

STEP 8: Train Your Staff, Board, Panelist, Grantees and Constituents

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Guidance on Educating Your Staff, Board, Grantees and Constituents

Educating staff and board heightens awareness, promotes integration of access issues into all aspects of the organization, and helps provide the support needed to move forward on access plans.

Access education/training should be repeated and/or updated on a regular basis. Review of the agency's Access Policy/Mission Statement and Access Plan should reinforce this concept.

Advisory Committee members and other qualified people with disabilities should participate in education efforts as panelists, consultants and instructors to assist in organizing and updating educational programs. All too often what might

be perceived as insensitivity is actually ignorance. Many people have not had experiences of knowing and working with individuals who have various disabilities.

The enforcement of nondiscrimination begins with education. State Arts Agencies and Humanities Councils should take the lead in educating, assisting and supporting their constituents on accessibility. A helpful, assertive approach is generally more effective than an investigative one.

Accessible programs enhance and expand the creative experience for all participants and audience members. What is needed for one participant can be a convenience for all, i.e., large print labeling or elevators.

Arts and humanities service organizations can be catalysts for researching and cultivating new audiences. Promoting access is a form of audience development. It is also a method for discovering new forms of outreach.

Learning first-hand from people who have disabilities increases awareness, effectively educates staff and encourages cooperation.

The ultimate goal is to make access part of all education efforts. Access issues should be integrated into general as well as optional sessions of conferences, workshops and management seminars.

Effective Training Practices

Train Board and Staff

Many cultural organizations are taking leadership roles to advance the state of access to the arts and humanities for their board, staff and constituents. It is highly recommended that board and top administrative staff are involved in these efforts to prevent a leadership void. Staff involved at all levels of the organization need to be trained. This includes staff who have direct contact with patrons with disabilities (i.e. those involved in greeting, ticket sales, information desk, security guards), as well as staff who work behind the scenes (i.e. administrators, exhibit developers, education, facilities). Staff with direct interactions will be the first point of contact for a patron/participant with a disability with a question. Staff behind the scenes needs to be aware of what the main issues that affect people with various disabilities and older adults so that they know best how to best structure the environment and to develop programs and procedures to ensure an enjoyable experience for all.

Model Accessible Practices through Your Training

The location, methods for instruction and content of the training should model accessibility. Participants and presenters will benefit from learning through demonstration of accessible training practices that includes the training site and methods used. Hold all training sessions in accessible locations; provide handouts in

large print and Braille; utilize videos that are captioned and/or audio described; and provide sign language interpreters so that participants experience the auxiliary aids and services that make programs inclusive to people with various disabilities.

Consult Accessibility Coordinators of regional, state and local arts agencies, humanities councils or your state chapter of VSA arts. These organizations may provide examples of access workshops that are being conducted in your area. In addition, individuals from these groups may be able to serve as advisors and/or presenters in your activities.

Training Components

The following are 8 components of an effective training programs for staff, board members, volunteers and grantees. These components are the recommended content areas that should be addressed in every workshop or training session.

The 8 Key Components to Training

1. **Discuss the organization’s commitment to accessibility and etiquette.**
2. **Define “People with Disabilities”.** Discuss the legal definition of disability as well as the range in fundamental needs of individuals visible and hidden disabilities.
3. **The needs of older adults, and access to facilities and programs.**
4. **The importance of language and its power to include or exclude.**
5. **Good communication practices.**
6. **How to correctly offer assistance to people with disabilities and older adults.**
7. **Describe and demonstrate services and auxiliary aids.**
8. **How to respond to emergencies and implement your organization’s emergency procedures for evacuation, fire or medical emergency.**

Design for Accessibility, A Cultural Administrator’s Handbook (2003)

Types of Training for Staff, Board, Panelists and Grant Recipients

A variety of training methods are described below that can be used as guidelines in setting up your own locally relevant conference, workshop or training programs.

Sensitivity Training Seminars

Present a panel of speakers who are artists, cultural administrators, educators and/or participants who represent different categories of disability. Each speaker discusses:

- 1) What cultural participation means to them;
- 2) Their experiences gaining access to the arts and humanities --- both good and bad; and
- 3) Their advice to cultural organizations for making their activities more accessible to their participants with their particular disability--- what works, what is effective and what to avoid.

This kind of experience helps participants understand why accessibility is important over and above the law, and provides information on current access issues. Further, panelists should be invited to meet with participants following the presentation, and to participate in the entire seminar or conference. This interaction should result in networking and increased awareness on everyone's part. For more information, see the outline for an access seminar, below.

Seminars to work with/study aspects of a particular disabled community/culture: for example, teaching basic, frequently used signs of American Sign Language; or learning first-hand from people who have disabilities. This kind of training has proven successful in cultivating potential audience members and discovering new methods of outreach.

Contact local organizations that represent people with disabilities, or who are older: for example, your state chapter of VSA or local Independent Living Center may be enormously helpful in providing literature and/or conducting sensitivity training for your organization and constituents.

See also: [Access and Opportunities: A Guide to Disability Awareness](#) produced by VSA arts is an informational tool for those who want to gain knowledge about disability, and tips for social etiquette and positive interactions.

[Disability Etiquette Handbook](#) produced by The City of San Antonio, Texas Planning Department and the Disability Advisory Committee as an information tool to enhance opportunities for persons with disabilities to pursue their careers and independent lifestyles.

Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design

This document contains guidelines as well as design tools. The guidelines are in part based on construction standards established for the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The represent Smithsonian methods for arriving at the laws' required end: accessible exhibitions that work for people with disabilities as well as for the rest of the public. Together the guidelines become the Smithsonian standard for accessible exhibition design.

"Model Programs" Panel

Artists and arts administrators who have accessible programs speak about their programs, audience development and cultivation of new access leadership. For example, a representative from an accessible performing arts facility speaks about:

- 1) How they evaluated and planned for increased access, funding required to make their theater structurally and programmatically accessible and technologies they use to accommodate patrons with disabilities.
- 2) Awareness training they provided for their employees and volunteers, e.g., box office staff.
- 3) Programming ideas that integrate performers and audiences with and without disabilities.
- 4) Concrete examples of how they make their programs accessible to all participants, for example, audio description, pre-performance "Sensory Seminars" of the stage set, costumes and props for audience members with visual disabilities; non-traditional casting of people with disabilities; shadow-interpreted performances or video captioning.
- 5) How they market and advertise their access accommodations.

On-Site Facility Access Evaluation Workshop

Workshop participants receive instruction on how to use the "Arts and Humanities Accessibility Checklist" (See Step 6). Training could include:

- 1) A hands-on site evaluation conducted by an expert access team and/or an individual who has a disability. Participants are shown how to assess architectural features, such as paths of travel, slope of ramps, restroom usability, horizontal and vertical circulation and integrated seating.
- 2) Subsequently, workshop participants are provided with access checklists to evaluate their own facilities and programs.

- 3) Follow up is important. A second session may be held several weeks later to provide additional guidance and strategies for access improvements, technical assistance or funding.

Access "Case Study" Workshops

Workshops may include case studies: for example, participants discuss and/or bring photographs of access challenges within their facility, and receive advice and solutions from a panel of experts. Participants could view designs that combine access compliance with 504 / ADA Regulations, universal design and aesthetic considerations.

Sequential Access Training Workshops

Access training is most effective when it is repeated and updated. Many arts and humanities organizations find that the best ideas and results for improving and upgrading access come from their staff and/or constituents holding an ongoing sequence of seminars/workshops. For example, a series of 4 workshops may address different areas or topics:

- 1) Section 504 and the ADA requirements, and sensitivity training for interacting with people with disability.
- 2) Structural accessibility: this session may include cultural administrators conducting an access site evaluation, discussion of adaptations to existing facilities, sources for technical assistance and tactics to obtain funding for improvements.
- 3) Developing targeted audiences by providing accessible programs: this session may include hands-on experiences with assistive technologies, marketing strategies to reach underserved populations and the economic benefits of these efforts.
- 4) Integrating people who have disabilities into arts and humanities programs, guidance provided by mentors, discussion of non-traditional casting, and disability as a diversity issue.

Producing Access Workshops, Conferences and Training

The planning process will require:

1. A minimum of a four-month preparation timeline.
2. Forming an advisory group to help plan the event.

3. Locating an accessible site by using a survey such as the “Checklist for Existing Facilities” (contained within the “Arts and Humanities Accessibility Checklist” in Step 6). Contact your local [Independent Living Center](#) for advice on accessible meeting spaces and/or to conduct a survey of a potential meeting space.
4. Determining the logistics and costs of providing access accommodations, including transportation.
5. Fundraising through arts agencies, foundations, corporations, etc. (Step 9: Financial Considerations).

Planning the program involves:

1. Defining the audience and developing a mailing list of invitees, for example:
 - a. Cultural administrators, artists, teachers, humanities scholars, authors, docents or other staff members from a particular arts institution;
 - b. Representatives from similar cultural institutions or organizations within the state or community, such as directors of dance schools/companies or museum curators; or
 - c. Selecting a specific cultural discipline to be featured at the training program.
2. Defining the sponsor(s); collaborative efforts have many benefits and program implications.
3. Developing the agenda (**see sample agenda below**).
4. Selecting presenters with and without disabilities who have appropriate professional expertise and experience, such as lawyers, architects, artist, filmmakers, authors, individuals with disabilities and cultural administrators.
5. Designing and producing the program in print and alternate formats.
6. Making arrangements for access services.
7. Preparing the panelists by providing them with an outline of topics to be covered.

8. Compiling resources for participants that assist access work. This may include local and state resource lists, an access bibliography and a listing of exemplary accessible programs in the state.
9. Marketing your access education-training program.

To locate accessible cultural programs and informed speakers in your area, contact:

1. Your state and/or local arts and humanities service agencies. As grant providers, these organizations will be able to suggest members of their constituency that have received grants based on the excellence of their programming and audience development.
2. State and local organizations serving people with disabilities, including your state chapter of VSA arts and local Independent Living Center.
3. Cultural organizations cited in the discipline-specific resource directories in this document (visual, literary, media and performing arts) see discipline specific resource directories in this document). Many of these groups have developed exemplary access programs and may be able to refer you to similar model activities in your area.

See also: [Independent Living Centers](#) provides services and advocacy for people with disabilities.

[State Agencies and Organizations for ADA Compliance and Technical Assistance](#) for a contact in your area.

[State, Regional, and Jurisdictional Art Agencies](#) about access training symposia sponsored by their organizations.

The [NEA Accessibility Coordinator List](#) can be found on the NEA Web site.

[VSA State Affiliates](#) are part of a national network of organizations that conduct arts programming for individuals with disabilities.

Sample Agenda for a Conference, Workshop or Training Session

VSA arts "Arts Access Training Program" Model

"Arts Access Training Program"

Sample agenda adapted from Very Special Arts' Arts Access Training Guide (1992):

8:30 - 9:00	Registration/Coffee
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome and Introductions
9:15 - 10:45	Impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act: [Advice from an expert, such as a lawyer or architect] <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the Act?• What are you liable for?• Who is exempt and who is not exempt?• Timeline for compliance.• Examples of the regulations as they relate to organizations.
10:45 - 11:45	Panel Discussion: "The Expectations of People with Disabilities for Change within Cultural Organizations" [Advice from people who have disabilities or representatives from disability organizations]
11:45 - 12:15	Questions and Answers
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:30	"Adaptive Technology and Design: Presentation of Devices and Design Concepts that Make Facilities and Programs more Accessible" [Advice/case studies from cultural organizations that have developed model programs; questions and answers]
--OR--	
1:00 - 2:30	"Disability Awareness Training" [General instruction on techniques for interacting with people who have disabilities; or focus on the needs of people who have a specific type of disability, e.g., people who are deaf or hard of hearing]

2:30 - 3:30	We're Here to Help: Role of Sponsors in Helping Organizations become more Accessible
3:30 - 4:00	Conclusion

National Endowment for the Arts Office of Accessibility Model

"Recipe for Access Symposia"	
National Endowment for the Arts Office of Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The focus of all access education should be inclusion: integrating older adults and people with disabilities into the cultural mainstream for full and equal participation. ▪ The conference/symposia itself should be a model of an accessible meeting. ▪ This meeting may be condensed into a one-day workshop; for best results these activities should be presented over a two-day period. 	
10 minutes	Opening Remarks by a key member of your organization (director, chairman, board member).
45 minutes	Opening Panel: "Access from the Artist's and Arts Administrator's Perspective" At least three practicing artists and arts administrators with various disabilities discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the arts mean to them; • Examples of their personal experiences in gaining access to the arts (both positive and negative experiences); and • Their advice to arts administrators on how to better serve people with their particular disability.
45 minutes	Panel: "The Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504" <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A speaker (i.e, lawyer) presents an overview of the laws translated into how they apply to cultural groups, including rented/donated space, touring and other relevant subjects. (15-20 minutes)

2. **An arts administrator discusses his/her experience in resolving a grievance or formal complaint, emphasizing the positive results.** (10 minutes)

3. Questions and answers. (10 minutes)

20 minutes **Luncheon and Dinner Speakers**

One speaker per meal who may be an artist, head of an arts organization, and a board member who is actively engaged in access issues; or a performance by professional artist(s) with disabilities.

1-1/2 hours **Concurrent panel sessions** (2 to 4 panels for each time slot)

The number, topics covered, and frequency of panels will depend on the length of your conference.

Each panel should include no more than three speakers, and at least one panelist who has a disability.

Suggested topics are:

- "Making Access a Reality": Discussion of policy, public affairs and marketing issues.
- "Education and Outreach": Model programs that reach and include people with various disabilities.
- "Access: It's More than a Ramp:" Designing for increased access through the self-evaluation process.
- "Universal Design": The concept of making access features an integral part of all design, including programs and facilities.
- "Adapting Existing Facilities and Historic Preservation Issues."
- "Making Websites Fully Accessible."
- "How to Hold an Access Training Workshop."
- "Media and Literature: Models, Technologies and Resources."
- "Performing Arts: Models, Technologies and Resources."

- "Visual Arts: Models, Technologies and Resources."

40 minutes **"Planning for the Future"**

In the closing session, participants discuss "Where do we go from here, and what do we need to do it." This valuable session will help your organization identify and prioritize ways you may help each other to advance access in your community.

Examples of Access Education Efforts for Staff, Board, Panelists and Grant Recipients

Access Education Sponsored by National, Regional, State and Local Arts Service Organizations

National Endowment for the Arts Accessibility Coordinators (ADA/504) Peer Session NASAA Conference, Charleston S.C., 2003 included "The Basics" on what new coordinators need to know and do—and what seasoned coordinators are doing to educate and assist their grantees with access issues; "Web Accessibility" and a demonstration of a screen reader; and West Virginia's Cultural Facilities Funding Program, and how it is being used to make arts facilities and programs more accessible. The peer session is designed to update participants in access issues and is a venue for Access Coordinators to Network.

In 2002 **Florida Arts Council** and **VSA Florida** held regional workshops addressing the topics of Cultural Access and the Arts in Healthcare, Professional Development of Artists with Disabilities and their Annual Leadership Conference focused on Arts in Education--- Inclusion and Application. VSA arts of Florida also presented Arts Extension Service workshops for arts administrators on Cultural Access and Arts for Older Americans.

VSA Idaho holds periodic community workshops and public meetings for cultural access throughout Idaho. **Idaho Commission on the Arts** staffers and board members attended the workshops as well as artists and arts organizations. The workshop contains a segment on sensitivity and awareness training.

Illinois Arts Council sponsored "Champaign Urbana Special Recreation" a VSA arts Festival in 2003 to showcase the creative talents of people with disabilities in the visual and performing arts. This included workshops, an Art Show, educational demonstrations and the creation of an on-site mural using adaptable art tools. Facilitated by Dwayne R. Szot, the mural was created by people with disabilities using his own original adaptive art tools and concept, including a wheelchair-painting machine.

The Inclusive Practices Workshop presented by **SPA (Studio Place Arts)** and **VSA Vermont** with support from the **Vermont Arts Council** and **The Center for Independent Living** was held on Monday, July 8th 2002, at The Aldrich Library and SPA. The workshop was offered to museums and galleries volunteers and advocacy/service organizations to learn about accessible exhibit design. The workshop was presented to coincide with the July exhibition at SPA, "Of the People, By the People and For the People." Over 30 participants learned about aesthetic touch and verbal description as ways to enhance the gallery experience. They worked with a team of people—the artist in the exhibit, access consultants, and advisors who are blind or visually impaired--- each providing their professional and/or personal presentation perspectives. The day began with a panel presentation an accessibility consultant for cultural institutions. After the panel presentation, the workshop moved to SPA where people worked in smaller groups to experience tactile artwork and techniques to describe art and the gallery experience for people who are blind or have low vision. People also shared personal stories that demonstrated the value of inclusion.

The **Kentucky Center for the Arts**, in partnership with the **Kentucky Arts Council** offered 6 regional workshops in 2002." "Access in Practice: A Positive Approach to Accessibility Services" and "Access by Design I and II addressed topics such as understanding the basics of the ADA, planning for access services, locating funding for access services and practical skills for staff and volunteers, making the visual arts accessible. Stage One's *The Music Lesson* was presented with audio description and captioning. These workshops covered numerous areas related to accessible arts and offered valuable materials to be shared with fellow staff and utilized in access planning.

In 2002 the **Mississippi Arts Commission** hosted a series of town hall meetings across the state. The meetings were a part of a statewide effort to bring communities, artists and arts supporters into the Commission's planning process and to discuss how the Commission in partnership with the community could better serve its constituents. The agenda for the meetings included a segment specifically addressing accessibility issues entitled, "Increasing audience by increasing accessibility and meeting ADA rules."

The Mississippi Arts Commission is also working in partnership with **VSA Mississippi** to work towards training organizations on developing a greater understanding of accessibility and promoting artists with disabilities. Two conferences were scheduled for early 2003--- *Building Funds for the Arts* and *Starting and Operating a Local Art Agency*. Mississippi's Arts Industry Director also serves as their ADA Coordinator and maintains resource files on accessibility, provides assistance to constituents, prepares and maintains resource files on accessibility, articles for publications, and serves as a conduit for NEA information on accessibility.

The Vermont Arts Council along with the **New England Artist Trust**, the Council's Access Project Consultant, the **New England ADA Technical Assistance Center**, plus representatives from over **13 local community organizations** and venues including churches, the town hall, the local historical society, the local library, local schools and

hotels collaboratively worked together in May of 2001 to bring a regional artist conference of nearly 300 participants to the historic village of Woodstock, Vermont. Access consultants with local representatives surveyed each site within the village of Woodstock to evaluate the level of accessibility in the local facilities. Reports were written and shared with representatives from venues, providing free service for them in terms of improving facilities for the future. The sites presented multiple challenges, both physically and technically but through communication and cooperation among multiple partners, the integrity of the historic venues was maintained. Access maps were created and conference materials ranging from the brochure to registration packets were available in alternative formats. In one case, a portable ramp and accessible bathroom facility was rented to make a facility more accessible.

In 2001, **West Virginia Division of Culture and History** and the **West Virginia Commission on the Arts** hosted a workshop called “Building for Accessibility” in three different locations across the state of West Virginia. The goals of the workshop were to attract quality grant applicants with accessibility components, to increase awareness and sensitivity to artists and audience with disabilities, to provide information and resources for evaluating barriers to participation in the Arts Education Program, and to demonstrate examples of assistive devices for the arts.

**WESTAF- “From Insight to Innovation: Art and Accessibility in the West”
December 14-16, 2000** This conference was organized by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), in partnership with the **National Endowment for the Arts and the state arts agencies of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.**

From Insight to Innovation: Art and Accessibility in the West



The Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) invites you to participate in a symposium to address issues, review developments, and identify opportunities for enhanced access and exposure to the arts for people with disabilities and older Americans. The event will provide panel discussions, workshops, showcases, and exhibits to offer practical guidance on ways to make access considerations integral to the arts.

General Information

Symposium Fees:

- \$150 if you register by October 31, 2000
 - \$175 if you register after October 31, 2000
- A daily rate of \$80 is available, please specify preferred day of attendance.

Registration is limited, so register now.

The Oakland Marriott City Center
1001 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94607
1-800/228-9290

When making your reservations, please be sure to discuss your individual accessibility lodging needs with the hotel at 510/451-4000.

The rate at the hotel (which is available until October 31, 2000) for those attending the symposium is \$129 plus tax for a single or

a double room. Mention the Disability and the Arts Conference to receive the special rate. Hotel reservations must be made directly with the hotel by calling 1-800/228-9290.

Driving directions to the hotel can be found on their Web site at marriott.com/marriott/oakdt or you may call the hotel directly at the number above.

Flyer and registration form are available in alternative formats by calling 303/629-1166 (voice) or 303/607-9019 (TDD).

Complete information, listing of speakers, and timely updates about symposium activities are available on the WESTAF Web site at www.westaf.org.

Questions? Call WESTAF at 303/629-1166 (voice) or 303/607-9019 (TDD).

We ask Symposium participants to help us keep all meeting rooms smoke and scent free.

Technical Assistance

Cultural administrators utilize a variety of technical assistance methods to educate, evaluate, support, and enforce access compliance. These efforts may include:

- Individual consultation: on site, email or by phone
- Small or large group training
- Referral to resources or programs
- Arranging onsite consultation with accessibility experts
- Providing presenters
- Information on innovative programs and practices
- Writing and disseminating information via newsletters
- Posting useful information on Web sites

The Pennsylvania Arts Council 2003-2004 Professional Development and Consulting Division offers non-matching funding to help applicants evaluate and plan to make facilities, programs, and staff accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Advisory Committees

The best method for creating effective and ongoing access training initiatives and providing technical assistance is to use the guidance of an Access Advisory Committee (See Step 4).

Use the guidance of an Access Advisory Committee to create effective and ongoing access education initiatives by providing technical assistance.

Each arts organization should create an advisory committee tailored to address the needs identified by their constituents, as well as their organization's financial resources and planning strategies.

Advice gained can be put into action quickly, producing solutions and outreach activities that involve greater participation from the community at large.

Experience has shown that some of the most creative and exciting work can happen when smaller, lower budget institutions work in partnership with a variety of arts and non-arts organizations in their area.

Self-Evaluations and Surveys

Access self-evaluations are an excellent learning opportunity for all parties involved, and provide a concrete vehicle to encourage, educate and help enforce access compliance. Experience shows that results obtained from surveying your constituency enable both grant providers and member organizations to determine strategies necessary for increased education and the type of assistance needed; these initiatives should be incorporated into access plans and budget.

Quite often, access evaluations provide the organizations surveyed with enough impetus, information and inspiration to achieve the spirit of the law: that is, going beyond the minimum standards by making programs comfortably available to the greatest extent possible.

Self-evaluations and surveys are most successful when the grant providing or membership agency presents itself as a partner in the process, by offering support through education, technical assistance, and resource materials. It also provides an opportunity to discover and highlight successful access programs developed by member organizations.

Example: In 2002, the **Kentucky Center for the Arts** and **Kentucky Arts Council** conducted 4 ADAAG Site Surveys for arts organizations. The survey identified areas of an organization that are not accessible according to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. The survey included readily achievable alternatives for compliance and served as a tool in long term access planning.

See also: Step 6: “Arts and Humanities Accessibility Checklist”.

Step 7: Implement Your Access Plan.

Consultancies and Mentorship

Several arts and humanities service agencies provide an access consultant referral service and/or directory, maintain an updated network of individuals with access expertise who are hired and/or recommended to work with arts organizations statewide. Consultants may be active in training workshops, access brainstorming sessions, program development, survey implementation, access funding initiatives, audio description training, or in creating mentorship links between various kinds of arts organizations.

Numerous non-profit advocacy organizations of and for people with disabilities will provide free or low-cost consultation to arts organizations who need guidance in complying with the legal access requirements of granting agencies. Many organizations, such as Independent Living Centers, Easter Seals, local Foundation for the Blind, Office of Special Education or Rehabilitation, may perform site evaluations, review plans, provide publications, offer guidance on where to buy equipment, or assist in developing access training workshops.

Example: **The New Jersey Arts Access Task Force** was created in 1992 to assist all cultural organizations in making their programs and facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Arts Access Task Force is comprised of individuals with specific knowledge and expertise in areas relating to accessible programming and facilities. Since its inception, the Arts Access Task Force has been a resource for New Jersey’s art community to use as they make structural and programmatic changes in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All of the Arts Access Task Force’s programs and services are made possible by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

The New Jersey Arts Access Task Force provides:

- **On-Going Technical Assistance Workshops-** These workshops, offered throughout New Jersey, provide training and

technical information to assist in the creation of a strong long-range ADA plan.

- **Self-Assessment Surveys-** A user-friendly survey helps identify areas of our operation that are and are not accessible and what is readily achievable regarding access. The survey will also act as a guide as long-ranged ADA plan is developed.
- **Referral and Information Services-** The Arts Access Task Force will provide appropriate information or the resources to for specific questions with regards to sign-interpretation, architectural access, employment issues, etc.
- **Review of ADA Long-Range Plans-** Members of the Arts Access Task Force will review ADA plans prior to their submission to the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Comments and suggestions will be made to applicants as to how they can improve the plan and what elements need clarification.
- **Cultural Access News-** This semi-annual publications informs the arts community about the latest advancements and accomplishments in arts accessibility in New Jersey and across the nation. Special features highlight valuable tools and programs that will assist in the implementation of your organization's ADA plan.

Example: **Beyond Access to Opportunity (BATO)** is a statewide education, information and technical resource program to inspire action on the part of **New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)** grantees to make facilities and programs more innovative and usable to people with disabilities and older adults. The arts council is developing and implementing several strategies that energize constituents to look at possibilities, examine best practices, problem solve with experts and peers, and make changes in their individual institutions.

Since the beginning of this initiative, NYSCA has worked with the Association of Resident Theaters of New York, which received funding from the Mellon Foundation to obtain assisted listening devices in 12 not-for-profit theaters. NYSCA has also been working with the Theatre Development Fund for the past four years, providing \$185,000 for their **Theatre Access Project** to support signed and captioned performances in theater, music and dance, as well as literature readings. Currently, NYSCA is exploring collaboration with Broadway and nonprofit theaters to improve the usability inclusiveness in the New York City theater industry.

Example: **West Virginia Commission on the Arts** has developed the **Peer Assistance Network (PAN)** that provides technical assistance to West Virginia's cultural arts community. The Network provides

ways for staff and board members of organizations to help each other as well as the artists in their communities by exchanging advice between peers who manage similar programs and projects in other areas of the state. In 2001, two advisors with accessibility expertise were added to the roster and a partnership with the Centers for Independent Living is in the works.

The WV Commission on the Arts makes two PAN sessions per year available to arts organizations free of charge. A "session" can be up to two days at a time. Sessions can range from computer training to organizational development to marketing to conflict resolution to lighting design to festival and season planning. They can involve an organization's whole board of directors or one or two staff members.

The Commission has selected a group of "peer advisors" from which organizations choose for their sessions. These advisors all have experience in the arts community in West Virginia and expertise in a range of fields that the Commission believes can provide the best, most relevant and applicable set of skills to arts organizations in the state. The advisors are listed in a catalog available from the Commission.

For more information, visit the [commission's Web site.](#)

Access Education Integrated into Day to Day Activities and Operations

Ultimately, it is everyone's responsibility to achieve fully accessible programming. Educating staff and board reinforces their role in ensuring access. The Accessibility Coordinator should serve as facilitator to the following educational efforts to ensure that access is integrated throughout the entire organization:

Recruit board members, staff, interns, volunteers or panelists who have disabilities; this will heighten awareness throughout your organization, and help gain needed resources for access improvements.

People with disabilities should participate on a wide variety of panels; for example, an architect discussing universal design as a part of facilities panel at a museum conference; or a person who is deaf discussing sign language interpreted performances as parts of an audience development panel at an arts presenters' conference.

Include an access component in new employee and/or grant applicant orientation, such as information on access materials and accommodations provided by your organization.

Example: As part of new employee training, have them perform the “Arts and Humanities Accessibility Checklist” (Step 6) for their office or area.

Generate a series of memos updating staff on access procedures and their responsibilities. Topics might include:

1. Planning Accessible Agency Events;
2. Access Accommodations: Guidance and Request Forms;
3. Emergency Evaluation;
4. User's Guide for Your Organization's TTY (TDD);
5. Progress on Implementing Your Access Transition Plan;
6. Availability of Access Guides;
7. Upcoming Access Seminars/Events;
8. Availability of Grants that May Be Used for Access Projects;
9. Updates on Providing Print Materials and Media in Alternate Formats;
10. Access is a Diversity Issue.

Promote access awareness by regularly updating constituents with your organization's newsletter and/or press releases; this may include articles, national and local resources, upcoming events/workshops, recent access-related mailings, etc.

Have selected information presented in both print and Braille so there are physical examples of your access efforts; for example, large print staff business cards; an "Access Guide for Visitors with Disabilities" brochure; an exhibition guide; a playbill.

Example: The 2001-2002 issue of **CoVisions**, a newsletter published by the **Colorado Council on the Arts** was revised to increase its accessibility. Revisions included the increase of font size, along with balanced use of white space, and a whiter paper stock to increased contrast.

See also: [Best Practices](#) contains practical advice on how to create access guides; improve conferences and meetings, exhibits, programs, facilities, interactions with visitors, live and recorded media, marketing, print materials, and web page design; and schedule sign language interpreters. This online resource was contained in Accessible Practices, produced by The Association of Science Technology Centers Incorporated (ASTC) to assist museums welcome and accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Guides, Newsletters, and Other Access Publications

Several arts service organizations have developed access publications for their constituents. The intention of these materials is to educate and inform; those that

include model programs provide inspiration and a basis for networking. All state arts agencies and humanities councils should provide to their staff and first time grantees with informational material and guidance. Organizations may, for example, direct to this online resource guide.

Example: **The New Jersey Arts Council** developed a publication [Discover New Jersey Arts Accessibility Guide](#). This companion piece to the **Discover New Jersey Arts Resource Guide** is designed to assist patrons with disabilities and their families in determining the physical and programmatic accessibility of New Jersey's cultural institutions. A "snapshot" of each organization's accessibility is provided via the International Access Symbols, which were determined from responses to a comprehensive accessibility survey.

Example: **Idaho Commission on the Arts** provides a number of services and publications including **Accessibility**. All workshops (grant writing, arts organizations, artists, long range planning) are held in public facilities that are accessible for all. In the spring 2000 issue of *Latitudes*, the commission's newsletter, the entire center pull-out section was devoted to an article entitled, "Disability and Nonsense: Dispelling Needless Barriers." The article gave statistics, common considerations, common courtesy, and ten steps to bring your organization into compliance through Web sites, books, magazines, videos, and listed contacts.

Example: The **Louisiana Division of the Arts** has a working arrangement with the Louisiana School for the Deaf and the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, to produce documents in accessible media for applicants, grantees, or panelist with special needs. The Louisiana Division of the Art is located near both the Louisiana School for the Deaf and The Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge, thus they are able to accommodate requests for such materials on relatively short notice. They are able to provide Braille version of program guidelines to a prospective applicant within several days of the request.

Example: **West Virginia Division of Culture and History** and the **West Virginia Commission on the Arts** produces a quarterly newsletter entitled **Art Works**, in which accessibility issues are continuously addressed. The 2002-2003 Winter issue included "Guidance for Writing and Speaking About People with Disabilities and Older Adults" from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Fall 2002 issue featured an article about an accessibility workshop held on the Campus of Marshall University to discuss why and how arts organizations need to do a better job of making their programs more

accessible to people with disabilities. The issue also included a informative fact sheet entitled, “ADA Facts: How the Law Affect You.” The cover story of the Fall 2001 issue of “Art Works” was about “the ‘A’ word”, “Accessibility”--- the creation of a universal or inclusive arts environment that everyone can use.

Example: The **Kentucky Center for the Arts and Kentucky Arts Council** publishes **Access Network News** - A monthly email newsletter that informs the art community about grant opportunities, assistive technology, online resources, marketing opportunities and other access related information.

Example: Every arts organization may create a customized Access Booklet/ Training Guide. A highly recommended and effective method for training grantees or constituents is to prepare an access booklet with contents customized to the needs of the organization. Any of the materials from this document can be copied and spiral bound for circulation. This abbreviated, concise, “ready reference” booklet could include:

1. Brief 504/ADA legislation fact sheets
2. Job Description for Accessibility Coordinator
3. Agency Access Self Evaluation
4. 10 Step Sample Access Plan
5. Discipline Specific Access Checklists
6. Materials on Interacting with People with Disabilities
7. Outreach/Marketing methods
8. Sample workshop agenda;
9. Targeted resource list;
10. Models of accessible programs within the state
11. Other pertinent information

Example: **The California Arts Council** in meeting one of their goals of their three year ADA/504 plan, produced with the **National Arts and Disability Center at UCLA**, [The Step by Step Guide to Accessible Arts in California](#) to assist the arts community to make their spaces, programs and activities available to the approximately 6 million Californians with disabilities. Along with 504/ADA requirements, it includes California access and civil rights laws pertaining to individuals with disabilities. The guide takes organizations through the process of evaluation, planning, and removal of physical and programmatic barriers.

Example: The **Iowa Arts Council** publishes online an [Accessibility Planning Guide: A Step by Step Approach for Planning Your Accessibility](#)

It includes steps to begin your planning process, conducting an accessibility audit of your policies, programs and services, as well as simple planning outline.

Example: In January of 2002, the **Southern Arts Federation** sent a letter and information package from their Access Coordinator entitled **Promoting Accessible Programs and Places** to all Southern Arts Federation Grantees. The letter stated that:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a comprehensive civil rights law that benefits people with disabilities. The Southern Arts Federation encourages arts and cultural organizations to learn more about ADA guidelines and accessibility implementation. As a recipient of federal fund for an arts-related project, your organization is strongly encouraged to review and implement the enclosed accessibility guidelines.

The enclosed material will provide suggestions to assist your organization as you develop programming and publications. To learn more about ADA resources, please visit the following [The National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\)](#).