation's advances in artistic excellence and innovation have been no less profound or transformative.

American artworks are recognized and celebrated worldwide. American artists have made indelible contributions such as original plays and literature; music and dance compositions; paintings, sculpture, and craft arts; films, video, and photography; and architecture and design. The National Endowment for the Arts exists to support art that meets the highest standards of excellence—whether such projects involve celebrating artistic and cultural traditions, creating original artworks, or strengthening the nation's cultural infrastructure.

### Strategic Objective 1.1

#### Honor and Support Artistic Activities and Traditions across the Nation

The NEA has continually lauded and preserved significant cultural contributions and traditions as part of the country's artistic legacy. For example, in 1982 the agency recognized the need to preserve the distinctly American art form of jazz as well as folk and traditional art forms in order that they may be practiced and enjoyed by new generations of Americans. This recognition spurred creation of two lifetime awards honoring artists in these fields: [NEA Jazz Masters Fellowships](#) and [NEA National Heritage Fellowships](#).

The comprehensive scope and variety of artistic offerings supported by the NEA presents myriad opportunities to engage Americans with new and old artistic traditions. By funding these opportunities, but also through national leadership initiatives and strategic partnerships, the NEA promotes civic dialogue around vital and constantly reinvigorated artistic practices, shaped by values and standards of excellence that are passed from generation to generation.

## Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicle for the agency's investment in projects that support recognition and preservation of artistic and cultural traditions in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support archival, documentation, and preservation projects and mentorships and apprenticeships across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Offering NEA Jazz Masters and National Heritage Fellowship awards, through an annual public nomination process, to recognize exemplary artists in jazz and the folk/traditional arts, respectively.
3. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the [state arts agencies and regional arts organizations](#) (SAAs/RAOs).

## Contributing Programs

The NEA's grantmaking to organizations, honorific awards (including the NEA Jazz Masters awards and the National Heritage Fellowships) and State/Regional Partnership Agreements remain the agency's chief tools for honoring and supporting artistic activities and traditions across the country.

Separately, the NEA partners with the SAAs/RAOs to honor and support artistic activities and traditions. Examples of such programs include:

- [Shakespeare in American Communities](#), which brings professional theater productions of Shakespeare to small and medium-sized communities across the country;
- [Poetry Out Loud](#), which encourages high school students' learning, memorization, and recitation of great poetry; and
- [NEA Big Read](#), in which communities across the country get together to read and discuss contemporary literature.

The [Folk & Traditional Arts Partnerships](#) (i.e., “state folklife programs”)—which are predominantly, but not exclusively, situated at state arts agencies—promote awareness of the folk arts in communities and assist communities in documenting and sustaining these living traditions.

Furthermore, the NEA partners with other federal agencies on programs such as [Save America’s Treasures](#), which preserves nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey our nation’s rich cultural heritage.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

As seen above, the NEA works with federal, state, and local partners, as well as private and nonprofit organizations, to honor and support artistic activities and traditions in the United States.

Moreover, to support this objective, the NEA has worked over the years with diverse federal agencies such as the National Park Service, the Departments of Education, Transportation, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Smithsonian Institution.

The NEA also works with nonprofit organizations on specific projects, such as the Poetry Foundation for Poetry Out Loud.

### External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA’s ability to meet this objective include the advanced age of many practitioners of America’s artistic and cultural traditions. Intergenerational learning about these art forms, genres, and techniques will be needed to ensure a pipeline of new talent and the availability of audiences to appreciate such works at home and abroad. In addition, the financial sustainability of artistic careers in the U.S. is a factor affecting the success of this objective.

### Performance Goals

Success for this objective will mean that artistic activities and traditions are preserved for the enjoyment and enlightenment of future generations. The NEA will support excellent projects covering a wide range of artistic and cultural traditions across the country, including those in rural and historically underserved areas. Additionally, master artists will be honored for their exceptional achievements and for their tangible contributions to the nation’s artistic heritage.

### Evidence Building

The NEA is in the planning phase of an outcome evaluation study of Poetry Out Loud, a national poetry recitation competition co-created with the Poetry Foundation and administered in partnership with state arts agencies from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. The purpose of this evaluation study is primarily to assess the student-level outcomes associated with the program under optimally implemented conditions. Findings from the study will be used to guide future NEA investments in this competition. The Poetry Foundation is co-funding this study with the NEA. The study is expected to conclude in FY 2020.

Finally, building on a FY 2017 NEA study that examined the agency’s Folk Arts Partnerships grants, the NEA is conducting a [qualitative analysis](#) of other grant applications and grantee final reports that fall into the NEA’s Folk & Traditional Arts portfolio. The intent of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how projects are implemented and what concrete outcomes they attain. The study report is anticipated by early FY 2019.

## Strategic Objective 1.2

### Expand the Portfolio of American Art

American art affirms the creative genius of the nation’s spirit, assesses the full range of individual and societal experiences composing the nation’s identity and that of its peoples, meditates on its struggles and conflicts, and envisions new prospects for the future. The NEA is committed to enriching the nation’s artistic output. It does so by funding projects that commission original artistic pieces, and by providing direct support to [creative writers and literary translators of distinction](#).

### Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA’s Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicle for the agency’s investment in projects that expand the portfolio of American art in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support creative activities (e.g., commissioning new works) across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Offering individual fellowships that support creative writers and literary translators.

3. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the SAAs/RAOs to meet this objective.

### Contributing Programs

The NEA's grantmaking to organizations, its fellowships for creative writers and literary translators, and its State/Regional Partnership Agreements remain the agency's chief tools for expanding the portfolio of American art across the country.

In recent years, the NEA also has launched initiatives such as the [Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge](#), a competition for high school students to create new musical works that could become part of the American songbook.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

Apart from grantee organizations and SAAs/RAOs that help the NEA to achieve this objective, the agency currently is working with the nonprofit American Theatre Wing in collaboration with private organizations Disney Theatrical Productions and Playbill, Inc., to produce the Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, referenced above.

### External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA's ability to achieve this objective include the financial sustainability of artistic careers in the U.S.

### Performance Goals

Success for this objective would mean that an incremental but substantial number of new original artworks would flourish within the United States, representing all artistic disciplines and geographic areas.

### Evidence Building

In FY 2019, the NEA will report findings from a comprehensive analysis of national statistics describing the artistic and cultural workforce in the U.S. To rely on multiple federal data sources, this research report will present demographic, geographic, employment, and earnings trends for artists and other cultural workers.

## Strategic Objective 1.3

### Strengthen the Cultural Infrastructure of the Nation

The NEA's founding legislation, as amended, states: "It is necessary and appropriate for the federal government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent." These "material conditions" include the financial and human resources needed for designing, planning, and executing projects showcasing artistic excellence. Although it is unreasonable to suppose that any single federal agency can fully support this vast cultural enterprise, the NEA is positioned to shape key components of it—through direct grantmaking and State/Regional Partnership Agreements, and also through research, publications, and convenings.

### Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicles for the agency's investment in projects that strengthen the cultural infrastructure of the nation. Additionally, the NEA accomplishes this work through its Office of Research & Analysis and Office of Public Affairs.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support professional development opportunities, artist residencies and other support systems, mentorships and apprenticeships, and other services to the field, across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, associations, and the SAAs/RAOs.
3. Monitoring and reporting on the state of U.S. arts and cultural infrastructure in terms of occupations, industries, and citizen engagement with artistic and creative activities.
4. Through publications and convenings, leading national discussions of key issues affecting the future of the U.S. arts and cultural infrastructure.

## Contributing Programs

The NEA's grantmaking to organizations, and its State/Regional Partnership Agreements, remain the agency's chief tools for strengthening the nation's cultural infrastructure. NEA research, special convenings, and communications to the field also play a role.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

In 2016, the NEA partnered with the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) to conduct a national study on current conditions for artists and the trends affecting their ability to create work and contribute to their communities. A convening brought together more than 200 artists, arts leaders, and creative thinkers from across the country and across sectors to discuss how creativity manifests itself in different fields and how to make resources and opportunities accessible to those who want to pursue a creative life. CCI authored a [report](#) that investigates the current conditions for artists and trends affecting their ability to create work and contribute to their communities. The report also included examples of successful partnerships.

The NEA works continually with its partners—the state arts agencies, regional arts organizations, associations, and arts nonprofits—to determine the best ways to address needs and trends in America's cultural community. Just one example is the NEA-supported EngAGE Initiative, a collaboration between state arts agencies and the National Center for Creative Aging to develop infrastructure and programming in arts, health, and aging, via communities of practice.

In another context, the NEA has worked with other federal agencies, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the White House Council on Native American Affairs.

Finally, to obtain periodic readings of the state of the nation's arts and cultural infrastructure, it is necessary to collaborate with larger federal statistical agencies that can provide these data. The NEA partners with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for [data on arts/cultural industries](#) and with the U.S. Census Bureau for [data on public participation in artistic and creative activities](#).

## External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA's ability to achieve this objective include the financial sustainability of artists' careers, nonprofit arts organizations, and other cultural providers. In addition, NEA leadership must be alert to larger social and economic trends—no less than specific artistic or cultural trends—affecting the supply and demand of artistic goods and services.

## Performance Goals

Success for this objective would mean an incremental but substantial number of services provided to the field through professional development or other opportunities supported by the NEA.

## Evidence Building

In FY 2018, the agency will report findings from a comprehensive analysis of national statistics concerning the artistic and cultural workforce in the U.S. To rely on multiple federal data sources, this research report will present demographic, geographic, employment, and earnings trends for artists and other cultural workers.

In FYs 2018 and 2019, the NEA will report findings from surveys it has conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, about adults' participation in artistic and creative activities.

In each of the years covered by this strategic plan, the NEA will report findings related to the U.S. Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, a research collaboration with the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Meanwhile, planning is underway for a study examining the media arts landscape in the United States. The intent of the study is to increase understanding of media artists, including their needs for support and their roles within the greater arts sector.



# Strategic Goal 2

## Cultivate Public Engagement with, and Access to, Various Forms of Excellent Art across the Nation

Artworks and audiences come together to create an experience that is unique, memorable, and life-affirming. Americans connect with art by attending music, dance, and theater performances; by touring architectural sites and art exhibits; by reading works of literature; and by enjoying artworks through electronic and digital media. Americans also participate in the arts through a variety of learning opportunities. Arts and cultural assets and activities contribute to the flourishing of communities—whether urban or rural, or small, mid-sized, or large—across the nation. Creative arts therapies and arts-in-health programs contribute to the health and healing of individuals.

The arts spur job creation, productivity, and economic growth. Artists, arts workers, and arts industries improve the aesthetic appeal of a community—and they play key roles in increasing civic pride and well-being, and in drawing local investments. The arts allow spaces and opportunities for community members of different backgrounds to converge on a shared aesthetic experience, one that summons their collective creativity and allows them to re-imagine their surroundings.

This strategic goal recognizes the importance of supporting numerous and diverse opportunities for the American people to engage directly with excellent artworks and to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts throughout their lives. It also champions the integration of arts and cultural practices with community life and it elevates the healing role of the arts.

### Strategic Objective 2.1

#### Provide Opportunities for the American People to Engage with the Arts

Arts experiences open new vistas of possibility, they challenge our aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual constructs, and they enlarge our understanding of what it means to be human.

Americans connect with art by attending music, dance, and theater performances; by touring architectural sites and art exhibits; and by reading works of literature. They participate through electronic media—including TV, radio,

handheld or mobile devices, and the internet—whether sampling a video clip, curating a playlist, or downloading a blog entry about graphic art. Furthermore, American audiences and artists are constantly discovering the potential for immersive storytelling technologies such as virtual and augmented reality.

The NEA's grantmaking programs are responsive to the changing landscape of arts participation. The agency rewards innovative strategies and models for engaging the public directly with arts experiences and for making them accessible to all.

Similarly, just as the NEA is charged with helping to preserve America's great artistic traditions in all their variety, it also has a responsibility to bring those works and artistic practices into diverse populations and thereby stimulate new discoveries for all people. This emphasis on art "delivery" systems is in keeping with a new generation of arts audiences who, faced with many competing options for spending discretionary time, nevertheless appear to prefer personal participation in the arts over passive spectatorship.

### Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicle for the agency's investment in projects that support recognition and preservation of artistic and cultural traditions in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support public engagement with the arts across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the SAAs/RAOs to support this objective. Notable examples of initiatives resulting from such partnerships are [Blue Star Museums](#), [NEA Big Read](#), [Shakespeare in American Communities](#), and [Poetry Out Loud](#).

### Contributing Programs

By funding projects whose primary purpose is to introduce artworks to audiences, the NEA provides Americans with new opportunities for rich and meaningful arts experiences. As is the case with projects dedicated to the

creation of excellent art, projects that bring artworks to audiences are supported both by direct grants and by NEA funds awarded through state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. Supported activities include:

- Exhibitions, performances, concerts, and readings
- Film screenings
- Touring and outreach activities
- Restaging of repertory and master works of historical significance
- Art fairs and festivals
- Public programs that raise awareness of artistic and cultural heritage
- Broadcasts on television and radio, video games, mobile apps, live streaming audio- and video-on-demand, podcasts, digital audio files, and other digital applications
- Publication, production, and promotion of digital, audio, mobile, online, or print publications; catalogues; and searchable information databases
- Projects that extend the arts to underserved populations, including those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, socioeconomic status, disability, or by living in institutional settings
- Projects that bring artists to work directly with a community

The NEA also provides technical assistance to help arts organizations understand and comply with federal accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, including the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. NEA grantees are required to affirm their assurance of compliance with these laws.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

The agency collaborates with several entities to produce national leadership initiatives around arts engagement.

- Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the NEA, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and museums across America. Each summer since 2010, the Blue Star Museums program has offered free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

- The NEA Big Read is an initiative of the NEA in partnership with Arts Midwest. The program supports approximately 75 community reading programs every year, each designed around a single NEA Big Read selection.
- Poetry Out Loud, a national recitation competition for high school students, was created by the NEA and the Poetry Foundation. The competition is administered in partnership with the state arts agencies of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.
- Shakespeare in American Communities, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history, brings professional theater productions of Shakespeare and related educational activities to Americans in small and mid-sized communities throughout the country through an agreement between the NEA and Arts Midwest.

Furthermore, The NEA Museums Office administers the U.S. government's [Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program](#) on behalf of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The Indemnity Program was created by Congress in 1975 for the purpose of minimizing the costs of insuring international exhibitions for U.S. nonprofit museums and organizations, thus increasing the American people's access to great works of art from all over the nation and world.

### External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA's ability to meet this objective include changes in the way people choose to engage with the arts. Recent NEA research indicates flat or reduced rates of attendance at certain types of live arts events (e.g., classical music, jazz, theater, ballet, and opera).

NEA research has shown that 13 percent of all adults wanted to attend a live arts event in a particular year, but ultimately opted not to, citing different reasons such as lack of time, cost of the event, or difficulty getting to the location. The NEA and its partners will work to address such barriers in coming years.

### Performance Goals

Success for this objective would mean incremental but substantial numbers of people from various demographic and geographic backgrounds engaging in NEA-funded projects across all artistic disciplines.

## Evidence Building

In recent years, the NEA has analyzed and reported on nationally representative data from surveys such as the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, the Annual Arts Benchmarking Survey, the General Social Survey, and the Health and Retirement Study to understand demographic and behavioral patterns affecting arts participation.

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, the NEA will report findings from surveys it has conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau about adults' participation across five modes of art activity: attending; reading books and literature; consuming through electronic media; making and sharing; and learning. A monograph series released by FY 2019 will explore in greater depth topics such as barriers, motivations, and personal preferences affecting arts participation.

## Strategic Objective 2.2

### **Provide opportunities for the American people to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.**

By helping to foster public appreciation and understanding of various art forms, genres, and artistic traditions, the NEA will build public capacity for lifelong participation in the arts. For audiences, the result will be a richer and more complex and meaningful arts experience. For artists and teachers, the NEA will facilitate the transfer of critical knowledge and skills that will enable them to refine their abilities and improve their work.

Beyond enriching the quality of personal arts experiences, arts education is a hallmark of civilization. The [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), enacted in 2015, recognizes the arts as core to a well-rounded education. ESSA discusses the provision of such educational experiences to all students, including female students, minority students, English learners, children with disabilities, and low-income students, who often go underrepresented in critical and enriching subjects. These well-rounded experiences include increasing student access to the arts and improving student engagement and achievement in arts activities and programs.

The benefits of an arts education throughout life have been reported by numerous research studies and publications. For example, socioeconomically disadvantaged children and teenagers who participate

in arts-intensive learning have shown greater academic, social, and civic engagement compared with peers who did not participate in such opportunities. Similarly, research and evaluation have demonstrated the potential benefits of arts education when integrated with STEM disciplines in formal learning environments.

## Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicles for the agency's investment in the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support acquisition of knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life, across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the SAAs/RAOs, to meet this objective. Notable examples of initiatives resulting from such partnerships are Poetry Out Loud, Shakespeare in American Communities, the [Arts Education Partnership](#), and [State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education](#).

## Contributing Programs

The agency employs two approaches in its grantmaking for projects that focus on providing opportunities to learn in and about the arts. One approach is exemplified by the [Arts Education](#) discipline's funding strategy that benefits pre-K-12 students. Representative project activities include:

- Direct learning projects for standards-based arts education activities for pre-K-12 students
- Professional development projects that improve instruction by equipping artists, school superintendents, principals, teachers, and other education providers with the skills and confidence to effectively engage students in high-quality arts learning
- Collective impact projects that increase student access to arts education through large-scale, cross-sector, systemic approaches
- Assessments and evaluations of arts learning

The second approach is broader. It supports opportunities for Americans across the life continuum in more informal contexts. Representative project activities include:

- Lifelong learning activities for youth, adults, and intergenerational groups
- Online courses and training
- Lectures and symposia
- Production, publication, and distribution of teachers'/facilitators' guides
- Innovative practices in arts learning for Americans of all ages
- Engagement with living artists (e.g., in the classroom and/or through apprenticeships)
- Informal education programs, workshops, and demonstrations
- Arts learning programs for older adults in community settings, residential settings, and healthcare/long-term care settings

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA works in partnership with other federal agencies to support and promote arts education. Most visible among these partnerships is the Arts Education Partnership (AEP). Established through an interagency agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education, AEP is currently supported as a center within the Education Commission of the States (ECS) by a cooperative agreement between the NEA and ECS. The Arts Education Partnership is dedicated to advancing the arts in education through research, policy, and practice, and serves as the nation's hub for individuals and organizations committed to making high-quality arts education accessible to all U.S. students.

Through a separate collaboration with ECS, the NEA is undertaking the [Statewide Data Infrastructure Project for Arts Education](#). This initiative will identify and interrogate data about K-12 student access to and enrollment in arts education within all 50 states and the District of Columbia by engaging arts education stakeholders in dialogue, fostering a supportive policy environment, and sharing tools and effective practices.

In addition, the NEA works with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies to support a Professional Development Institute for education managers at state arts agencies.

### External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA's ability to achieve this objective include the changing policy landscape for arts education in the U.S. First, although federal law has designated arts education as a core academic subject to be taught in our nation's public schools, states have struggled to keep it in the curriculum. Budget cuts to state education departments, state arts agencies, and school districts have contributed in many cases to a weakening of arts education at the local level. Secondly, state policies and methods for evaluating teacher practices and assessing student learning in the arts differ widely—as do strategies for their implementation.

In addressing the aging Baby Boomers cohort, arts organizations will need to accommodate an increasing number of people with functional limitations, including diminishing eyesight and hearing, loss of mobility, and growing cognitive impairment. Organizations will need to be ready to adapt their programs to retain and attract older audiences and participants, as well as younger people with disabilities.

### Performance Goals

Success for this objective means that incremental but substantial numbers of people of all ages and from various demographic and geographic backgrounds engage in arts learning through NEA-funded projects in all artistic disciplines.

### Evidence Building

In FY 2018 and FY 2019, the NEA will report findings from surveys it has conducted in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau, about adults' participation in arts classes or lessons.

In addition, the agency has planned two major evaluation activities intended to support this objective. The NEA will build an evidence-based logic model and measurement model for the NEA's Arts Education Collective Impact grants. Developing a common measurement system across grant projects is an important goal for the NEA, as it would position the agency to use grantee data for an outcome evaluation study in the future. Work on this project is scheduled to begin in FY 2018.

Another significant evidence-building activity is the Statewide Data Infrastructure Project for Arts Education, launched in FY 2018. This project will bring greater

access and transparency to public data about K-12 student participation in arts education through the creation of a toolkit that will provide user guides, dashboard wireframes, and training materials to help states build their own systems for extracting, analyzing, reporting, and communicating data about arts education. Thus, it is hoped that key metrics related to students' access and enrollment in K-12 education—as well as the underlying data and the methods for obtaining and analyzing them—become integral to education policy discussions within states, across states, and ultimately at the national level.

Easy access to timely, reliable data about arts education is a prerequisite for knowing how much and to whom arts education is being delivered in schools. These data can help decision-makers determine whether they are meeting national and state policies and content standards regarding arts education. In addition, these data can help state departments of education, state arts agencies, funders, and others to direct resources to increase the likelihood that all students will benefit from an education that includes the arts.

### Strategic Objective 2.3

#### **Provide Opportunities for the Arts to Be Integrated into the Fabric of Community Life.**

Artists, arts workers, and arts industries play a critical role in helping communities flourish as lively, beautiful, and resilient places. Through the arts, communities can imagine new possibilities for their future, or solve a specific local problem. The arts also provide a means for bringing together communities, people, places, and economic opportunity via physical spaces or new relationships.

In service of this objective, the NEA supports grants to organizations across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas. For instance, the NEA has supported festivals of traditional American music and dance that amplify a region's cultural heritage. It has also supported arts activities that engage local residents in art-making in public spaces. Other NEA-funded projects serving this objective have expanded local creative industries.

The most prominent NEA activity that provides opportunities for the arts to be integrated with community life is [creative placemaking](#). The benefits of creative placemaking are visible in both rural and urban communities when artists, arts organizations,

and community development practitioners deliberately integrate arts and culture into community revitalization work—placing the arts at the table with land use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies. [Our Town grants](#), awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts, help to advance and sustain the increased utilization of art, culture, and design activities in community development through diverse, cross-sector partners.

### Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices are the primary vehicle for the agency's investment in projects that support integration of the arts in community life across all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support the integration of the arts in community life across a spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.
2. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the SAAs/RAOs to support this objective. Notable examples of initiatives resulting from such partnerships are Our Town, the [Citizens' Institute on Rural Design](#), and the [Mayors' Institute on City Design](#).

### Contributing Programs

To accomplish this objective, the agency will dedicate a portion of grantmaking funds to projects that integrate the arts into the fabric of community life. Below are representative project activities:

- Arts engagement, including artist residencies, arts festivals, community co-creation of art, performances, and public art (both permanent and temporary)
- Cultural planning, including cultural district planning, cultural/creative asset mapping, and public art planning
- Design, including artist/designer-facilitated community planning, design of artist space, design of cultural facilities, and public space design
- Artist and creative industry support, including creative business and professional artist development

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA works closely with many federal, state, and local partners on integrating the arts into the fabric of community life throughout the country. The agency partners with federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Delta Regional Authority to align community development goals and leverage federal resources. State partners include all of the state arts agencies (56 in all, including territories and DC), the six regional arts organizations, and, as applicable, governors, when NEA grants are awarded in their states.

On the local level, the NEA works with mayors when grants are awarded in their cities, and also through the NEA program Mayors' Institute on City Design, which convenes mayors and design experts to solve critical planning and design challenges facing their cities.

In addition, the NEA works with arts nonprofits throughout the country to promote the arts, as well as with associations such as Americans for the Arts and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

## External Factors

Apart from budgetary or staffing constraints, factors that could affect the NEA's ability to achieve this objective include:

1. **Leadership:** Local leaders play a key role in directing and steering project activities. Depending on the partnership makeup, leadership may include committed governmental, nonprofit, civic, and private sector leaders.
2. **Cross-sector partnerships:** The success of projects seeking to integrate the arts into the fabric of community life is dependent on the strength of partnerships that may cut across private, public, and nonprofit sectors, as well as community development sectors (e.g., health, public safety, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure).
3. **Financial resources:** Funds available to the grantee influence the implementation of the project activities. This includes the grant provided by the NEA as well as matching/other funds provided by local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and other kinds of stakeholder.

4. **Community buy-in:** Participation and support from local community leaders and residents are instrumental in creating the shared vision and assuring execution of the project activities.

## Performance Goals

Success for this objective will mean increased and sustained utilization of art, culture, and design activities in community development through diverse, cross-sector partnerships supported by the NEA. During the term of this strategic plan, the NEA will assess final reports submitted for all grant projects, including those that had the primary purpose of integrating the arts into the fabric of community life. The NEA aims to award a majority of such grants to projects that support cross-sector opportunities for the arts to be integrated with local economic and community development through arts engagement, cultural planning, design, and artist and creative industry support.

Indicators of progress toward this goal include increases in the number of awards made to projects with community-focused goals, partners from non-arts sectors, and that incorporate arts engagement, cultural planning, design, and artist and/or creative industry support activities in the project design.

## Evidence Building

During FY 2017, the NEA developed a conceptual framework for its Our Town program, including a theory of change, logic model, and measurement model, to address a need to improve the assessment of outcomes from its creative placemaking investments. This work was carefully informed by a review of other federal, place-based initiatives as well as by NEA Design staff consultations, interviews with field experts, and reviews of grantee final reports.

An implementation evaluation study to validate the Our Town theory of change, logic model, and measurement model is scheduled to take place during FY 2018. The primary methods for the implementation evaluation will be a national survey and case studies. The NEA anticipates modifying its grantee final report requirements based on this study in order to build a stronger evidence base in the long term.

An analysis of arts and cultural data from the 2015 American Housing Survey is currently underway with a report expected in FY 2019. The analysis will address key questions about the relationships between residential proximity to arts and cultural amenities and neighborhood choice; perceived importance of living near arts and cultural amenities and reported levels of satisfaction

about accessing those amenities; and presence of arts and cultural amenities and perceptions of neighborhood economic and community development. The report is expected to contribute to a greater understanding of the mechanisms underlying how the arts and cultural amenities contribute to community life.

## Strategic Objective 2.4

### Support Access to Creative Arts Therapies and Evidence-Based Programs in the Arts and Health.

Creative arts therapies refer collectively to music therapy, visual art therapy, dance/movement therapy, drama therapy, and several other arts-based forms of therapy. Arts-in-medicine and arts-in-healing programs contribute further to the arts' delivery in clinical settings. Application of the arts to promote health and well-being has also arisen in non-clinical contexts, including arts programs in correctional institutions, in after-school programs for at-risk youth, and in community programs for older adults or military veterans.

The NEA supports projects that deliver creative arts therapies in clinical and non-clinical settings alike. Similarly, the agency supports arts programming that is integrated in healthcare settings or in health interventions. For example, NEA grants have supported poetry and storytelling in community settings for older adults with dementia, as well as artist residencies in healthcare settings.

In addition, the NEA chairs the [Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development](#), which encourages more and better research across federal government on how the arts can help people reach their full potential at all stages of life. This foundational work has contributed in part to recent initiatives such as Sound Health, an ongoing collaboration between the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Institutes of Health, in association with the National Endowment for the Arts, which seeks to explore the intersections of music, the brain, and wellness.

An NEA leadership initiative that supports access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health is [Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network](#). More than 500,000 U.S. service members and veterans are living with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including 10-20 percent of all service members deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. TBI and PTSD are known to contribute to depression, and

to the estimated 20 suicides committed by veterans each day. Creative Forces was established to serve the unique and special needs of military patients and veterans who have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions, and to serve the needs of their families and caregivers.

## Strategies

The funding opportunities administered through the NEA's Programs and Partnerships offices, the Office of the Senior Deputy Chairman, and the Office of Research & Analysis are the primary vehicles through which the agency supports access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health.

Strategies include:

1. Offering grant funding to support access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health for a spectrum of artistic disciplines, settings, and geographic locations.
2. Partnering with other federal agencies, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the SAAs/RAOs to meet this objective. Notable examples of initiatives benefiting from such partnerships are Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network, the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development, and Sound Health.

Through Creative Forces in particular, the NEA is building a national network of care for injured service members, whether they are active-duty personnel or veterans, or in medical treatment or transitioning back to their bases and communities. Creative Forces has three primary strategies:

- **Clinical:** Place creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care in the military and Veterans Administration medical systems. Through Creative Forces, the NEA funds creative arts therapists, equipment, and supplies at multiple clinical sites across the nation, and a telehealth program for patients in rural and remote areas.
- **Community:** Provide increased community-based arts opportunities for members of the military, veterans, and their families around clinical site locations in collaboration with state arts agencies. This network will extend support for such populations impacted by TBI or PTSD, including current and former creative arts therapy patients as they transition from clinical treatment to community arts programming.

- **Capacity-Building:** Invest in capacity-building efforts, including the development of resources and research. An important component of the Creative Forces program is research on the impacts and benefits—physical, emotional, and economic—of these innovative treatment methods. Investments are also being made to document effective practices, develop training and practice guides, and support a digital platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing across clinical sites.

### Contributing Programs

The agency dedicates a portion of its grantmaking funds to projects that cross all disciplinary lines but share a focus on supporting access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health. Among other NEA activities contributing to this objective are the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development and Sound Health.

The Creative Forces partnership began in 2011 by offering creative arts therapies to service members with traumatic brain injury and associated psychological health issues at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland, and later, at the Intrepid Spirit at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. The President and Congress recognized the success of the partnership at these facilities, and believed it could do more.

In FY 2016 and FY 2017, Congress appropriated a nearly \$2 million budget increase each year for the NEA specifically to expand this military healing arts program. The expanded program now reaches multiple clinical sites across the nation and includes a telehealth program, which extends access to creative arts therapies for those who live in rural and remote locations, or who are homebound.

In the Creative Forces clinical program, art, music, and dance/movement therapies, as well as creative writing instruction, are provided for military patients and veterans who have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury and psychological health conditions. As part of Creative Forces, creative arts therapies are offered alongside more than 20 different types of therapies that are part of a patient-centered clinical care model. Military partners provide space for the clinical therapy to take place and integrate patient referrals into their care plans. Creative Forces creative arts therapists provide services to 100 to 300 new patients each year, and have served nearly 1,000 patients since 2011 at NICoE Walter Reed and Fort Belvoir, the first two Creative Forces clinical partners.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA works closely with program staff of many federal, state, and local partners on supporting access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health throughout the country.

Through the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development, the NEA works with other federal agencies and departments, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education. Sound Health partners include the Kennedy Center and the National Institutes of Health. State partners include all of the state arts agencies (56 in all, including U.S. jurisdictions and DC), the six regional arts organizations, and, as applicable, governors when NEA grants for projects that support projects aligned with this objective take place in their states. In addition, the NEA works with nonprofits throughout the country to support access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health.

To implement Creative Forces, the NEA works with several federal, state, and local partners on the clinical and community components of Creative Forces. Americans for the Arts supports implementation of the community component through a cooperative agreement with the NEA. The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs support the clinical component by providing space for the clinical therapy to take place and generating patient referrals.

The NEA and the Department of Defense also collaborated on the development of a research strategic framework to guide research initiatives. Another clinical partner is the Center for Arts in Medicine at the University of Florida, which in partnership with the Rural Veterans TeleRehabilitation Initiative (a part of the Department of Veterans Affairs) provides creative arts therapies to patients in rural and remote areas. A cooperative agreement with the Creative Arts Therapies PhD program at Drexel University currently supports research and evaluation efforts across the clinical sites.

The following are clinical sites that were part of the Creative Forces network in early FY 2018:

- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Anchorage Alaska
- Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California



- Fort Carson, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, Tampa, Florida
- Fort Campbell, Kentucky
- National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at Walter Reed, Bethesda, Maryland
- Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, North Carolina
- Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas
- Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Joint Expeditionary Base, Little Creek, Virginia
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Tacoma, Washington

Community networks will include state and local arts agencies. As part of their participation in Creative Forces, state arts agencies around the country will work with local partners to host summits to bring together interested stakeholders, including community arts programs, veterans' networks, military family support networks, and individual artists.

### External Factors

Similar to other complex, cross-sector initiatives, the ability to successfully support access to creative arts therapies and evidence-based programs in the arts and health depends on a variety of factors often outside of the agency's sphere of influence, including:

1. **Leadership:** Federal, state, and local leaders play a key role in directing and steering project activities. The success of this initiative is reliant on individuals within federal and state agencies, a national nonprofit, and local programs, networks, and organizations who are willing to exercise leadership.
2. **Cross-sector partnerships:** Creative Forces is a cross-sector collaboration that relies largely on partners from the public and nonprofit sectors, as well as the arts, health, and military sectors. Willingness to share sensitive information, personnel, and material resources across organizational boundaries is a significant success factor in cross-sector collaborations.
3. **Financial resources:** Expansion of this initiative is enabled by availability of funds provided by the NEA and its federal and nongovernmental partners.

4. **Community buy-in:** Participation and support from patients, clinical site staff, and state and local community leaders and residents is instrumental in creating the shared vision and assuring execution of the project activities. In addition, healthcare administrators and public and private partners must have evidence of the value and cost-effectiveness of creative arts therapies and arts-in-health programs if these services are to be integrated into the mainstream of U.S. healthcare.

### Performance Goals

Success for this objective would mean that an incremental but substantial number of people in the United States have opportunities to engage with creative arts therapies or evidence-based programs in the arts and health. For the Creative Forces clinical program, performance will be tracked partly by the number of service members served and the number of therapeutic encounters enabled. Separately, Creative Forces' clinical research and evaluation studies will assess creative arts therapies within network sites.

During the term of this strategic plan, the NEA will review the extent to which NEA-supported projects lead to demonstrations of benefits for health and well-being. Specific to Creative Forces, the agency will assess performance of the initiative's three core strategies: clinical, community, and capacity-building.

The clinical performance goal is to serve at least 200 new patients and facilitate at least 1,000 encounters per therapist per year across the program. An initial community goal is to establish community networks around clinical sites to extend support for current and former creative arts therapies patients and their families as they transition from treatment in a clinical setting to arts programming in their community.

Another performance goal is the development and launch of the National Resource Center, a digital platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and expanding capacity. For capacity building, research-oriented performance goals include the development of a Creative Forces research strategic framework and on-time implementation of the associated action plan to guide and coordinate research activities during the term of the strategic plan.

## Evidence Building

In addition to collecting anecdotal evidence from service members about the success of this treatment approach, the Creative Forces program is investing in clinical research on the biological, psycho-social, and comparative cost effectiveness impacts and benefits of creative arts therapies on service members, veterans, and their families. Through a cooperative agreement with the Creative Arts Therapies PhD program at Drexel University in Philadelphia, several research studies are now underway. The [Creative Forces Research Inventory](#) provides an inventory of all the completed, current, and pending research and clinical practice papers associated with Creative Forces. Some studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals, including this [case study](#) examining long-term art therapy with a senior military service member with PTSD and TBI.

To guide future evidence-building efforts, the NEA held in late FY 2017 the [Creative Forces Clinical Research Summit](#), which convened world-renowned experts to discuss clinical approaches to creative arts therapies and culminated in a discussion about a research agenda for the next five years as part of Creative Forces. The agency also commissioned a [working paper](#) that presented recommendations for a research agenda based on a research synthesis and gap analysis. A research strategic framework is currently under development. In addition to describing the personnel, organizational, and project-oriented characteristics necessary for Creative Forces research, this document will outline a five-year agenda with priority areas for study. These efforts will result in the establishment of clinical metrics to evaluate the impact and benefits of creative arts therapies across the current Creative Forces sites, as well as the development of a long-term clinical research program.

Planned for FY 2018 is the development of a community engagement research agenda and framework for defining indicators and developing metrics for measuring the impact and benefits from participation

in therapeutic arts interventions and community-based arts engagement programs aligned with, or complementary to, Creative Forces clinical program outcomes.

Separately, the NEA's Research grants program and its own research studies have generated, and will continue to generate, [significant new insights](#) about the value and impact of creative arts therapies and of evidence-based arts and health programs.

# Strategic Goal 3

## Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Apart from supporting arts activities throughout the country, the NEA fosters greater appreciation and understanding of the arts among the American people. Knowing about the arts, and especially about activities in one's community, offers people a chance to connect with each other through a shared arts experience, or to find a different way of perceiving and interpreting their surroundings. By promoting knowledge and understanding about arts activities and artists in U.S. communities, the NEA helps people better appreciate the arts' value and makes them more inclined to engage with the arts, thereby expanding creativity and innovation within the nation as a whole.

The NEA is also a leading national source for data and analyses about the U.S. arts sector. It provides credible, evidence-based information about the value and impact of the arts. By making these data and analyses publicly available, the agency plays a crucial role in assisting arts-related organizations and government policymakers in understanding the place of arts and culture in their programs and communities. This service can result in authoritative evidence of the arts' contributions to social, economic, and civic conditions.

To further promote the arts' importance, the NEA provides opportunities for U.S. artists and artworks to reach global audiences through international residencies and through participation in foreign arts events. Similarly, U.S. audiences, artists, and communities benefit from opportunities to appreciate and understand international artists and artworks. Such efforts, across national boundaries, can significantly extend the reach, understanding, and impact of the arts—broadening the American people's perspectives, encouraging empathy, and familiarizing the unfamiliar.

### Strategic Objective 3.1

**Inform and Engage with the American People about Arts Activities and Artists in Communities across the Country and Their Importance to the Vitality of the Nation.**

All Americans can benefit from knowing about the presence and contributions of artists, artistic practices, and arts organizations in their communities, and about opportunities to participate. Experiencing the arts can make people's lives better, richer, and fuller, and can foster connections among individuals and communities. By sharing information about successful, meaningful arts events, the National Endowment for the Arts can create a positive impression of the arts. In addition, the American people will become more knowledgeable about the arts in general, and about local arts activities in particular, thus raising the likelihood of robust participation in the arts.

The NEA sees its position as the national arts agency as a vehicle for promoting the importance of the arts on a national scale. The agency has a national voice and is well-placed to use the various tools it possesses—traditional and social media, website, publications, research—to display the arts' perpetual contributions to the welfare and prosperity of America.

### Strategies

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is responsible for disseminating and promoting NEA-related events, programs, and research, and for the promoting the general importance of the arts and their contributions to the United States.

OPA's strategies include:

1. Using traditional media techniques, such as placing high-impact stories about NEA-funded activities in newspapers and magazines nationwide, placing op-eds by the chairman as appropriate, and monitoring press coverage of the NEA specifically and of the arts generally.
2. Using social media channels, such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#) to directly reach hundreds of thousands of people regarding important arts happenings and issues.
3. Using the [NEA website](#) as the main portal for interaction between the NEA and its constituents. The website includes the application process for NEA funding, and detailed descriptions of grants and projects the agency has funded. It is also the hub where agency-created content on the arts is located, including webcasts, podcasts, blog posts, magazine articles, and other publications.

4. Using [webcasts](#) to make the National Council on the Arts meetings open to as many of the public as possible; to broadcast special convenings on the arts in various artistic disciplines; and to share special NEA events with the public (see Contributing Programs below).
5. Using the NEA's [Art Works Blog](#) and [podcast series](#) to provide information on exemplary art projects and artists across the country, encourage arts participation, and engage the public in national conversations about the arts to demonstrate their importance to individuals and communities.
6. Using the NEA's quarterly magazine, [NEA Arts](#), to present more detailed information on exemplary arts projects and artists across the country, showing how the arts impact communities large and small across the country.
7. Producing a monthly newsletter to constituents to update them on NEA activities, issues in the arts, new arts content on the NEA website and elsewhere on the internet, and upcoming events.
8. Making the NEA chairman and discipline directors available in traditional and social media to discuss arts issues, positioning the NEA as a leader in the arts community.
9. Working with the chairman's office on travel throughout the United States to draw media attention to how the NEA supports the arts in American communities.
10. Producing [publications](#) on various arts-related subjects, including
  - a. NEA activities (*Annual Report, Guide to the NEA*),
  - b. Essays on specific artistic areas (*How to Do Creative Placemaking, The Art of Empathy: Celebrating Literature in Translation*),
  - c. Reports from conferences and convenings (*Beyond the Building: Performing Arts & Transforming Place, The Summit on Creativity and Aging in America, State of the Field: A Report from the Documentary Sustainability Summit*), and
  - d. Research reports (*Staying Engaged: Health Patterns of Older Americans Who Participate in the Arts, The Arts in Early Childhood: Social and Emotional Benefits of Arts Participation, How Creativity Works in the Brain*).

## Contributing Programs

In addition to promoting all the agency's grantmaking and program areas using the strategies mentioned above, OPA plays an important role in several NEA events:

1. Poetry Out Loud: OPA live webcasts the national competition in Washington, DC, highlighting the power of poetry and the importance of arts education.
2. NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert: OPA coordinates the production of tribute videos for each honoree, which are included with the biographical information on the website, and livestreams the concert event, which is then [archived](#) on the agency website. This is all to bring greater attention to an American-grown art form that has been highly influential on American culture.
3. NEA National Heritage Fellowships Concert: OPA livestreams the concert event, as well as provides an [archive](#) on the website. This service brings greater attention to folk art traditions and how they affect and vitalize communities throughout the nation. The NEA also works with state arts agencies and the Folk Arts Partnerships to produce video profiles of each National Heritage Fellow, spotlighting the artist, the artist's community of residence, and the infrastructure that sustains the artist.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

OPA works with the public affairs staff of many federal, state, and local partners on promoting the arts throughout the country. Federal partners on projects include the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additionally, the NEA works with Congressional representatives to promote NEA grants awarded in their respective states.

State partners include all of the state arts agencies (50 states and six jurisdictions), the six regional arts organizations, and, as applicable, governors when NEA grants are awarded in their states. OPA produces a monthly newsletter for the public affairs staff of the state arts agencies to coordinate promotion of the arts and to inform them of material on the NEA website that they might use in their own promotional activities.

On the local level, the NEA works with mayors when grants are awarded in their cities, and also through the NEA program Mayors' Institute on City Design, which convenes mayors and design experts to solve critical planning and design challenges facing their cities.

In addition, the NEA works with arts nonprofits throughout the country to promote the arts, as well as associations such as Americans for the Arts and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.

### External Factors

The most prominent external factor that could affect the success of OPA's promotion of the contributions of the arts is the proliferation of misinformation about a particular grant the NEA has awarded or a work of art that the agency has written about. A way of addressing this potential risk is to contact the media outlet in question and provide information on the NEA's panel process; on how the agency convenes U.S. citizens (both expert and non-expert)—not NEA staff—to review and recommend grants; and on the criteria used to determine the excellence and merit of the project. OPA would use the NEA's own information outlets (the website, social media, email) to broadcast this same information to the general public.

Occasionally, the agency will receive negative press about something that is arts-related but not specifically related to NEA grants or activities. In those cases, OPA will contact the media outlet and clarify the information, and request that it correct the misinformation.

OPA monitors both traditional and social media for any potential problems on a daily basis. If any issues are identified, the OPA director is alerted, who in turn discusses with the chairman and senior deputy chairman to determine the appropriate response using the procedures noted above. On social media, OPA also will respond to clarify information or delete a comment if it is off-topic or offensive.

### Performance Goals

The overall outcome is a more positive understanding of how the arts affect people's lives and communities, and a more positive view of the work that the NEA does. A related outcome would be that people interact and engage with the arts more often in their communities. For these outcomes to be possible, the NEA must reach as many American people as possible through traditional media, social media, the website, and publications.

To determine OPA's reach to the American people, the office reviews the number of newspapers and magazines in which NEA- and arts-related articles appear. OPA can also review the number of followers on social media channels, and how often people engage with specific material featured on them. OPA looks at how many people visit the NEA website, in what states they are located, what pages

they go to, and how much time they spend on them. OPA examines the number of publications ordered as well as how many times publication pages are accessed on the website. Together, these numbers give a general idea of the reach the NEA has into American communities to promote the knowledge and understanding of arts.

## Strategic Objective 3.2

### Expand and Promote Evidence of the Value and Impact of the Arts for the Benefit of the American People.

Research and evaluation are essential to the NEA's ability to monitor and improve its overall performance, but this capacity also benefits the public more directly. Arts workers and arts industries depend on timely information and analyses to track patterns of employment, fiscal health, and public demand for their goods and services. Outside the arts sector, individuals and communities require statistically reliable data on the relationship of arts and culture to other aspects of everyday life. The general public seeks to know whether and how the arts should factor into decisions about where to live, how to spend one's discretionary time, and what kind of education to provide for one's children. The NEA thus helps the American people to achieve—in the words of its founding legislation—"a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future."

### Strategies

Through its [Office of Research & Analysis](#) (ORA), the NEA generates research findings and datasets that can be used by national, regional, or local policymakers, funders, educators, journalists, and arts and cultural organizations. ORA also leads program evaluations and performance measurement for the agency, while anticipating and responding to internal and external requests for facts and figures. Whether in research or evaluation, ORA's products and working methods are rooted in the social and behavioral sciences. The office serves Strategic Objective 3.2 in the following ways:

1. Conducts, commissions, and curates high-quality, policy-oriented research on the value and impact of arts and culture. Based on a five-year [research agenda](#) and a guiding schematic, ORA designs and implements studies yielding original reports, research briefs and articles, and interactive data visualizations about the arts' value and impact.

2. Develops models, methods, and metrics that report the impact of the NEA's performance and provide a resource for nonprofit arts organizations to better account for their own performance. ORA routinely monitors and updates the NEA's performance measurement system. As an integral part of this work, the office assesses grants-related data for utility, quality, and integrity. In addition, ORA cultivates NEA staff awareness of the tools and services available through the office. Finally, ORA conducts or supports evaluations and analyses as requested by senior management or discipline directors, while ensuring that the methodologies and results from these projects are accessible to the public.
3. Improves capacity of researchers outside the NEA to conduct rigorous, high-impact studies about the arts. ORA does this by continuing to use opportunities within federal data collections to improve the quality and variety of useful data collected about the arts. (ORA makes such collections publicly available through its [National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture](#) as well as through the NEA's Arts Data Profile pages.) ORA also supports a research grants program—including funds for experimental and quasi-experimental studies of the arts—and a Research Labs program, fostering sustainable, trans-disciplinary partnerships between researchers and arts practitioners.

### Contributing Programs

ORA administers two regular funding opportunities for research and evaluation:

- [NEA Research: Art Works](#)
- [NEA Research Labs](#)

In addition, ORA regularly engages with contractors to conduct specific research or evaluation projects, and the office frequently hosts public webinars and contributes blog posts to share arts-related research and evaluation findings, practices, methodologies, and funding opportunities with a broader audience.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

ORA partners with the U.S. Census Bureau to sponsor [periodic data collections about adults' rates of arts participation](#), as a supplement to the Current Population Survey. In a collaboration with the Bureau of Economic Analysis, ORA oversees production of a national and

state/regional [Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account](#). Other recent research partnerships have included the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for specific studies or publications concerning arts data variables.

Through [Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network](#), ORA provides research consultation on an initiative cosponsored by the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. ORA also chairs the NEA [Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development](#), a coalition of nearly 20 representatives from federal entities such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Museum & Library Services, and others, to catalyze research opportunities and information-sharing about the arts' contributions to health and education across the lifespan. ORA and the NEA's Music division represent the NEA on the steering committee for "Sound Health," a partnership involving NIH and the Kennedy Center. ORA represents the NEA on the interagency Subcommittee on Social and Behavioral Sciences, within the White House's Committee on Science.

Separately, the NEA works with the National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices to bring to all governors and their policy staffs up-to-date research about the arts' value to community and state economic development. Currently, the agency is collaborating with NGA on a research report about the arts and rural economic development.

### External Factors

Prompt access to the advanced technical expertise needed to pursue the NEA's five-year research agenda and to conduct performance measurement and evaluations on behalf of the agency is partly a function of ORA's staff composition and its ability to recruit contractors. Similarly, ongoing access to technological platforms, statistical software, and databases remains vital to this strategic objective.

Both of these concerns—one personnel-related and the other technology-related—are dependent in turn upon the NEA's available budget. Successful grantmaking and cooperative agreements to support this strategic objective will rely partly on the existing skills, resources, and enterprise of organizations capable of conducting such research. Changes in priorities from any new leadership or administration may affect the NEA's five-year research agenda and the agency's approach toward performance measurement and evaluation.

Further, technological or human factors affecting data quality and integrity pertaining to the NEA's grants data can decisively shape the outcome of any performance measurement or evaluation project.

### Performance Goals

Based on agency-wide and external feedback, ORA has developed its own five-year strategic plan and research agenda. The office aims to complete 75 percent of targeted projects by the end of the five-year term of the research agenda. The office has identified criteria that have been used to set annual milestones for two tiers of research projects. For example, ORA aims to complete 80 percent of Tier One projects and 50 percent of Tier Two projects by fiscal year 2022. In addition, ORA will review NEA-originated research articles and citations in academic journals specializing in non-arts disciplines, and it will also review articles about NEA-originated research in non-academic news outlets across the nation. Regarding ORA's customer service function within and outside the NEA, the office will devise other goals and metrics.

### Strategic Objective 3.3

#### **Provide Opportunities for the International Exchange of Artists, Artworks, and Arts Activities.**

U.S. artists and artworks already attract global recognition, so the National Endowment for the Arts provides opportunities for them to be showcased for other audiences through participation in global arts events. Similarly, U.S. audiences, artists, and communities can benefit from opportunities to appreciate and understand international artists and artworks.

The NEA, as the lead federal agency in supporting the arts, is constantly examining opportunities with other federal agencies, nonprofit arts organizations, state arts agencies and regional arts organizations, and international collaborators to partner on activities to raise awareness of the arts for domestic and foreign audiences. The agency is also a key point of contact for international cultural visitors and those interested in the infrastructure for arts support in the United States, hosting an average of 50 international delegations annually.

### Strategies

The NEA awards grants to U.S.-based nonprofits for projects that involve bringing foreign artists and artworks to U.S. audiences. Also, the NEA works with a number of organizations to foster international exchanges of arts and ideas. The NEA Office of International Activities (OIA) is the lead NEA office for these exchanges, and achieves this mission in the following ways:

1. Partners with the regional arts organizations (RAOs) on programs such as Performing Arts Discovery, which showcases the work of U.S. performing artists in each particular region for presenters based outside the United States.
2. Partners with the State Department by managing the peer review process for selection of participating U.S. artists and architects for the Venice Biennale, and by providing grants for participating arts organizations.
3. Partners with the Japan-United States Friendship Commission on the [U.S./Japan Creative Artists Program](#), which supports three-month residencies in Japan for five U.S. artists in any arts discipline annually.
4. Partners with U.S. regional arts organization Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation on two of its international programs: [USArtists International](#), and [Southern Exposure: Performing Arts of Latin America](#). USArtists provides support for U.S. dance, music, and theater ensembles that have been invited to participate in international arts markets, while Southern Exposure enables performing artists from Latin America to perform in U.S. communities that have little access to this work.

Additionally, two NEA offices work on specific international activities. The NEA Literature Office manages the [NEA Literature Fellowships program](#), which provides not only grants to literary writers but grants to translators for specific translation projects, enabling access to literature from other countries and cultures that the American people would not be able to experience otherwise.

The NEA Museums Office administers the U.S. government's [Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program](#) on behalf of the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The Indemnity Program was created by Congress in 1975 for the purpose of minimizing the costs of insuring international exhibitions for U.S. nonprofit museums and organizations.

## Contributing Programs

There are four international exchange programs that OIA currently manages:

- USArtists International
- U.S./Japan Creative Artists Program
- Southern Exposure: Performing Arts of Latin America
- Performing Arts Discovery

In addition, NEA grants are given in many artistic disciplines that support international art appearing at museums and in performance. The NEA is also one of the largest supporters of literary translation in the country, both through its grants to nonprofit organizations that publish translations, and the NEA Literature Fellowships in Translation. The Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program, administered by the NEA Museums Office, indemnifies U.S. nonprofit museums and organizations planning temporary exhibitions that involve bringing works of art and artifacts from abroad to the United States or sending works of art and artifacts from the United States abroad.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA works with the various nonprofit organizations mentioned above to manage the international arts exchange programs. Additionally, the NEA's international team works closely with the State Department as a connector between arts organizations and cultural attachés. The OIA is a key point of contact for international cultural visitors from the State Department's International Visitors Leadership Program. OIA hosts international delegations weekly, and works in conjunction with the State Department's Foreign Service Institute to educate new cultural attaché officers before they head to various U.S. Embassy posts about the NEA and how the agency can be a strategic partner.

## External Factors

Apart from staffing or budgetary constraints, factors affecting this objective include necessary coordination with the State Department on international programs and on issues such as obtaining travel visas for artists.

## Performance Goals

The overall outcome is to create a more positive understanding of the United States through creative interactions with other countries, and to expose the American people to new arts and culture to build

connections among people through the arts and promote a better understanding of our world. NEA's international activities increase recognition of the excellence of U.S. arts around the world and broaden the scope of experience for American artists, thereby enriching the art they create. Through partnerships with other government agencies and the private sector, the NEA fosters international creative collaboration by strengthening residency programs of foreign artists in communities across the country. Through the NEA Literature Fellowships in Translation program, the agency makes available literary works from around the world, enriching the American people's horizons as creative, innovative thinkers and citizens of the world. And through the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program, the NEA helps bring to U.S. museums art from around the world that might otherwise be too costly to insure.

There are a few ways to measure the success of these programs. One can look at the art created by artists who participated in the residencies and international collaborations, and how it is received by U.S. audiences when it is presented. The NEA can measure the audiences at events, both in the U.S. and abroad, to estimate the impact of bringing foreign artists to U.S. audiences or bringing U.S. artists to international audiences. The NEA also can look at press coverage and the proportion of it that is positive.

## Evidence Building

The NEA intends to examine the impacts of these international exchanges on the careers of U.S. artists and on U.S. audiences who experience works originating from foreign artists as part of its evidence-building efforts. As an initial step, the NEA is investigating whether to plan a survey of U.S. artists participating in international exchanges with the goal of developing a richer understanding of the program's short- and longer-term impacts on their careers.



# Strategic Goal 4

## Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

The NEA is a small, independent federal agency with a big impact, and is committed to effectively carrying out its mission. The NEA is a responsible steward of its resources, using technology strategically and building a workforce that is committed to its mission and service to the American people.

The NEA is the sole arts funding entity, public or private, whose funding reaches every Congressional District in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories, supporting activities such as performances, exhibitions, healing arts and arts education programs, festivals, and artist residencies. With such an ambitious mission and extensive roster of programmatic activities, the NEA can succeed only because of its commitment to organizational excellence. Creating and maintaining a highly functioning organization allows the agency to fulfill its considerable responsibilities to the American people.

### Strategic Objective 4.1

#### Be an Effective and Vigilant Steward of Public Funds.

Entrusted with public funds to pursue the NEA's mission, the agency's employees strive to build and sustain public confidence that the agency's business processes and procedures reflect the highest standards of effective and vigilant stewardship.

#### Strategies

1. Engage in rigorous review and oversight (including pre-award risk assessments and post-award audits and reviews) to ensure that grantees are in compliance with regulations concerning the proper use of federal funds.
2. Invest in efficient and effective systems to ensure that the agency's funds are spent wisely and accounted for accurately.
3. Cooperate with the NEA Office of the Inspector General in an annual independent financial statements audit.

## Contributing Programs

To ensure effective use of public funds, the NEA is committed to proper internal controls, meaningful performance measures, continuous assessment to achieve desired outcomes, and clear and understandable reporting. NEA management will regularly review progress toward achieving outcomes, and continuously improve by planning, executing, evaluating, and adjusting actions to achieve desired results. Performance data, supplemented by information provided by grantees through applications and final reports, will be reviewed quarterly as part of this effort. Other specific actions include:

- Utilizing shared services, e.g., financial management services through the Federal Aviation Administration's Enterprise Services Center (ESC), electronic grants management system (eGMS) through the National Endowment for the Humanities, and electronic travel services through ESC.
- Dispersing information technology operations in the cloud as appropriate.
- Applying robust enterprise risk management and internal control processes.
- Conducting pre-financial assistance award risk assessments, reviewing grantee progress and final reports, and undertaking audits and reviews through the NEA Office of Inspector General.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA collaborates with numerous agencies in pursuit of effective and efficient use of funds, both programmatic and administrative. Chief among the latter is our partnership with NEH for the development and operation of the eGMS, at a fraction of the cost of purchasing service from one of the large agency-shared service providers. A significant programmatic effort is our partnership with the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs on our Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network, allowing the agency to accomplish significantly more with the funds Congress appropriated for the initiative by leveraging the capacity and reach of these two partners.

In sum, the NEA's cross-agency collaborations provide cost savings to the NEA and to the government as a whole, reducing the likelihood that redundant systems and operations will be retained.

### External Factors

The annual appropriations process is the single most important external factor related to this objective. Every year, the NEA is required to manage within the budget passed by Congress, and every year the agency must plan for the uncertainty inherent in that process.

While the NEA provides information and guidance to grantees regarding appropriate use of federal grant funds, grantee compliance with these laws and regulations is largely beyond the agency's control. The NEA reviews information and data provided by grantees prior to issuing payments; however, the agency relies on the integrity of grantees when reporting. The NEA Office of Inspector General keeps the agency apprised of any questionable grantee activity based upon audits, hotline tips, etc. Finally, it is notable that in recent years, the NEA consistently has received annual letters of commendation from the Office of Government Ethics.

### Performance Goals

The agency has received an annual unmodified ("clean") financial-statements audit opinion for the last 15 years. An audit opinion remains the primary measurement of success for this strategic objective.

## Strategic Objective 4.2

### Be Transparent and Accountable to the Public.

As with all government agencies, the NEA must be accountable to the public, providing readily available information and data about its operations and decision-making. The agency maintains and continually improves upon policies, processes, and systems that ensure optimal transparency and accountability. Chief among these is the NEA's grant application review process, at the heart of which are review panels comprised of citizen panels—both experts in the various arts fields, as well as laypersons with knowledge in the relevant fields, whose names are made publicly available after each panel concludes. In addition, state and regional partnership agreement review panels are conducted in the open—accessible in real time via internet and/or teleconferencing.

### Strategies

Other steps the agency takes to ensure transparency and accountability include:

1. Make data about financial assistance awards, contracts, and research readily available to the public.
2. Ensure the security of NEA information technology systems and the data they contain.
3. Provide equitable access to agency opportunities in as simplified and streamlined a manner as possible.
4. Ensure the accessibility of the NEA's website, printed materials, and multimedia resources.
5. Maintain the [NEA Online Grant Search](#) tool for public use.
6. Educate and inform the public about agency activities and, more broadly, the arts in America.

### Contributing Programs

Several key pieces of legislation have the purpose of enhancing transparency and accountability of federal government agencies. The NEA is committed to full compliance with all such laws.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA collaborates with the Grants.gov Program Management Office within the Department of Health and Human Services on the Grants.gov portal. The portal is a simple, unified electronic storefront for interactions between grant applicants and the federal agencies that manage grant funds. Grants.gov allows organizations to find and apply electronically for competitive grant opportunities from all federal grantmaking agencies.

The NEA receives financial management services from the Enterprise Services Center (ESC). ESC maintains a separate, complete, and identifiably distinct set of books on the Oracle Federal Financial System for the NEA and provides accounting services. Collaborating with ESC and using the tools provided by ESC has assisted the NEA in receiving clean audit opinions for the last 15 years as well as accurately reporting data pursuant to the DATA Act.

## External Factors

Changes in administration and budget levels invariably result in changes to the agenda that public agencies are able to pursue. However, regardless of the challenges presented by external factors, the agency is committed to maintaining the transparency of and accountability for its operations.

## Performance Goals

As a result of this objective, agency activities are fully transparent to the public, and the agency is fully accountable to the public, as evidenced through multiple channels of communication and reporting, chief among them compliance with the requirements of the DATA Act and Federal Information Security Modernization Act.

## Strategic Objective 4.3

### **Attract and Maintain a Diverse, Creative, Knowledgeable, Productive, and Motivated Workforce.**

The NEA's workforce is at the heart of its ability to provide the American people with the highest level of service. The NEA identifies critical workforce needs; it recruits strategically and in compliance with government hiring principles; it provides its workforce with incentives such as training and advancement opportunities, as appropriate; and it develops and maintains policies and processes to ensure excellent performance and accountability.

### Strategies

1. Design positions appropriate to the need.
2. Recruit effectively and in compliance with government hiring principles.
3. Provide tools, such as compensation, incentives, training, advancement opportunities, and appropriate resources to ensure that the workforce is equipped and motivated to provide consistently outstanding service to the American people.
4. Foster a climate of personal and professional accountability.
5. Maintain policies and processes that ensure consistently excellent organizational performance, including maintaining a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.

## Contributing Programs

In addition to government-wide benefits—including an incentive awards program (when available), family-friendly leave policies, and flexible/alternative work schedules (including telework when appropriate), the NEA provides wellness services—both health center access and an expansive Employee Assistance Program, through an interagency agreement with Federal Occupational Health (FOH).

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA works with the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide programs in connection with special emphasis observances implemented by Presidential Proclamation, Executive Orders, and Public Law, such as African American History Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

## External Factors

Changes in funding levels invariably result in changes to the agenda that public agencies are able to pursue, and have a direct impact on the agency's workforce needs and ability to fill those needs. In addition, the state of the economy can affect the NEA's ability to hire, in a timely manner, the most qualified people needed to accomplish the agency's mission. People make decisions about where to work based on several criteria, among them organization mission, working environment, salary, and benefits. As with all federal agencies, the NEA cannot control all of these factors, so it must use the full range of government hiring and compensation flexibilities currently available to find, hire, and retain the best people.

## Performance Goals

1. The NEA will continually maintain compliance with and exceed the requirements of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) 80-day hiring model, through which talented and skilled applicants are identified and on-boarded in a timely manner.
2. The NEA will continue to encourage maximum employee engagement and respond proactively to employee viewpoints in order to maintain a ranking as one of the best places to work in the federal government. A key strategy for collecting employee feedback is the OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which identifies specific areas as needing improvement.

## Strategic Objective 4.4

### **Recruit and Engage Citizens as Panelists Who Will Make Recommendations for NEA Awards That Meet the Highest Standards of Excellence.**

The democratic process is manifest in the NEA review of applications seeking agency funds. Representing the demographic and geographic characteristics of this nation, citizen panel members participate in the decision-making process for virtually all of the NEA's awards. The NEA ensures that different points of view—those of experts and non-experts in the arts—are heard at panel meetings, thereby enhancing the value of NEA grantmaking for all Americans.

#### Strategies

1. Maintain an open process for interested individuals to self-nominate for panel participation.
2. Actively and continually recruit new panelists—both experts and non-experts.
3. Maintain a rigorous panel composition review and approval process to ensure that all panels embody a measure of demographic, geographic, and aesthetic diversity.

#### Contributing Programs

The NEA's legislation guides the composition of panels charged with reviewing grant applications. The agency is committed to full compliance with this component of its legislation through management by the NEA's Office of Guidelines & Panel Operations, programmatic staff, and senior management. The panel review process is conducted entirely remotely, enabling participation despite differences in geographic location or schedule. The National Council on the Arts, whose members are Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed, ratifies NEA award recommendations stemming from these panel decisions.

#### Cross-Agency Collaborations

NEA staff periodically work with arts associations and other entities (e.g., in the case of Research grants, specialty research organizations) to identify and recruit qualified panelists for service.

#### External Factors

The NEA's ability to convene diverse, qualified panels is dependent on citizens' availability to perform this valuable public service. It is also necessary to find appropriate panelists within the NEA's artistic disciplines who, in aggregate, represent the geographic and demographic make-up of the nation.

#### Performance Goals

NEA awards are responsibly adjudicated and represent the broad interests of the American people and, where appropriate, the specific artistic disciplines and sub-disciplines for which grant proposals are adjudicated. In aggregate, where possible, panelists will represent the nation's geographic and demographic diversity.

# Cross-Cutting Objective

## Through Strategic Partnerships and Award-Making, Ensure That NEA-Funded Activities Reach a Wide Breadth of Geographic Locations and Underserved Populations across the Country.

In its founding legislation, the NEA was charged with the responsibility of widening the availability of art, particularly to historically underserved populations—those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability. Since its creation, the NEA has dedicated considerable resources, developed several leadership initiatives, and strengthened its partnerships with state arts agencies (SAAs) and regional arts organizations (RAOs) to realize the vision of a nation in which the arts enrich the lives of all Americans.

Of particular concern with regard to underserved groups is the connection between income and arts participation. National survey data show large disparities in arts participation rates by income and education level. Despite this challenge, an analysis of NEA grants awarded in FY 2016 shows that more than 41 percent of arts activities sponsored by NEA grants are held in Census tracts where 20 percent or more of the population live below the poverty line. In addition, a portion of each state arts agency partnership grant is designated for reaching underserved communities within the state, and a portion of each regional arts organization grant is designated for touring arts activities to underserved populations within the region.

### Strategies

The NEA makes grants and participates in strategic partnerships to ensure that NEA-funded activities reach a wide breadth of geographic locations and underserved populations nationwide. Following are the ways in which the NEA achieves this cross-cutting objective:

1. Funds grants across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas.
2. Continues geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants are being funded across the United States.
3. Develops and supports leadership initiatives and strategic partnerships that provide opportunities for the NEA to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.
4. Maintains a fair and effective review process that provides reviewers with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the agency's decision-making process.
5. Works efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore mutual strategies that can help the agency fulfill this cross-cutting objective.

### Contributing Programs

All of the NEA's activities, including its direct grants and the funds awarded through SAAs and RAOs, contribute to this cross-cutting agency objective. To guarantee complete coverage by NEA programs, the agency will continue to award at least one grant in every congressional district. Each year the agency analyzes the geographic distribution of its grants and conducts outreach to eliminate gaps. Continued geographic data collection and analysis should help maximize the impact of these outreach efforts.

### Cross-Agency Collaborations

Key partners supporting this cross-cutting objective are the state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. These vital partners have a shared constituency with the NEA and shared priorities for ensuring that every community in the nation enjoys the cultural, civic, economic, and educational benefits that stem from engaging in the arts.

By designating 40 percent of its grantmaking funds to the state and regional arts organizations, the NEA leverages state government support as well as additional public and private investment in the arts. The NEA's partnership agreement grant to the states must be matched 1:1 by state government funds while regional arts organizations match their grant with public and private support. This level of investment enables the federal, state, and regional partners to collectively reach every community in the nation. Moreover, both the State and Regional Partnership Agreements with the NEA are required to address traditionally underserved communities.

## External Factors

The decision to apply for a grant, whether it is directly from the NEA or from one of the SAAs or RAOs with which the NEA has a partnership, is affected by many factors. For instance, organizations may lack the technical capacity or human resources necessary to submit a grant application, obtain matching funds (where required by the NEA), or comply with federal reporting requirements.

## Performance Goals

To assess performance on this cross-cutting agency objective, the NEA will monitor the distribution of awards across the spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas to ensure that they reach Americans nationwide. Indicators of progress include equitable distribution of NEA-supported activities relative to population across states and to underserved populations.

## Evidence Building

While there are no specific plans for evidence building to support this cross-cutting objective, the NEA plans to build the evidence base supporting the goals and strategies discussed elsewhere in this strategic plan. Of particular interest is evidence that helps the agency understand the longer-term impacts of its investments, including the long-term benefits and sustainability of arts activities engaging underserved populations and geographic areas.