

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

ART WORKS FOR AMERICA

Strategic Plan, FY 2014-2018

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Agency Overview

The National Endowment for the Arts relies on a simple, straightforward credo: "Art works."

"Art works" refers to works of art themselves—the performances, objects, and texts that are the creations of artists.

"Art works" represents the ways that art works on individuals and communities to change, confront, challenge, and inspire us; to allow us to imagine and to aspire to something more.

"Art works" declares that arts jobs are real jobs that are part of the real economy. Art workers pay taxes, and art contributes to economic growth, neighborhood revitalization, and the livability of American towns and cities.

The Arts Endowment recognizes these three elements—the works of art themselves, the ways art works on audiences, learners, and participants, and art *as* work—as central to all of the agency's activities, programs, and partnerships. "Art works" is a guiding principle in this Strategic Plan, which charts the Arts Endowment's objectives and how it proposes to meet them.

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is the largest national funder of nonprofit arts in the U.S. Annually, the NEA awards more than 2,200 grants and cooperative agreements exceeding \$130 million, funding the arts in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions, including urban and rural 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 areas listed below.

- ✓ Artist communities;
- ✓ Arts education;
- ✓ Dance;
- ✓ Design;
- ✓ Folk and traditional arts;
- ✓ Literature;
- ✓ Local arts agencies;
- ✓ Media arts;
- ✓ Museums;
- ✓ Music;
- ✓ Opera;
- ✓ Presenting and multidisciplinary works;
- ✓ Research;
- ✓ State and regional arts organizations;
- ✓ Theater and musical theater; and
- ✓ Visual arts.

All grant applications to the Arts Endowment are reviewed on the basis of artistic excellence and artistic merit. Applications generally receive three levels of review. First, they are evaluated by independent, national panels. Each panel consists 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 advisory body, is comprised of nationally and internationally renowned artists, distinguished scholars, and arts patrons appointed by the President. It also includes non-voting Congressional members. 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 Arts Endowment's funds are awarded to the nation's state and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and regional arts organizations (RAOs). This investment enables arts projects in thousands of communities across the country. Through Partnership Agreements with SAAs and RAOs, moreover, the NEA builds capacity in local planning, programming, evaluation, and communications.

Also through Partnership agreements, the NEA supports SAA/RAO strategies for strengthening arts education and fostering the arts in underserved communities. Each state and regional 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, these partnerships vastly extend the agency's reach and impact, aligning national leadership with local benefit. 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 our 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 throughout the country. The agency is committed to helping communities that seek to leverage these assets more effectively as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve general livability through the arts.

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 NEA's founding legislation invokes the inspirational values of artistic excellence and creativity that define the agency's role within the federal government. "The arts...belong to all the people of the United States," the law declares in a bold series of statements outlining the agency's purpose. They 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 this enduring philosophy. 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 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.

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.*

Whether affording personal insights and inspiration—or contributing to our social, civic, and economic well-being—*art works* for America. This work is embodied by the products and services that artists and arts organizations create. But it also assumes the empowerment of *all* people and places through sustained engagement with diverse and excellent art. This engagement will allow Americans fully to realize their creative and imaginative potential, both as individuals and as communities.

Strategic Goals

To fulfill its mission in FY 2014-2018, the NEA has established four goals: three strategic and one operational. The strategic goals apply to all of the Arts Endowment's activities, and are advanced further by grant-making and services that result from the NEA's awards to SAAs and RAOs.

Strategic Goal 1

Support the Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Context: American artists enrich the cultural, civic, and economic life of our nation by producing original works in such fields as music and dance; drama and literature; architecture and design; and visual, media, and folk and traditional arts. By awarding organizational grants in the category of art-making, and grants to individuals where permitted, the NEA helps to channel the ingenuity of American artists and fosters leadership in creativity and innovation. In doing so, the agency will contribute to a dynamic, national portfolio that can be enjoyed by present and future generations.

Artworks that result from these projects will replenish and rejuvenate America's enduring cultural legacy. With this goal, the Arts Endowment is amplifying a core component of its legislative mandate, "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."

Principal Strategy: Fund grants to organizations, and to individuals where permitted, to support the creation of artwork across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

Strategic Goal 2

Foster Public Engagement with Diverse and Excellent Art

Context: 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. The NEA will provide new opportunities for Americans to have a profound and meaningful arts experience.

Americans also participate in the arts through a variety of learning opportunities. NEA research has identified arts education as the single best predictor of a person's arts participation patterns throughout life. By helping to foster public appreciation and understanding of various art forms, genres, and artistic traditions, as well as opportunities to participate in the creation of art, the NEA will build public capacity for creativity and innovation, and for lifelong participation in the arts.

Art makes an impact on individual lives, but also on neighborhoods, towns, and cities. Artists, arts workers, and arts industries play a critical role in shaping the life of a community. They can improve its aesthetic appeal and the civic pride of its residents. They can spur job creation, productivity, and economic growth. They can also provide spaces and opportunities for community members of different backgrounds to converge on a shared arts

experience, one that summons their collective creativity and allows them to re-imagine their surroundings. In recognition of these benefits, the NEA will support projects that integrate the arts with strategies to improve the livability of communities.

Principal Strategy: Fund grants to organizations, across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas, to provide the following services: engage the public with works of artistic excellence; provide individuals of all ages with opportunities for lifelong learning in the arts; and strengthen communities through the arts.

Strategic Goal 3

Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Context: As federal, state, and local policymakers assess the place of arts and culture in their programs and budgets, they seek authoritative evidence about the arts' contributions to social, economic, and civic outcomes. The NEA remains the primary national source for data and analyses about the U.S. arts sector. Increasingly, the agency has aimed not only to explore the factors and conditions affecting arts participation and art-making, but also to document the impact of the arts on American lives and communities.

Further credible and evidence-based information about the value and/or impact of the arts will enable the NEA, in turn, to pursue its overall mission more effectively. Some of that knowledge will bear directly on the agency's work in supporting arts creation, arts participation, lifelong learning in the arts, and the arts' integration with civic and community life. Other research findings will influence national and community-level indicators of creative and cultural vitality, allowing policy-makers to become better informed about the distinctive contributions the arts make to society. Primarily through its Office of Research & Analysis, the NEA will take a leadership role in initiating dialogues and information-sharing about arts and culture.

In particular, the Arts Endowment will communicate knowledge—about the value and/or impact of the arts—to other federal agencies and departments to complement their efforts to serve the American people. Internationally, the NEA will raise awareness among other countries and cultures about the exemplary offerings of American artists; conversely, the agency will provide opportunities for Americans to expand their knowledge and understanding about the arts and culture of other nations. Such efforts—whether across government or across national boundaries—can significantly extend the reach and impact of the arts.

The NEA also considers its Public Affairs office a significant part of the effort to promote understanding about the contributions of the arts to all Americans. This approach is three-fold. One, public affairs specialists work with journalists in print, online, and broadcast media across the country, placing stories about the programs and projects we support. Two, the office is responsible for producing publications, which tell the stories of artistically excellent projects, pinpoint trends in various artistic fields, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and disseminate arts-focused research. Three, through its website and social media channels, the Public Affairs office encourages and hosts discussions around topics of interest to various disciplines and communities, highlights exceptional arts projects and artists across the country, and shares examples of best practices across disciplines.

Principal Strategy: Implement the NEA's Research Agenda for FY 2012-2016, based on a system map and measurement model (*How Art Works*, 2012) that was developed in consultation with a broad cross-section of

American researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers within and outside the arts; update the agenda for FY 2016-2018; and continue to identify federal and international partners and cultivate or deepen relationships with those entities.

Agency Management Goal

Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Context: Achieving this goal is a prerequisite for the NEA's success in serving its overall mission. Other arts funders and cultural policy-makers, as well as nonprofit arts groups, often look to the Arts Endowment for models and best practices in arts administration. The Arts Endowment must ensure that it is a high-performing and publicly accountable organization committed to 1) supporting arts creation; 2) engaging Americans with diverse and excellent art; and 3) promoting knowledge and understanding about the contributions of the arts. To succeed in these aims, the NEA must possess a diverse, creative, productive, and motivated workforce; ensure that its operations are efficient, effective, and transparent to the public; and be a vigilant steward of public funds and resources.

Principal Strategy: Design and allocate positions appropriately; hire the right people; provide staff with appropriate resources, including technology, information, and relevant training; align individual performance plans with the agency's strategic goals; and reward employees based on performance.

The National Endowment for the Arts' Strategic Plan Framework for FY2014-2018

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 the Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Objective 1.1

Expand the portfolio of American art by investing in projects dedicated to the creation of excellent art.

GOAL 2:

Foster Public Engagement with Diverse and Excellent Art

Objective 2.1

Provide all Americans with opportunities for arts engagement by funding projects that create arts experiences.

Objective 2.2

Enable Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts by funding projects that address lifelong learning in the arts.

Objective 2.3

Strengthen American communities by investing in projects that seek to improve the livability of places through the arts.

GOAL 3:

Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Objective 3.1

Expand and promote evidence of the value and/or impact of the arts by fulfilling a long-term research agenda and by using traditional and social media channels to distribute findings and new information.

Objective 3.2

Increase the domestic and international impact of the arts by establishing strategic partnerships with public and private organizations.

Cross-Cutting Objective 1.1

Ensure that NEA-funded activities reach Americans throughout the country by making awards for projects that address a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines, geographic locations, and underserved populations.

MANAGEMENT GOAL:

Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Objective 1.1

Provide the American people with outstanding service by attracting, maintaining, and optimizing a diverse, creative, productive, and motivated workforce.

Objective 1.2

Be an effective and vigilant steward of public funds by sustaining transparent and efficient grant-making and administrative processes.

Note. The NEA Strategic Plan applies to all Agency activities, and is advanced further by the grant-making and services that result from the NEA's awards to State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Goal 1: Support the Creation of Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Strategic Objective 1.1

Expand the portfolio of American art by investing in projects dedicated to the creation of excellent art.

Throughout its history, the United States of America has exemplified ingenuity and inventiveness in such diverse fields as basic 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 including original plays and literature; music and dance compositions; paintings, sculpture, and craft arts; films, video, and photography; and architecture, graphic, industrial, and interactive design.

Since its establishment in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts has fostered artistic creativity through its grant-making. The NEA's founding legislation is explicit about this role, stating: "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."

All signs suggest that the public appetite for many forms of art-making is as robust as ever. Data from the NEA's Survey of Public Participation in the Arts show that young adults are highly engaged in creating artworks of their own, notably through electronic media and the Internet. Arts creation, in many forms, is equally prevalent among urban and rural communities, and among Americans of diverse socioeconomic characteristics.

Strategies

- 1) Fund grants to organizations and, where permitted, to individuals, to support the creation of artworks across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines, platforms, and geographic locations.
- 2) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of creating art are being funded across the United States.
- 3) Develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based. (*Current examples of such initiatives include Blue Star Museums, The Big Read, NEA Jazz Masters and National Heritage Fellowships, and the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program.*)
- 4) Ensure that NEA application review panelists have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that meet the highest standards of excellence and can expand the portfolio of American art.
- 5) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the agency's decision-making process.

6) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

Contributing Programs

To be approved for NEA funding, grant applications must demonstrate that the proposed projects adhere to the strictest standards of artistic excellence and merit. This careful adjudication helps to ensure that NEA-funded projects whose primary purpose is arts creation will replenish and rejuvenate America's cultural legacy. This focus on creation of excellent art includes activities supported by the Arts Endowment's direct grants and by NEA funds awarded through SAAs and RAOs. Examples of those activities are:

- Commissioning, developing, and producing new work
- Design competitions and design or cultural planning projects for new arts or cultural spaces or landscapes
- Workshops or residencies for artists where the primary purpose is to create new art
- Opportunities for writers and translators to create or to refine their work (e.g., Literature Fellowships)
- Projects that employ innovative forms of art-making and design

External Factors

The NEA recognizes that current conditions for arts creation are vastly different from those in 1965, when the agency was established. Hybrid art forms have emerged; generations of immigrant artists have blazed new idioms of expression; the popular distinction between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" genres has eroded; and the rise of new technologies and methods has altered the very processes by which art-making can occur, with implications for more inclusive public participation. The NEA will take such factors into consideration when developing and administering policies and programs.

Performance Goal

To assess performance on this strategic objective, the NEA has begun to pilot test an innovative process that uses independent experts to gauge the level and nature of excellence achieved in grants awarded primarily for the purpose of creating art. In doing so, the NEA will learn more about the ways in which different kinds of programs, processes, and activities help the agency meet this objective.

The data from the pilot test are currently being collected and pilot results are expected in mid-2014. Because this performance measure remains in the pilot phase, no specific performance targets have been established; the findings from the pilot will be used to establish baseline figures and to design full implementation of the measure beginning in 2014.

Strategic Goal 2: Foster Public Engagement with Diverse and Excellent Art

Strategic Objective 2.1

Provide all Americans with opportunities for arts engagement by funding projects that create arts experiences.

Artists, artworks, and audiences come together to create an experience that is unique, memorable, and life-affirming. 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—TV and radio, certainly, but also through handheld or mobile devices and the Internet—whether sampling a video clip, curating a playlist, or downloading a blog entry about graphic art.

The NEA's grant-making programs must be responsive to the changing landscape of the arts and arts participation. It is no longer sufficient to provide access to artistic works of high quality; the agency will also reward innovative strategies and models for actively engaging the public directly with such experiences.

Likewise, the Arts Endowment is charged with helping to preserve America's great artistic traditions in all their diversity—and 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 entirely 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

1) Fund grants to provide engagement with artistic excellence across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic locations.

2) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of providing engagement with artistic excellence are being funded across the United States.

3) Develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based. (*Examples of such initiatives include Blue Star Museums, The Big Read, NEA Jazz Masters and National Heritage Fellowships, and the Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program.*)

4) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can engage the public with diverse and excellent art.

5) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the agency's decision-making process.

6) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

Contributing Programs

By funding projects with the primary purpose of introducing 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 SAAs and RAOs. Arts projects in this category 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
- Documentation, preservation, and conservation of artwork
- Public programs that raise awareness of arts programming and cultural heritage
- Broadcasts on television or radio; video games; mobile apps; live streaming, audio- and video-on-demand, podcasts, digital audio files, or other digital applications
- Design charrettes
- Publication, production, and promotion of digital, audio, mobile, or online publications; books; magazines; catalogues; and searchable information databases
- Services to artists and arts organizations
- Projects that extend the arts to underserved populations —those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability
- Projects that employ innovative forms of art and design delivery
- Projects that enable the public to interact with electronic art
- Projects that bring artists to work directly with a community

External Factors

Recent NEA research shows flat or reduced rates attendance at certain types of live arts events (e.g., classical music, jazz, theater, ballet, and opera). On the other hand, arts events at schools and religious institutions are drawing large numbers of unique audience members, as are outdoor fairs and festivals. Similarly, other informal activities—including personal exhibits/displays and performances of artworks—and greater exposure to online arts experiences, provide for more customized arts experiences and opportunities to combine art with social networking. Through these activities, Americans find a greater degree of interactivity than they often find in traditional arts venues.

Performance Goal

One of the NEA’s performance goals is based on surveys of audiences of NEA-supported artworks being performed and displayed. By better understanding how art-goers are cognitively or emotionally affected by artworks that the NEA supports, the agency will learn more, and thus be able to communicate to the public more effectively, about the ways in which different types of programs and activities foster public engagement with the arts.

In FY 2012, the NEA pilot tested an “Audience Impact Survey” designed to reveal the extent to which audiences are affected by having attended NEA-funded arts events. Several different methodologies and survey formats were tested. At the conclusion of these tests, the NEA determined that a web-based methodology was most appropriate for collecting this information in the future and launched a second phase of the pilot process to determine the best method for implementing this approach. That new pilot test is currently underway, and results are expected in mid-2014. Because this performance measure remains in the pilot phase, no specific performance targets have been established; the findings from the pilot will be used to establish baseline figures and to design full implementation of the measure beginning in 2014.

Strategic Objective 2.2

Enable Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts by funding projects that address lifelong learning in the arts.

In national studies, arts education consistently emerges as the single best predictor of arts participation throughout life, whether through live attendance or the personal performance or creation of art. 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. And for artists and/or teachers, the NEA will facilitate the transfer of critical knowledge and skills that will enable them to refine their ability and improve their work.

Beyond enriching the quality of personal arts experiences, arts education is a hallmark of civilization. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has observed, for example, "the important role that arts education plays in providing American students with a well-rounded education. The arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem-solvers who are confident and able to think creatively."

Further, he noted, "these qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances." Indeed, NEA-supported research has shown that at-risk youth who have arts-rich experiences in and out of school are more likely to achieve key positive outcomes—academically, socially, and civically—compared with peers who lack those experiences.

Given these assumptions, the NEA can be most effective in two ways: by upholding rigorous, standards-based arts education for pre-K-12 students and teachers, in and out of school; and by providing Americans of all ages with more informal opportunities to learn about the arts. One track involves supporting school- and community-based projects that adhere to national or state arts education standards and that include knowledge- and/or skills-based assessment of students and/or teachers.

The other track is broader. It accommodates Americans still in school, those no longer in school, and those yet to begin school. These types of arts education grants might involve a seminar held as part of a theater performance, or a docent tour as part of a museum event. They might include a teaching artist at a day-care center or a writer's workshop at a nursing home. Although not aligned with national or state standards, these projects will meet NEA standards for artistic excellence and merit.

Strategies

- 1) Fund grants to provide Americans of all ages with arts learning opportunities across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines, learning environments, and geographic locations.
- 2) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts are being funded across the United States.
- 3) Develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based. (*Examples of such initiatives include Poetry Out Loud and Shakespeare for a New Generation.*)

- 4) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can provide opportunities for Americans of all ages to acquire knowledge or skills in the arts.
- 5) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the agency's decision-making process.
- 6) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

Contributing Programs

The agency dedicates a portion of its grant-making funds to projects that will cross all disciplinary lines but share the common focus on providing opportunities to learn in and about the arts. Some of these projects support formal, standards-based arts education programs, while others support opportunities to learn arts in a more informal context. Representative project activities include:

- Lifelong learning activities for youth, adults, and intergenerational groups
- Standards-based arts education activities for pre-K-12 students
- Informal education programs, workshops, and demonstrations
- Mentorships and apprenticeship programs
- Professional development for artists, teaching artists, teachers, and other education providers
- Assessments and evaluations of arts learning
- Online courses or 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

External Factors

Several external factors that will affect the agency's achievement of this strategic objective also highlight the NEA's continued leadership in arts education as necessary and appropriate.

First, although federal law has designated arts education a core academic subject to be taught in our Nation's public schools, states have struggled to keep it on 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 standards for evaluating teacher practices and assessing student learning in the arts differ widely—as do strategies for their implementation.

Even if arts education is not yet universal, today's employers are acutely aware of the capacity for risk-taking and creative thinking that the subject can encourage. Business leaders have identified such abilities as highly desirable for a 21st-century workforce, even as they acknowledge problems in finding creative workers among today's job applicants. From this vantage point, arts education can not only improve the quality of Americans' arts experiences, it may well improve the quality of their lives and livelihoods.

Moreover, the NEA's renewed focus on lifelong learning in and about the arts is justified in part by generational shifts. As Americans head into retirement, there is every reason to expect their continued participation in the

arts through classes, lessons, workshops, and online courses. Further, a literature review commissioned by the NEA in partnership with the National Institutes of Health showed promising health outcomes reported in studies of older adults who pursued arts learning opportunities.

Performance Goal

The NEA's performance goal for this strategic objective includes measuring Americans' participation in arts learning activities throughout the lifespan. A more direct measure involves reviewing the extent to which NEA-supported arts education projects lead to demonstrations of learning by teachers and students. Through this two-fold approach, the agency will gain a better appreciation of both the extent to which lifelong learning is being achieved in general and through NEA-supported projects.

Strategic Objective 2.3

Strengthen American communities by investing in projects that seek to improve the livability of places through the arts.

Livability consists of a variety of factors that contribute to the quality of life in a community. Some commonly cited examples are affordable housing, ease of transportation, and public safety. Yet not to be overlooked are opportunities for social, civic, and cultural engagement—including arts participation—and an aesthetically pleasing environment. Indeed, a Knight Foundation study, conducted by Gallup in 26 U.S. communities over a three-year period, recently identified "social offerings," "openness," and "aesthetics" as the three top drivers of community attachment, or why people love where they live.

Nationwide, there has been a surge of interest among arts organizations, artists, urban and rural planners, designers, and local economic development agencies, in a phenomenon called creative placemaking. These grassroots initiatives typically involve multiple partners from the nonprofit, corporate, and philanthropic sectors working together to shape the character of a community with local arts and cultural assets.

Some of the anticipated long-term results of these projects include measurable local benefits. For instance, communities may set out to achieve growth in overall levels of social and civic engagement; new avenues for expression and creativity; design-focused changes in policies, laws, and/or regulations; job and/or revenue growth; or positive changes in migration patterns.

The NEA supports creative placemaking primarily through an initiative called Our Town, which funds projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and helps transform them into lively, beautiful places with the arts at their core. But the agency also welcomes project proposals that seek to apply other strategies to strengthen communities through the arts.

Strategies

- 1) Fund grants to strengthen communities across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas, including programs that support communities nationwide with arts engagement, cultural planning, and design projects.
- 2) Encourage diverse and multiple partnerships as a tool for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of funded projects.

- 3) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants for the purpose of strengthening communities through the arts are being funded across the United States.
- 4) Develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic, societal, or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based. (*Examples of such initiatives include Our Town, the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design, the Mayors' Institute on City Design, Challenge America Fast-Track, and Blue Star Museums.*)
- 5) Ensure that NEA panel review members have the qualifications and expertise necessary to identify projects that can strengthen communities through the arts.
- 6) Maintain a fair and effective panel review process that provides panel members with adequate information to determine which projects meet the highest standards of excellence, and instills public confidence in the agency's decision-making process.
- 7) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore mutual strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

Contributing Programs

To encourage the strengthening of American communities through the arts, the agency will dedicate a portion of grant-making funds to projects primarily focused on improving community livability. Below are representative project activities:

- Development of plans for cultural and/or creative-sector growth
- Enhancement of public spaces through design or new art works
- Arts or design activities that are intended to foster community interaction in public spaces
- Activities that contribute to community identity and sense of place
- Inclusion of artists, designers, and/or arts organizations in civic engagement activities and plans and processes to improve community livability and enhance the unique characteristics of a community
- Innovative community-based partnerships that integrate the arts with livability efforts

External Factors

The ability to strengthen communities through the arts depends on a variety of social, economic, and demographic factors unique to each location. As people and organizations move, often in response to local conditions, the livability of one community can greatly affect that of another.

Performance Goal

To measure its performance on this strategic objective, the NEA will evaluate final reports submitted for grant projects that had the primary purpose of strengthening communities through the arts. Reporting requirements for NEA grantees in this category include both quantitative and qualitative measures of steps taken to improve livability. The data also include information on the types of organizational partnerships that were formed in these communities.

The lasting benefits of creative placemaking projects are likely to emerge over time and may not be fully measureable during the period of a grant. Robust evaluation of the impacts achieved by such grants will require longer-term studies. As an initial step toward such studies, the NEA is validating a national set of statistical

indicators designed to capture the kinds of outcomes that practitioners of creative placemaking deem relevant to their projects. To assist such practitioners, the NEA is also producing an online series of case studies and lessons learned that will illustrate key statistics and outcomes from creative placemaking projects supported by the agency.

Strategic Goal 3: Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Arts

Strategic Objective 3.1

Expand and promote evidence of the value and/or impact of the arts by fulfilling a long-term research agenda and by using traditional and social media channels to distribute findings and new information.

Both the arts sector and the broader public require statistically reliable data on the relationship of arts and culture to other aspects of everyday life. Arts workers and arts industries depend on timely information and analyses to monitor patterns of employment, fiscal health, and public demand for their goods and services. The greater public, on the other hand, needs 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 remains the primary federal source for national data and analyses about the U.S. arts sector. Increasingly, however, the agency has aimed not only to explore the factors and conditions affecting arts participation and art-making, but also to illuminate the impact of the arts on American lives and communities. This new line of scientific inquiry requires creative research methods, more robust data collection involving federal, academic, and commercial partners, convenings with the Nation's cultural research experts, and smarter metrics.

As federal, state, and local policymakers assess the place of arts and culture in their programs and budgets, they seek authoritative details about the arts' contributions to social, civic, and economic outcomes. As in recent years, the NEA will both conduct and support impact analyses of arts and cultural programming; such studies will incorporate both quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Also, the agency will continue to share relevant findings and data with the public through publications, presentations, webinars and webcasts, convenings, and news and social media. These efforts will bring cohesion to ongoing cultural research endeavors spanning many different disciplines across the United States. In tracking this work, the NEA will pay close attention to cutting-edge research strategies and will offer encouragement to a new generation of arts and cultural researchers.

Regarding information-sharing more broadly, the NEA's Public Affairs office works with traditional media journalists (e.g., for newspapers, magazines, and TV or radio broadcasters) to place stories about excellent art projects (and artists, where appropriate) that the NEA has funded or supported. Through its own print and online publications such as *NEA Arts*, the agency regularly offers examples of high-quality artists and arts projects. Finally, to better encourage discussions about arts participation, the NEA uses social media, webcasts, and webinars to interact with the public and share best practices in community engagement, marketing and promotion, audience development, organizational management, and content development and programming.

Further credible and evidence-based information about the value and/or impact of the arts will enable the NEA, in turn, to pursue its own mission more effectively. Some of that knowledge will bear directly on the agency's

work in supporting arts creation, arts participation, arts education, and the arts' integration with community life. Other research findings will influence national, state, and community-level indicators of creative and cultural vitality, allowing policy-makers to become better informed about the distinct contributions the arts make to society.

Strategies

Through its Office of Research & Analysis (ORA), the NEA will:

- 1) Advance the NEA research agenda by completing research milestones identified in *How Art Works*, an ORA strategic planning document with a system map and measurement framework. Using the system map, update the NEA's research milestones beyond FY 2016.
- 2) With the Office of Public Affairs, identify optimal distribution channels for NEA Research projects and use them effectively. Examples include NEA publications, peer review journals, public presentations, webcasts or webinars, online research tools, and social media.
- 3) Examine arts research initiatives outside the NEA and, where appropriate, determine mechanisms for the agency to foster collaboration among these initiatives.
- 4) Use research and evaluation findings to identify best practices in priority areas. Encourage adoption of those practices by the agency and relevant stakeholders.
- 5) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

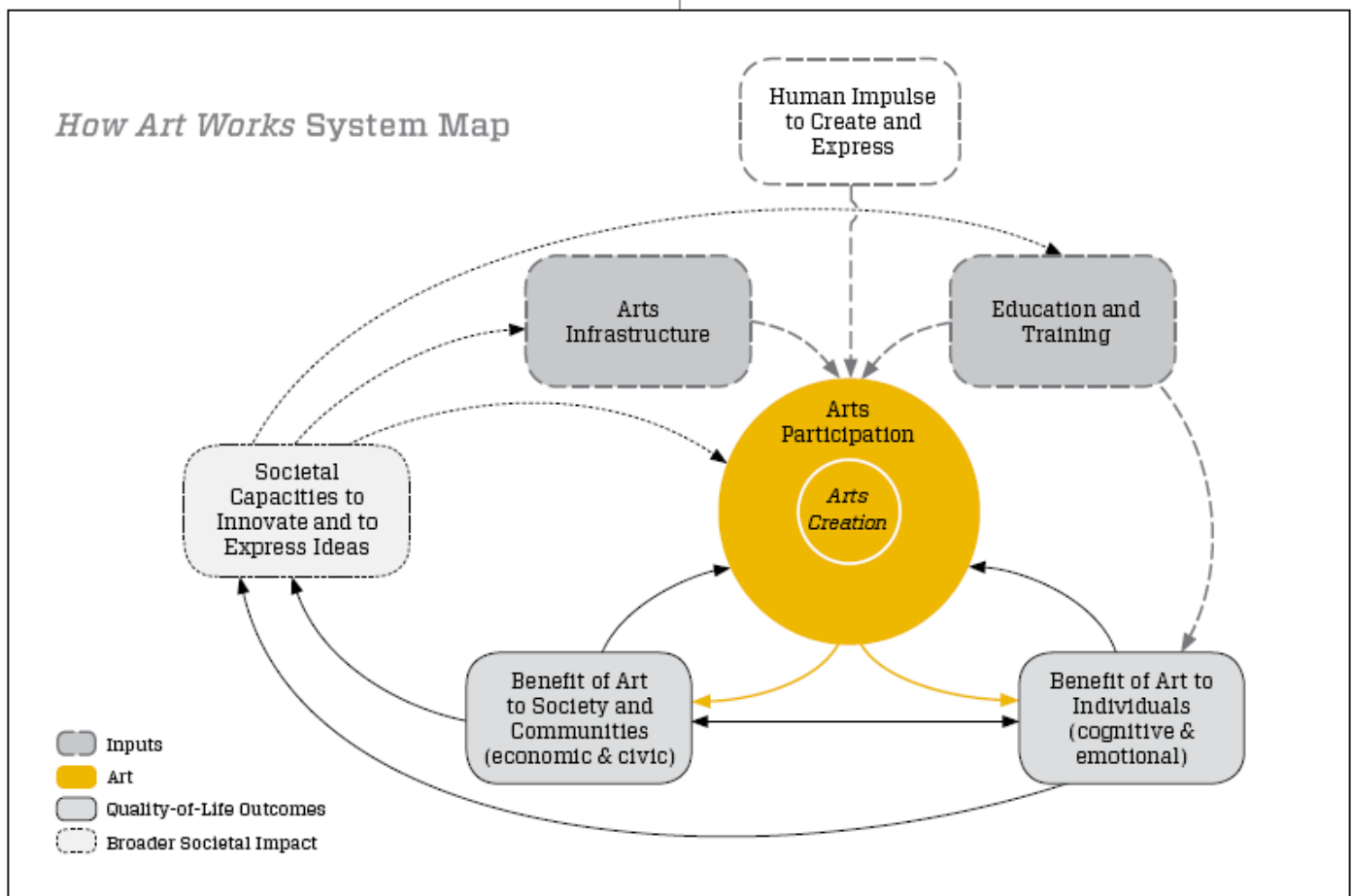
Through its Public Affairs office, the NEA will:

- 1) Work with traditional media to place high-impact stories about NEA-supported programs and projects.
- 2) Produce print and online publications, such as the quarterly magazine *NEA Arts*, which highlight exemplary art projects and artists throughout the nation and their effects on communities.
- 3) Through the NEA's website and blogs, and using a variety of social media, provide information about 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.
- 4) Using all of the methods listed above, keep the public informed on the application process for NEA funding, and provide detailed descriptions of grants and projects the agency has funded.

Contributing Programs

Research & Analysis

In addition to its own internal research team and any contractors it might retain, the NEA Office of Research & Analysis manages a grants program that contributes to the accomplishment of this strategic objective. In 2012, the NEA released *How Art Works: A Five-Year Research Agenda for the NEA, Supported by a System Map and Measurement Model*, which the agency is using to guide priorities and resource allocation for research in FY 2012-2016. The *How Art Works* system map identifies many nodes and relationships critical to developing evidence about the value and/or impact of the arts in the U.S. (*See illustration, below.*)



At the core of the map are variables related to *Arts Creation* and *Arts Participation*, which have cascading effects, represented by *Benefit of Art to Individuals (cognitive and emotional)* and *Benefit of Art to Society and Communities (economic and civic)*. According to the *How Art Works* hypothesis, these benefits lead to second-order effects, represented by *Societal Capacity to Innovate and Express Ideas*, which, in a virtuous cycle, feeds back into the two key inputs of the system: *Arts Infrastructure* and *Education and Training* in the arts.

The NEA's research agenda includes several projects in each "node" of the system map. ORA has set milestones for those projects which it tracks and updates annually. The projects and milestones serve three ORA goals:

- Identify and cultivate new and existing data sources in the arts.
- Investigate the value of the U.S. arts ecosystem and the impact of the arts on other domains of American life.
- Elevate the public profile of arts-related research.

Public Affairs

The NEA runs three blogs through its website: the Big Read Blog, which supports the Big Read initiative and covers literary subjects; the Blue Star Museums Blog, which supports the Blue Star Museums initiative and covers military and museum-related topics; and the Art Works Blog, a more general blog that covers the arts in communities across the United States. In addition, the Public Affairs office produces a weekly audio podcast segment, consisting of interviews with artists, arts administrators, and creative thinkers about both the practical

and visionary aspects of working in the arts and the impact the arts can have on the quality of life in communities large and small.

The NEA also creates publications to complement certain NEA initiatives, such as NEA Jazz Masters, as well as an annual report about the previous fiscal year's activities and an annual guide that notes current NEA initiatives, programs, and grant opportunities. The *NEA Arts* quarterly magazine takes a thematic approach to discussing the arts, each issue tackling a different arts-related topic with the idea of demonstrating the best examples of community engagement, content development, and a host of other pertinent subjects.

The Office of Public Affairs webcasts public meetings of the National Council on the Arts as well as concerts and ceremonies for the two lifetime honors the agency awards. In addition, the office works with other NEA units to produce webinars on a variety of arts-related topics. Such webinars allow the public to learn more about NEA grant opportunities, to engage with content experts about NEA programs such as Big Read and Our Town, and to participate in NEA Research presentations and events such as those sponsored by the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development.

The NEA's social media platforms complement the agency's website and publications to further engage the public with this rich content, as well as provide a larger audience for future webcasts, webinars, and press releases.

External Factors

As with much social impact research, studies of arts participation and arts education continue to show correlative, but not conclusively causal, linkages between those activities and outcomes in other areas. Also, economic impact studies have struggled to isolate the impact of arts and culture from other local factors. Impact analyses in the arts will require creative research methods; more robust data collection involving federal, academic, and commercial partners; regular convenings with the Nation's cultural research experts; and smarter metrics.

Regarding public outreach and communications, most of the NEA's exposure to the public formerly occurred through the traditional media of newspapers, periodicals, and radio and television broadcasts, over which the agency had little control other than providing information. With the Internet, the Arts Endowment has more direct channels to the public through its website and social media platforms (while still working with traditional media). The NEA will continue to find the best methods of using the various Internet platforms to promote arts and arts participation in the United States.

Performance Goal

Half of the performance goal for this strategic objective focuses on the accomplishment of milestones detailed in the NEA's Research Agenda. Because this agenda is based on a System Map and Measurement Model that explores the role of the arts in American society from multiple dimensions, accomplishing the milestones set out in the Research Agenda can help the NEA speak to the many dimensions along which the arts have value and impact in society.

The second half of the performance goal focuses on the breadth and depth of public engagement with NEA publications, social media content, and information about grants and funding opportunities. The NEA plans to explore methods for measuring the impact that NEA research produces within academic research journals and

other commercial outlets such as consumer and trade news outlets in print, broadcast, and online formats, as well as social media channels.

Strategic Objective 3.2

Increase the domestic and international impact of the arts by establishing strategic partnerships with public and private organizations.

As the federal government's lead agency in supporting the arts, and as its primary sponsor of arts-related research, the Arts Endowment is a vital resource for domestic and international organizations that have common cause with the NEA. At the federal level, the Arts Endowment can communicate knowledge about the value and/or impact of the arts to other agencies and departments to complement their efforts to serve the American people. Internationally, the NEA can raise awareness among other countries and cultures about the exemplary offerings of American artists. Alternatively, the agency can expose American audiences to new and exciting works being created abroad.

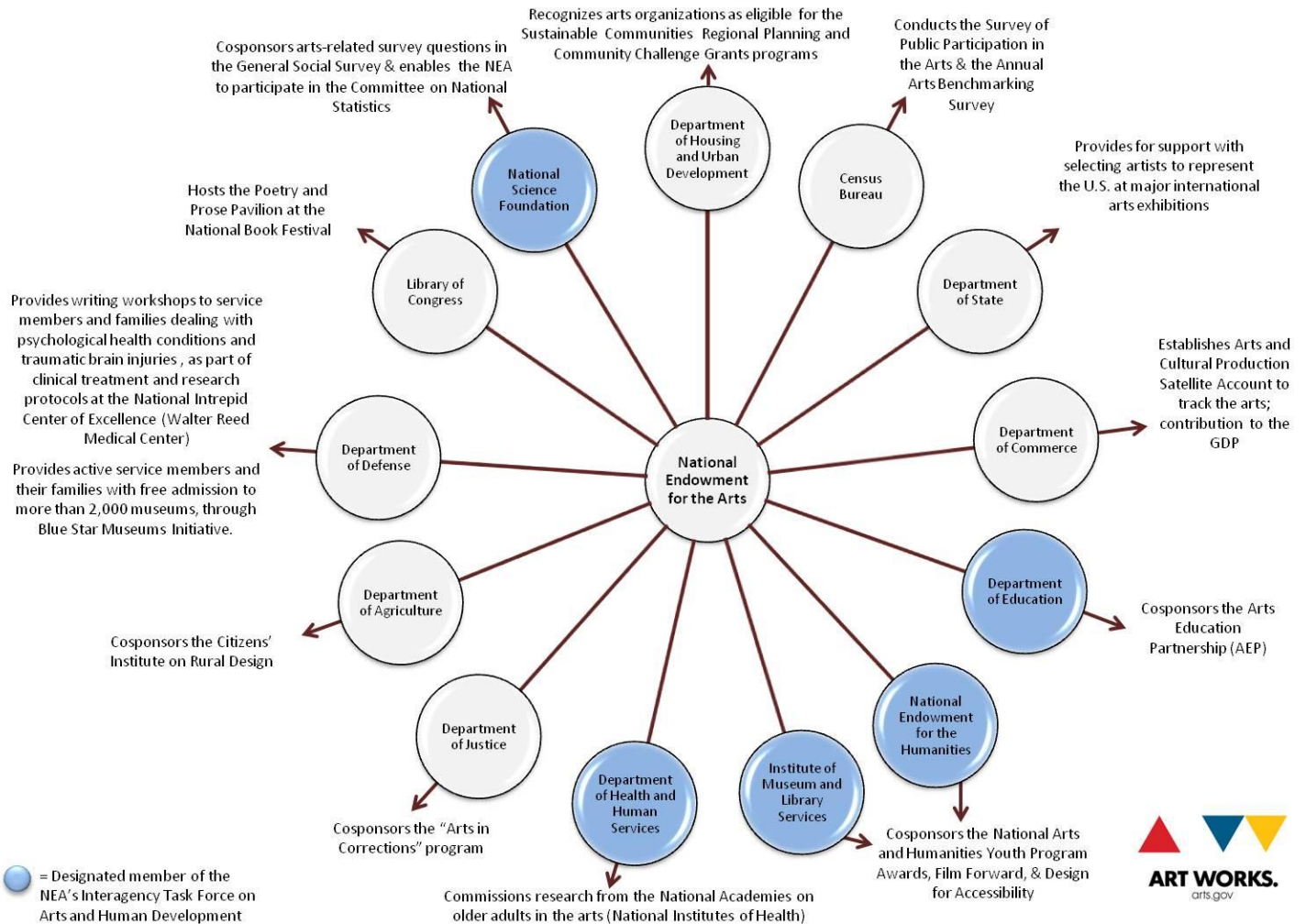
Strategies

- 1) Identify target federal agencies that perceive great value in enhancing the role of arts in their program planning. Cultivate relationships with those organizations to explore formal and/or informal partnerships.
- 2) Identify international partners that have the means, opportunity, and inclination to pursue a strategic goal shared by the NEA. Cultivate relationships with those organizations.
- 3) Work efficiently and effectively with the SAAs and RAOs to explore strategies that can help the agency fulfill this strategic objective.

Contributing Programs

In recent years, the NEA has formed or enhanced strategic partnerships with the Departments of Education, Commerce, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Defense, Interior, and State, in addition to working with the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the National Park Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency, among others. (*See illustration, below.*)

NEA Partnerships with Other Federal Agencies and Departments



The Arts Endowment has also historically played a formal and informal role in cultural diplomacy through the arts, from the development of programs with government arts agencies in China, Japan, Pakistan, or Egypt, in concert with the U.S. Department of State, to bringing American art to audiences in Russia and Mexico. Over the next five years, the NEA will continue efforts to strengthen cultural ties and promote the exchange of artistic resources between the United States and its international partners.

External Factors

Changes in administration and constrained budgets invariably result in changes to the agenda that public agencies are able to pursue. Adjusting to these changes in agency agendas requires flexibility and focus in maintaining partnerships. These kinds of complications are magnified when dealing with relations between the NEA and cultural agencies abroad.

Performance Goal

To track ongoing accomplishments in achieving this strategic objective, the NEA will rely on a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures to express the breadth and depth of partnerships with other federal

agencies, as well as the impact of partnerships with various kinds of organizations to promote exposure of American artworks and audiences to audiences and artworks from other countries.

Agency Management Goal: Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

Management Objective 1.1

Provide the American people with outstanding service by attracting, maintaining, and optimizing a diverse, creative, productive, and motivated workforce.

To accomplish strategic goals 1 through 3, the Arts Endowment requires a workforce that demonstrates the qualities of creativity and excellence identified with the agency's mission. The NEA is committed to recruiting a diverse and competent workforce, ensuring that employees have the resources and technologies they need to excel in their jobs, and fostering a climate of personal and professional accountability.

Strategies

- 1) Recruit a diverse, highly-skilled, and competent workforce.
- 2) Support the workforce with efficient and effective human resource policies, opportunities for training, and access to information technologies.
- 3) Encourage and reward creative and innovative problem-solving.
- 4) Foster a climate of personal and professional accountability.
- 5) Maintain a workplace free from discrimination as defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Contributing Programs

The NEA has taken steps to foster an environment that supports a highly productive, creative, and motivated workforce. In addition to government-wide benefits—including incentive awards program (when available), family-friendly leave policies, and flexible/alternative work schedules, the NEA provides wellness services, such as its interagency agreement with Federal Occupational Health (FOH) to provide health center services to agency staff.

External Factors

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 Goal

To maintain the highest standard of organizational excellence, the agency regularly will monitor employee feedback. A key strategy for collecting employee feedback is the OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which identifies specific areas as needing improvement. With this strategic plan, employee feedback becomes

part of the NEA's performance measurement. This information will be used to improve recruitment and retention strategies for high-performing workers.

Management Objective 1.2

Be an effective and vigilant steward of public funds by sustaining transparent and efficient grant-making and administrative processes.

In addition to holding its workers accountable—and being accountable to its workers—the NEA has a duty to the American taxpayer. Its responsibilities extend to the financial integrity of its operations, but also to its communication with members of the public who seek to use the agency's services.

NEA operations improve as a result of using clear and understandable reporting, proper internal controls, meaningful performance measures, continuous assessment to achieve desired outcomes, and effective management. The 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 and reported semi-annually as part of this effort.

Strategies

- 1) Maintain financial integrity throughout the agency.
- 2) Promote data-driven decision-making and information-sharing practices throughout the agency.
- 3) Improve grants management and grantee compliance. Provide technical assistance to applicants and grantees through outreach efforts.
- 4) Expand the use of technology to improve productivity and efficiency.
- 5) Foster a climate of organizational accountability.

Contributing Programs

The Arts Endowment continually seeks ways to improve the efficiency of its operations, and technology has been an effective tool in this regard. For example, the NEA will expand the use of the NEA GrantsOnline™ (NEA-GO) System and remote panels, both of which were pilot-tested in 2012-2013.

The NEA-GO system allows grants panelists to have access to more application material in advance of panel meetings than in the past, and to score and comment on applications online, improving the quality of application review. NEA-GO also provides staff with new tools for the application review process, improving efficiency and productivity. Remote panels reduce costs and streamline the application review process for panelists and staff.

The NEA has also renewed its partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop and deploy a cloud-based grants management system known as eGMS. The agency expects the benefit of this partnership to include cost savings through shared services and systems, and streamlined and standardized processes among agencies. Finally, the Arts Endowment recently launched a new online service that allows

members of the public to search the NEA’s grants database for information about awards dating back more than a decade.

External Factors

There are fewer external factors that affect this management objective than affect most of the other objectives in this strategic plan. Provided that the agency is able to maintain the resources to continue to support the kinds of programs that contribute to achieving this objective, progress will be sustainable.

Performance Goal

To monitor the agency’s success at continuing to be an effective and vigilant steward of public funds, the NEA will track progress on the technical advances outlined here. The agency will also monitor feedback from grant applicants to ensure the support and guidance provided to the public on the process for obtaining awards is clear and easily accessible.

Cross-Cutting Objective 1.1

Ensure that NEA-funded activities reach Americans throughout the country by making awards for projects that address a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines, geographic locations, and underserved populations.

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 and Regional Arts Organizations 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 from 2009-2010 shows that more than 53 percent of arts events sponsored by NEA grants are held in Census tracts with median household incomes below \$50,000, suggesting new opportunities for arts participation in those communities.

One program employed by the agency for ensuring a diverse distribution of grants to underserved communities is the Challenge America Fast-Track category. Challenge America Fast-Track offers support primarily to small and mid-sized organizations for projects that extend the reach of the arts to underserved populations. Grants are available for professional arts programming and for projects that emphasize the potential of the arts in community development. In the last fiscal year, nearly 35 percent of Challenge America Fast-Track awards were made to first-time grantees; the NEA will continue to improve outreach to this important constituency.

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

- 1) Fund grants across a diverse spectrum of artistic disciplines and geographic areas.

- 2) Enhance geographic data collection and reporting capabilities to ensure that grants are being funded across the United States.
- 3) Develop and support leadership initiatives that provide opportunities for the Arts Endowment to address special artistic or cultural needs—whether field- or geography-based.
- 4) Maintain 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) Work 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 Arts Endowment’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 our 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. Enhanced geographic data collection and analysis should help maximize the impact of these outreach efforts.

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 Goal

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 across the country.

Conclusion

The NEA's strategic goals and objectives build on the two-word premise from the opening section of this plan. The three ways that "Art works" (as works of art, as ways art works on audiences, and art *as* work) are reflected in the agency's portfolio, which includes: projects involving arts creation; projects that engage audiences, learners, and whole communities; and projects that raise public awareness of the measurable contributions of artists and artworks in everyday life.

To assess the performance of that portfolio on an ongoing basis, the NEA's Office of Research & Analysis is undertaking several comprehensive efforts:

- *Independent, Post-Award Reviews.* The agency will institute post-award, independent, citizen-expert reviews of selected NEA grants to determine the degree to which objectives were achieved. Grants awarded for the creation of artworks will be evaluated to determine the degree to which NEA-supported projects demonstrate excellence.
- *Audience Surveys.* For grants that involve the presentation of art performances or exhibits, the NEA will provide grantees with access to a web-based survey instrument that will query audience members about the nature and extent of their responses to these art experiences. In addition, the surveys will ask about audience members' prior exposure to similar events and activities.

The NEA will encourage grantees to promote the survey link widely before, during, and after presentation of the agency-funded performance or exhibit. The survey results thus will give the NEA a snapshot of attitudinal and/or motivational changes that occurred as a result of NEA grants supporting the engagement of Americans with diverse and excellent art.

- *Grant Applicant Surveys.* NEA grant applicants are surveyed anonymously upon submission of their applications so that the agency can learn about their experiences in using and understanding the grant application guidelines on the NEA website as well as the quality of interactions with NEA staff while preparing applications. Where appropriate, this information is used to refine the grant application process.

All such efforts will benefit from the recent establishment of a program evaluation function within the NEA's Office of Research & Analysis. The office will analyze data collected for informational and strategic purposes and present the findings to NEA staff and leadership on a periodic basis, helping to improve the agency's overall decision-making. Formal and informal sharing of performance data will contribute to organizational excellence, which is critical to the NEA's ability to advance artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities.

In addition to tracking the direct outcomes of the agency's programs and grants activity, the NEA has improved its ability to measure ongoing trends in the arts and cultural sector. By monitoring these trends, the agency will gain insights that will allow more evidence-based decision-making, while informing the public of gaps and opportunities.

For example, the NEA has begun an annual arts "benchmarking" survey, in cooperation with the U.S. Census Bureau, to take the pulse of arts participation in a nationally representative sample of adults. Similarly, the NEA is creating a series of national indicators to track the outcomes that matter most to communities conducting creative placemaking projects—such as those made possible through the agency's Our Town program. More recently, the NEA embarked on an interagency agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis to develop a national satellite account on arts and cultural production. The account will track, for the first time in U.S. history, the value added by the arts to the nation's economy. All of these measures will reinforce the central claim of this strategic plan: Art works for America.

Note: *In updating its strategic plan for FY 2014-2018, the NEA notified Congress and posted a draft on the agency's website, along with a survey tool to collect feedback from the general public. The NEA consulted those comments in revising the document into the current version.*