

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**FY 2022-2026**

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# NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS STRATEGIC PLAN – IN BRIEF:

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## OVERVIEW

This National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) strategic plan covers fiscal years 2022 through 2026. The plan took shape while the agency was implementing provisions of the American Rescue Act of 2021, designed to bring direct relief to Americans enduring the health and economic crises of COVID-19. By including the NEA in this comprehensive relief strategy, Congress reaffirmed the NEA's capacity to support a vital and growing segment of the U.S. economy: the arts and cultural sector—including artists and other creative workers—on whose stability rests economic and job opportunities for people and places nationwide.

Amid this historic backdrop, the NEA is positioning itself as the lead agency within the federal government for social and economic change through the arts. The NEA will broaden and deepen its engagement with organizations that seek to extend the arts and the arts' benefits to underserved populations, even as the agency will support arts projects that aim to help improve individual health outcomes, or that use systems-level approaches to help strengthen or heal communities. The NEA also will invest in arts projects that support the training, research, technical assistance, and technologies needed for the sector to serve Americans wherever they live, and to benefit future generations. Ultimately, through effective operational practices—and with a dedicated focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility—the NEA will achieve the goals and objectives of its strategic plan.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The arts strengthen and promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the National Endowment for the Arts fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

## VISION STATEMENT

A nation in which the arts are essential to our democracy and to reaching our highest potential by nourishing creative enterprise, freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

### **Goal 1. Support opportunities for all people to participate in the arts and arts education.**

#### ***Objective 1.1 Expand public access to the NEA's programs and award-supported activities.***

*Description: By increasing opportunities for the public to encounter different artists, art forms, and artistic and cultural traditions, the NEA invites others to enlarge their aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual boundaries and to realize a greater understanding of the human condition. For the nation and for communities everywhere, these opportunities can awaken social, civic, and economic benefits. The NEA pursues strategies that enable arts participation by people from all backgrounds. Those participants include artists and other creative workers, who are integral to the work of this plan.*

**Objective 1.2** *Prioritize data-driven methods to broaden and deepen engagement with underserved communities.*

Description: *The NEA uses data and analysis to identify and address gaps in representation of underserved groups among the agency's grant applicants, grantees, and program beneficiaries. This evidence base permits the agency to conduct effective outreach and engagement and to make strategic investments and improve program designs to meet the needs of distinct communities that face persistent barriers in accessing or benefiting from arts programs.*

**Objective 1.3** *Provide opportunities for people throughout the country to participate in arts education and to increase their knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.*

Description: *By helping to foster public awareness and appreciation of various art forms and artistic and cultural traditions, the NEA boosts public capacity for lifelong participation in the arts. In particular, this objective supports arts education in and out of school, for students (including artists and arts instructors) at all phases of development, through formal and informal learning opportunities. For society at large, support of arts learning translates to acquisition of skills and competencies that are highly prized in today's economy and jobs market.*

**Objective 1.4** *Ensure opportunities for the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions.*

Description: *The United States produces artists and art forms that are recognized and celebrated the world over. The NEA works with the U.S. State Department and other entities to foster country-to-country exchanges in the arts—thus providing U.S. artists and art forms with greater international exposure, but also allowing people in the U.S. to experience other artistic and cultural traditions.*

**Goal 2. Integrate the arts with strategies that promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities.**

**Objective 2.1** *Support arts projects with a focus on advancing the health and well-being of individuals.*

Description: *The NEA supports programs that address specific health conditions or that integrate the arts with strategies designed to improve individual health and well-being.*

**Objective 2.2** *Embed the arts in system-wide initiatives that strengthen or heal communities.*

Description: *The NEA is building on initiatives that seek to advance systems change through the arts—such as the Arts Education Collective Impact grants program and the Our Town creative placemaking grants program—by encouraging projects that integrate the arts with broader strategies to produce thriving communities. The agency also encourages arts projects that promote community healing and/or recovery, or that strengthen a community's natural, cultural, and economic resources.*

**Goal 3. Build capacity and infrastructure within the arts sector through knowledge-sharing, tools, resources, and evidence-based practices.**

**Objective 3.1** *Support the development of skills and strategies that will enable arts leaders to manage more effective organizations and agencies.*

Description: *Several factors have contributed to a demand for wide range of leadership skills and competencies for arts managers to address new and changing environments. These factors include the following needs: to lead arts organizations effectively in a COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 environment; to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts; and to ensure continuity of skills acquisition and learning for successive generations*

of arts leaders, including those working in policy and practice at the crossroads of the arts and other sectors (e.g., health, community development, the environment). To help fulfill such needs, the NEA supports peer-to-peer learning groups and workshops for emerging arts administrators.

**Objective 3.2** Produce research, statistics, and general information about the arts for the benefit of the arts sector and beyond.

Description: By investing in research and evaluation, the NEA promotes empirical insights on the value and impact of the arts for individuals and communities. The NEA also circulates evidence, data, and research resources to support the ongoing work of cultural providers, funders, researchers, and policymakers. Through the Office of Public Affairs, the NEA regularly communicates with the arts sector and additional audiences about the arts as well as about ideas and topics of growing importance to arts practitioners.

**Objective 3.3** Invest in the capacity of arts organizations and artists to serve a broader public through digital or emergent technology.

Description: Artists and arts organizations continue to use digital and emergent technology as a creative medium for expression and for audience engagement. Furthermore, artistic practice during the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for hybrid (in-person and digital) arts programming options and for bridging “digital divides” in the arts and in the communities served. The NEA supports investments in the capacity of arts organizations to integrate technology more effectively—and to improve conditions for accessibility—in the creation and delivery of art.

**Goal 4. Pursue and adopt exemplary practices to support the agency’s mission.**

**Objective 4.1** Continue to be accountable and transparent to the public through effective operations that promote vigilant stewardship of funds.

Description: NEA staff design, implement, and refine work practices and systems that are efficient and transparent and deliver evidence of impacts to U.S. taxpayers.

**Objective 4.2** Foster a skilled, agile, diverse, and cohesive workforce.

Description: The NEA is committed to embedding principles of diversity, equity, access, inclusion, and accessibility in its work practices and systems, creating an environment for employees to thrive. The NEA also invests in training and staff recognition programs, and promotes work-life balance so as to attract, develop, and retain a talented and diverse staff that is empowered and equipped to execute a shared mission and vision for the NEA.

**CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE**

*The NEA will model diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts through all of its activities and operations.*

Description: The NEA makes it a priority to give underserved populations every opportunity to benefit from the programs and projects it supports. The agency accomplishes this cross-cutting objective partly by ensuring that grants are recommended in every Congressional District and by monitoring the presence of NEA-funded activities in urban and rural areas, and in high-poverty and other underserved populations. This work is amplified and extended through the NEA’s state and regional partnership agreements. In continuing efforts to identify and eliminate barriers to NEA grants, the agency also monitors a range of characteristics for organizations that receive NEA grants support, and it will explore methods for collecting demographic data associated with organizations receiving NEA funds. Moreover, in its own policies and practices for managing human resources, the agency ensures a diverse workplace free from barriers to opportunity.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

In the narrative section titled “Strategic Goals,” each goal is accompanied by a brief description, the title of a designated “Goal Leader” or “Lead Office,” and a list of “Strategies,” followed by a list of the “Contributing Programs” and “Cross-Agency Collaborations” that the strategies will invoke. Also included under each goal are “Performance Goals” and broader “Evidence-Building” strategies.

The NEA Strategic Plan applies to all agency activities, foremost among them grantmaking, but also to activities and functions such as leadership initiatives, convenings, training and capacity-building efforts, and strategic partnerships (with federal agencies, state arts agencies [SAAs], regional arts organizations [RAOs], and other public and private organizations), and to the agency’s internal operations.

The Office of the Chair will be deeply involved and engaged in the agency’s pursuit of all strategic goals and objectives.



# PROPOSED NEA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: 2022-2026

## MISSION

The arts strengthen and promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the National Endowment for the Arts fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

## VISION

A nation in which the arts are essential to our democracy and to reaching our highest potential by nourishing creative enterprise, freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry.

## GOAL 1

Support opportunities for all people to participate in the arts and arts education.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1** Expand public access to the NEA's programs and award-supported activities.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2** Prioritize data-driven methods to broaden and deepen engagement with underserved communities.

**OBJECTIVE 1.3** Provide opportunities for people throughout the country to participate in arts education and to increase their knowledge and skills in the arts at all stages of life.

**OBJECTIVE 1.4** Ensure opportunities for the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions.

## GOAL 2

Integrate the arts with strategies that promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities.

**OBJECTIVE 2.1** Support arts projects with a focus on advancing the health and well-being of individuals.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2** Embed the arts in system-wide initiatives that strengthen or heal communities.

## GOAL 3

Build capacity and infrastructure within the arts sector through knowledge-sharing, tools, resources, and evidence-based practices.

**OBJECTIVE 3.1** Support the development of skills and strategies that will enable arts leaders to manage more effective organizations and agencies.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2** Produce research, statistics, and general information about the arts for the benefit of the arts sector and beyond.

**OBJECTIVE 3.3** Invest in the capacity of arts organizations and artists to serve a broader public through digital or emergent technology.

## GOAL 4

Pursue and adopt exemplary practices to support the agency's mission.

**OBJECTIVE 4.1** Continue to be accountable and transparent to the public through effective operations that promote vigilant stewardship of funds.

**OBJECTIVE 4.2** Foster a skilled, agile, diverse, and cohesive workforce.

## CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE

The NEA will model diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts through all of its activities and operations.



# INTRODUCTION

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

**- National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965**

As the premier arts agency of the U.S. government, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has positioned itself as a vital and sustaining force in American culture, committed to serving all people throughout the nation by bringing the arts into their lives, schools, and neighborhoods. Another enduring role of the agency is to cultivate and elevate existing artistic and cultural traditions as critical assets within communities.

Over the past 50+ years, the NEA has become the largest funder of the arts and arts education nationwide and, as a catalyst of public and private support for the arts, an essential institution. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA annually awards an average of approximately 2,400 grants and cooperative agreements exceeding \$129 million, funding the arts in all 50 states and six U.S. jurisdictions, including rural and urban areas. The NEA also exercises leadership by supporting key initiatives, research and evaluation, and domestic and international partnerships.

The arts’ tangible and intangible rewards extend to various realms of our lives. Among the more measurable benefits that the arts confer to society are job creation and economic growth. As of 2019, for example, arts and cultural production added 4.3 percent directly to the nation’s GDP, for a total approaching a trillion dollars (\$919.7 billion). In the same year, the sector employed 5.2 million wage-and-salary workers whose total compensation was \$447 billion.<sup>1</sup> NEA funding to organizations that provide the arts and arts education throughout the U.S. serves this greater economic good, catalyzing further investments in jobs and economic activity that can improve lives and livelihoods for Americans everywhere.

Most recently, in recognition of the NEA’s capacity to promote job growth and financial well-being across the sector—outcomes that translate to whole communities and to the nation itself—Congress appropriated additional funds to the NEA under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This historic legislation is intended to fuel U.S. recovery from the devastating economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NEA’s grantees are vital partners in extending these and other benefits. Eligible applicants to the NEA include nonprofit organizations; units of state and local government; federally recognized tribal communities or tribes; and, where permitted, individuals. Notwithstanding additional awards such as those administered under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the NEA makes dollar-for-dollar cost- share/matching grants to support exemplary projects in the following areas:

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

1 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/SummaryReportAccessLinks.pdf>. (Accessed Dec. 9, 2021.)

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

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

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

Through these agreements, moreover, the NEA supports creation and implementation of statewide and regionwide plans for strengthening arts education and fostering the arts in underserved communities. Each plan responds to the unique needs of the state or region and its constituents, whose views are solicited by each SAA/RAO through surveys, town hall meetings, arts practitioner convenings, policymaker consultations, and other forms of citizen engagement.

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

# MISSION

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**Mission Statement:** *The arts strengthen and promote the well-being and resilience of people and communities. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the National Endowment for the Arts fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.*

Arts participation means taking part in any number of activities that include the visual and performing arts, crafts and media arts, design, and literary arts and arts education. People engage with the arts as audience members, as viewers or listeners, as readers or learners, and as creators, curators, or performers. These diverse modes of arts participation—and different forms and genres of artistic expression—quicken and enlarge our sensibilities. The arts broaden and enhance our understanding and our connections to one another and to the greater world.

As with individuals, communities and society at large benefit from the arts and arts education— culturally, civically, and economically. The arts heal and unite: they nurture a sense of shared identity, but they also permit distinctive and often marginalized voices to be heard. It is the responsibility of the NEA to elevate artistic achievements throughout the country and to offer people from all backgrounds the opportunity to partake of this living cultural heritage. By performing these functions, the NEA will help to expand the number of arts participants nationwide and to extend the social, educational, and economic benefits of the arts to communities of every type.

# VISION

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**Vision Statement:** *A nation in which the arts are essential to our democracy and to reaching our highest potential by nourishing creative enterprise, freedom of thought, imagination, and inquiry.*

By giving voice to unique talents and perspectives through creative expression, the arts embody and reflect the boldness of our democratic experiment. In remarks he gave at Amherst College on Oct. 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy described how in the case of the poet Robert Frost, who had died earlier that year, “The artist’s fidelity has strengthened the fiber of our national life.” The president went on to champion the truth-telling powers of artists and the vision of “an America that commands respect not only for its strength but for its civilization as well.”

President Kennedy added: “If sometimes our great artists have been the most critical of our society, it is because their sensitivity and their concern for justice, which must motivate any true artists, make them aware that our nation falls short of its highest potential.” A nation that respects and celebrates the arts is unafraid of inquiring into its mores and behaviors, and re-imagining a more just future. The arts are vital, therefore, to our democratic process, just as they embolden creativity, innovation, and all free thinking.

# CONSULTATION

This strategic plan is the result of thorough consultation with the agency's internal and external stakeholders. The first stakeholder consultation period took place in March 2021, prior to the development of the strategic framework. During this phase, feedback was solicited from agency staff and leadership, SAAs, RAOs, and national service organizations in the arts. Also consulted were NEA cooperators and a representative random sample (20 percent) of the agency's applicants and grantees from the past three years.

Internal stakeholder consultation was undertaken through six town-hall meetings of NEA staff. During the town-hall meetings, participants were guided to reflect on the agency's Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and measurable Results, using the SOAR model. Emailed comments also were encouraged during the internal stakeholder consultation period. At the same time, the agency solicited feedback from external stakeholders. Comments were solicited in three main ways: 1) email communications; 2) social media outreach; and 3) a *Federal Register* notice. From March 8 through March 31, 2021, the agency fielded 113 unique comments by email. Feedback came from a variety of external stakeholders, including: national service organizations in the arts, SAAs, city governments, nonprofit arts organizations, non-501(c)(3) arts organizations, and individual artists.

Collectively, this feedback shaped the FY 2022-2026 strategic framework. Members of the National Council on the Arts, along with the agency's leadership and staff, engaged with members of an NEA-wide Executive Working Group in discussions and emails about the strategic framework. After the second draft of the strategic framework was completed, another NEA staff town-hall meeting was held, allowing agency staff to respond directly to the framework and propose strategies for guiding the agency's work for the next four years.

A second stakeholder consultation period took place in August 2021, after the Executive Working Group completed a full draft of the FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. During this period, the draft strategic plan was circulated and comments solicited from the internal and external stakeholder groups listed above. The NEA also shared the draft plan with relevant Congressional offices. The agency fielded 107 unique comments from external stakeholders by email. Those comments were solicited in three main ways: 1) email communications; 2) social media outreach; and 3) a *Federal Register* notice. Further comments from the agency's leadership and Executive Working Group also were received and addressed.

## CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHT

During the first and second stakeholder consultation periods, the NEA received several comments expressing interest in the role of the arts in addressing climate change and disaster readiness. In response, the NEA referenced climate change as part of its Strategic Objective 2.2 and committed to support projects that use the arts to protect and revitalize natural resources within communities and that reinforce trauma response and recovery efforts within communities and emergency preparedness planning within arts organizations.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

## STRATEGIC GOAL 1

### **Support Opportunities for All People to Participate in the Arts and Arts Education.**

The arts celebrate our differences while connecting us through shared experiences. Americans from all backgrounds can experience the arts by attending music, dance, and theater performances, visiting art and design exhibits, reading or listening to works of literature, and enjoying the arts via media and technology. Participation also can involve making art of one's own, whether alone or with other people, and acquiring an arts education—knowledge, skills, and competencies that can last a lifetime. All of these varieties of participation can and do occur anywhere, in formal or informal settings, whether inside or outside a specific cultural tradition.

Although the arts are a universal resource, long prized by nations for transmitting cultural identity and creative expression, there is no guarantee that everyone will have equal access to arts opportunities. In the U.S., socioeconomic and geographic factors play an outsized role in people's ability to participate in the arts.

Federal surveys consistently show that higher education and income levels, as well as urbanicity, are closely correlated with greater rates of arts participation. Most recently, a Survey of Public Participation in the Arts found that one in three U.S. adults could not agree with the following statement: "There are plenty of opportunities for me to take part in arts and cultural activities in my neighborhood or community." Among those most likely not to agree were Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos.<sup>2</sup>

By ensuring greater opportunities for everyone to take part in the arts and arts education, the NEA will extend the benefits of those activities to more Americans. Such benefits are not limited to aesthetic, emotional, or intellectual rewards. They translate to greater social, civic, and economic well-being in the lives of individuals, of whole communities, and of a nation itself.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.1

### **Expand Public Access to the NEA's Programs and Award-Supported Activities.**

People connect with the arts by attending music, dance, and theater performances; by visiting architectural wonders and art exhibits; by reading works of literature; or by picking up a paintbrush or pencil to capture the world around them or to sketch their innermost thoughts. Today, they even carry in their pockets—in the form of smartphones—access to museums, concert halls, stages, and studios that enable individual arts experiences on demand. For artists and audiences alike, new pathways for participation abound. And yet, access to those in-person and/or digital pathways is by no means guaranteed.

The NEA addresses this need by providing opportunities for the public to engage with the arts through its grant programs, including through Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. The agency's grantmaking is responsive to the changing landscape of arts participation and arts production. The NEA

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/US\\_Patterns\\_of\\_Arts\\_ParticipationRevised.pdf](https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/US_Patterns_of_Arts_ParticipationRevised.pdf). (Accessed Dec. 9, 2021.)



rewards innovative strategies and models for engaging the public directly with arts experiences, for preserving them, and for making them accessible to all. At the same time, the NEA strives to promote funding and partnership opportunities to all eligible entities, whether or not they have experienced prior success in competing for these resources.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of the Deputy Chair for Programs & Partnerships

## Strategies

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

Strategies include:

- Support grants and cooperative agreements that enable public access to arts activities throughout the U.S.—whether as audiences or artists/creators.
- Regularly review application guidelines and administrative requirements to ease public burden and increase access to NEA funding while ensuring compliance with government-wide regulations and laws.
- Publish and promote application guidelines and/or other agency materials in language(s) other than English.
- Ensure that grant application and review processes are accessible to people with disabilities.

## Contributing Programs

The NEA provides new opportunities for rich and meaningful arts experiences. Foremost among the many funding programs coordinated by the NEA, Grants for Arts Projects (to eligible organizations) and Partnership Agreement grants (to SAAs and RAOs) bring artworks to the public and support jobs for arts and cultural workers. Supported activities include the following:

- Exhibitions, performances, concerts, and readings
- Film screenings
- Touring and outreach activities
- Art festivals
- Public programs that spotlight diverse artistic and cultural heritage
- Radio and television broadcasts, video games, mobile apps, live streaming audio- and video-on demand, podcasts, digital audio files, virtual reality, and other digital applications
- Publication, production, and promotion of digital, audio, or print publications; catalogues; and searchable databases
- Projects that address and reduce barriers to the arts for people with disabilities and that celebrate the work of disabled artists
- Projects that extend the arts to underserved populations, including those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, economics, race/ethnicity, or disability
- Projects that connect artists and designers with communities

Although the majority of the NEA's direct grantmaking supports arts projects that are undertaken by eligible organizations, the agency also offers a few awards and honorifics to individuals. These awards include:

- The NEA Literature Fellowships, grants to published creative writers that enable the recipients to set aside time for writing, research, travel, and general career advancement, and to translators who bring specific works from other countries to readers in the United States.
- The NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship is the highest honor that the U.S. bestows on jazz artists. Since 1982, the annual program has elevated to its ranks a select number of living legends who have made exceptional contributions to the advancement of jazz.
- The NEA National Heritage Fellowships are lifetime achievement awards that recognize the recipients' artistic excellence and support their continuing contributions to our nation's traditional arts heritage.

Additionally, the NEA helps to administer the National Medal of Arts, a White House program for the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the U.S. government. The National Medal of Arts is awarded by the president to individuals or groups who "are deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States."

Beyond direct grant support, the NEA provides technical assistance to help arts organizations understand and comply with federal accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended. NEA grantees are required to affirm their assurance of compliance with applicable laws. The NEA also provides professional development around cultural accessibility for SAAs and RAOs to build capacity for state- and regional-level accessibility initiatives and legal compliance efforts.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The agency collaborates with several entities to stimulate greater arts engagement by the general public. Examples include:

- Blue Star Museums, a collaboration among the NEA, Blue Star Families, the U.S. Department of Defense, and museums across America. Each summer, Blue Star Museums offers free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel, the National Guard and Reserves, and their families from Armed Forces Day through Labor Day.
- The NEA Big Read, an initiative of the NEA in partnership with Arts Midwest. The program supports community reading programs around the country every year, each designed around a single NEA Big Read selection.
- The NEA currently partners with the Federal Bureau of Prisons to provide artist-in-residence programs, primarily creative writing, at three federal prisons in New York, West Virginia, and South Dakota. The agency offers technical assistance and support to the teaching artists and helps the prisons in selecting community-based artists for the program.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA increases the percentage of grant applications received from first-time applicants.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of award applications received and adjudicated by the NEA, by first-time applicant status. A secondary measure will be the success rate of such applications.
2. *The NEA increases the number of communities that host grantee organizations and NEA-supported project activities.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of unique communities that contain NEA grantee organizations and, separately, where NEA-supported project activities take place.

3. *The NEA supports projects that expand access to the arts through strategic partnerships.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of NEA-supported projects that identify, as strategic partners, organizations outside the arts sector. A secondary measure will be the percent of NEA-supported projects that identify minority-serving institutions of higher education as strategic partners.

The NEA also will explore the ability to report, during this strategic plan period, on factors related to the quality and depth of strategic partnerships effected through NEA awards, and/or of the public's engagement with NEA programs and award-supported activities. Primary methods for understanding these factors may include qualitative analyses of narrative data collected through NEA grantee reports.

## Evidence-Building

Research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the agency's Learning Agenda process.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.2

### **Prioritize Data-Driven Methods to Broaden and Deepen Engagement with Underserved Communities.**

Data and evidence are poised to improve the agency's administration of grants and programs so that even larger numbers of people—from more diverse backgrounds than before—can benefit from NEA programs and grant activities. Tools like U.S. Census Bureau data files and geospatial mapping will allow the agency to target historically underserved areas more effectively in its engagement efforts.<sup>3</sup>

One example of a NEA program dedicated to this type of engagement is Challenge America, which supports underserved populations through grants to primarily small and mid-sized organizations. Beyond this program, the agency routinely conducts outreach so that its programs and grant-supported activities can benefit people in every Congressional District. Through targeted outreach and award programs, the NEA extends economic opportunities through the arts and creativity to underserved communities and regions across the nation.

In recent years, moreover, the NEA has elevated opportunities for tribal nations—and for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions of higher education—to participate in NEA programs. By consulting empirical data as the agency undertakes these and other initiatives, the NEA will achieve a greater likelihood of success in building and sustaining relationships with people and organizations that have been underserved by NEA programs.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of the Deputy Chair for Programs & Partnerships  
Office of Research & Analysis

## Strategies

The NEA makes grants and participates in strategic partnerships to ensure that NEA-funded activities reach a wide breadth of geographic locations and historically underserved populations nationwide. Specific strategies include:

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<sup>3</sup> For a definition of “underserved,” see the White House *Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government*, Jan. 20, 2021.

- Identify and address gaps in representation of historically underserved communities among NEA applicants, grantees, and beneficiaries. The agency's Equity Action Plan includes strategies to improve data collection. Through its Offices of Research & Analysis (ORA), Guidelines & Panel Operations, and General Counsel, and working with the Department of Justice, the NEA will determine the feasibility of expanding data collection related to program beneficiaries, as well as to the staff and the leadership of recipient organizations. If feasible, adjustments will be made to program data collection forms to increase equity-related information available to staff. This strategy will be implemented through distinct actions addressing the agency's direct grants and partnership agreements starting in FY 2022.
- Collect and act upon data on HBCUs in support of the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities. During FY 2022 and 2023, the agency will plan and conduct a mixed-methods study of HBCUs' arts-related assets, including programs and facilities; identify funding streams supporting HBCU arts programs; and conduct a workforce development gap-analysis examining HBCU arts programs in relation to the communities where HBCUs reside. Findings will be included in a report to the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities on the agency's progress on its HBCU competitiveness plan.
- Establish and cultivate ongoing relationships with Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), HSI partners (e.g., White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics), and related cultural partners to build awareness of the NEA, to share critical resources and information, with a focus on funding opportunities, and to build capacity for successful application to the agency from HSIs. To measure the agency's efforts to increase HSI applications, a strategy will be developed to track HSI applicants across disciplines.
- Strengthen nation-to-nation relationships with tribal communities. In October 2021, the NEA published its formal Tribal Consultation Policy.<sup>4</sup> The policy was built on two nation-to-nation consultations with tribal leaders, and a series of community meetings with Native American and Alaska Native artists and arts/cultural organizations. The policy accords with President Biden's Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships and Executive Order 13175 and has been reviewed and approved by OMB.
- Explore methods to identify the needs of U.S. communities with limited access to arts experiences, so as to better understand their needs and to facilitate collaboration. See the dashboard development strategy discussed in the Evidence-Building section of this plan.
- Combine knowledge, data, and best practices with those of other federal entities serving these populations.

## Contributing Programs

Data-driven methods to broaden and deepen engagement with historically underserved communities will be employed across the agency's grantmaking, including the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects. In addition, such methods will be used for Challenge America—grants that offer support primarily to small and mid-sized organizations for projects in all artistic disciplines, extending the arts' reach to underserved populations. Challenge America features an abbreviated application and a robust element of technical assistance.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- The NEA's participation in the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through HBCUs provides opportunity for the agency to share and learn from other agencies' data-driven methods to broaden and deepen engagement with HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Tribal%20Consultation%20Policy%20NEA%202021%20Final.pdf>. (Accessed Dec. 20, 2021.)

- By serving on the federal Interagency Working Group for Youth Programs, the NEA will share and learn from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies and departments about successful strategies for engaging with underprivileged youth.
- Through an agreement with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), the NEA receives analytical support for monitoring the presence of arts funding across different geographies. These empirical insights will inform Strategic Objective 1.2.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA increases engagement with potential applicant organizations in underserved communities.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of organizations located in underserved communities and that are engaged through technical assistance (e.g., webinars or other events/services) provided by the NEA. Another performance measure will be the percent of applications received and adjudicated from NEA organizations located in underserved communities; a secondary measure will be the success rate for such applications.
2. *The NEA increases engagement with potential applicant organizations that primarily address underserved communities.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of applications received and adjudicated by the NEA from organizations primarily addressing underserved communities; a secondary measure will be the success rate for such applications.

## Evidence-Building

In FY 2020, the NEA developed for internal use an interactive map of agency grantmaking and initiatives data, with high-level summary data on agency grant awards. These data include direct grants and subgrants, and national initiative activities for the preceding three-year period. The map, which also includes Census data on poverty and urbanicity, provides contextual information to NEA leadership; it features a dynamic dashboard showing summary statistics of grant funding and activities based on selected regions and other characteristics. This NEA data tool will be updated in FY 2022 to include additional information on underserved communities, including race and ethnicity, and will be updated annually during the term of this strategic plan. Dashboards also will be developed in FY 2022 and made available to agency staff. Easy access to timely, reliable data about agency grantmaking and initiatives is a prerequisite for knowing whom the NEA-supported arts projects are serving, and for better enabling the agency to broaden and deepen engagement with underserved communities.

Additional research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.3

### **Provide Opportunities for People throughout the Country to Participate in Arts Education and to Increase Their Knowledge and Skills in the Arts at All Stages of Life.**

By helping to foster public appreciation and understanding of various art forms, genres, and artistic traditions, the NEA will build public capacity for lifelong participation in the arts. For audiences and learners, the outcome will be vibrant and transformative arts experiences. For artists and teachers, the NEA will facilitate the transfer of critical knowledge and skills that will enable them to refine and improve their work.

The arts are essential to a well-rounded education. Numerous studies have revealed the social and emotional benefits of arts education for early childhood development, and the ability of arts education to bridge gaps in academic achievement among teenagers and youth who come from less privileged backgrounds than others. Additionally, arts education contributes to students' acquisition and development of skills (e.g., the "four Cs"—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and especially creativity) that have been closely associated with 21st-century job requirements. Further along the lifespan, older adults who engage with the arts have reported higher levels of cognitive ability and fewer limitations to their physical functioning.

The agency's grants support arts learning activities across a variety of artistic disciplines for people of all ages. Grants awarded by the NEA Arts Education office support standards-based learning in the arts for K-12 students. However, NEA grants, including from other offices, also support the integration of arts learning with other academic curricula, including STEM disciplines. Beyond grants for student learners, Arts Education grants support professional development opportunities for educators, including but not limited to arts instructors. Additionally, NEA programs such as Poetry Out Loud offer arts learning experiences for high school students (including, in this case, benefits that extend from poetry appreciation to language skills development).

Apprenticeships are time-honored programs allowing master artists to train apprentices, often over an extended period of time. These trainees then have the ability to teach others, sharing what they have learned with their own communities. Formal learning programs of this nature are instrumental in passing on cultural knowledge to the next generation. Through the NEA's continued support of state folklife programs and their apprenticeship awards, the agency ensures that traditional artists have the opportunity to pass on the techniques and cultural knowledge of their art forms, which can be as diverse as Mexican ballet folklórico, Northern Arapaho beadwork, gospel singing, and taiko drumming. The NEA also supports apprenticeships directly through its own grantmaking. As with the NEA's support of the arts and arts education more generally, such apprenticeships form a critical link in connecting economic and labor-related outcomes from artistic practice to communities at large.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Arts Education Division  
Folk & Traditional Arts Division

## Strategies

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

Through awards and strategic partnerships, the NEA will support:

- Arts learning opportunities across various artistic disciplines, learning environments, and geographic locations
- K-12 standards-based arts education
- Job training programs and/or apprenticeships with master artists or practitioners

## Contributing Programs

Projects that bring arts education to the general public are supported across the agency's grantmaking, including the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects program and Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. The agency employs two approaches in its grantmaking for projects focused on providing opportunities to learn in and about the arts. One approach is the grant support offered by the NEA's Arts Education office. Representative project activities include:

- Standards-based arts education activities for pre-K-12 students through long-term, in-depth projects
- Professional development to improve arts instruction by equipping artists, school superintendents, principals, teachers, and other education providers with the skills and confidence to effectively engage students in high-quality arts learning
- Assessments and evaluations of arts learning

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

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

In addition, through strategic partnerships, the NEA leads national initiatives that support arts learning. They include:

- Poetry Out Loud, a national recitation competition for high school students. Created by the NEA and the Poetry Foundation, the competition is administered in partnership with the SAAs of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa.
- Shakespeare in American Communities, which supports high-quality theater productions and educational activities in middle schools, high schools, and juvenile justice facilities throughout the United States.
- The Musical Theater Songwriting Challenge, a national contest for high school students with a passion for musical theater songwriting and for the wide range of musical styles represented in contemporary musicals.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) is the nation's hub for arts and education leaders, building their leadership capacity to support students, educators, and learning environments through research, reporting, counseling, and convening. AEP has been supported by the NEA and the U.S. Department of Education since 1995 and is administered by the Education Commission of the States.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA engages underserved youth in arts education through activities supported by its awards and partnerships.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of arts education projects located in underserved communities and that directly engaged youth. A secondary measure will be the percent of arts education projects supported by subawards through the NEA's Partnership Agreements, that were located in underserved communities, and that directly engaged youth.

2. *The NEA supports the arts education sector with convenings, research, and technical assistance.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of NEA-supported convenings, research products, and technical assistance opportunities made available to the arts education sector.

## Evidence-Building

Research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.4

### Ensure Opportunities for the International Exchange of Artists and Arts and Cultural Traditions.

According to the founding legislation for the NEA, the United States' reputation as a world leader must not "rest solely upon superior power, wealth, and technology, but must be solidly founded upon worldwide respect and admiration for the Nation's high qualities as a leader in the realm of ideas and of the spirit."

Nowhere are these traits better exemplified than in America's artistic and cultural contributions. International demand for U.S. artists and their artworks is best captured by a single statistic. In 2019, the most recent year for which such data are available, the U.S. exported \$33 billion more in arts and cultural goods and services than it imported from other countries.<sup>5</sup> Unlike many other segments of the nation's economy, arts and culture is running a trade surplus.

By working with the State Department and other entities to enable nation-to-nation exchanges of artists and artworks, the NEA assists in providing U.S. artists and their wares with exposure to international artists and cultural traditions, and to global markets and audiences. Concurrently, international exchanges permit U.S. audiences, artists, and communities to experience vibrant cultural traditions and artists from abroad.

Apart from fostering such exchanges, the NEA communicates regularly with international scholars, policymakers, and arts administrators who seek to learn about U.S. infrastructure for domestic arts programs. All of these activities help to advance the federal government's efforts at cultural diplomacy. They also nourish the capacity of artists and audiences everywhere to realize their shared humanity through various forms of creativity and cultural expression.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of International Activities

## Strategies

Through its grantmaking, the NEA will continue to invite project proposals that a) seek to promote the diversity of U.S. artists and artworks for audiences abroad, and/or b) seek to provide U.S. audiences and artists with opportunities to experience international artistry in the U.S. As described below, however, the majority of these activities will occur through strategic partnerships with arts organizations, and in consultation with the U.S. Department of State. The NEA will monitor survey data to ascertain whether the NEA's investments under this objective are resulting in positive experiences by U.S. artists who engage with such programs, and the agency will track the representation of such projects within the NEA's grants portfolio, based on performance targets that will be created alongside this plan.

5 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/SummaryReportAccessLinks.pdf>. (Accessed Dec. 9, 2021.)



## Contributing Programs

Projects that support opportunities for the international exchange of artists and artworks are supported by the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects program and by Partnership Agreement grants to RAOs. The NEA also contributes, either through funding or administrative support, to the following programs:

- USArtists International, which is committed to ensuring that the impressive range of the performing arts in the U.S. is represented abroad, and that American artists can enhance their creative and professional development through participation at international events.
- The United States/Japan Creative Artists Program, which provides three- to five-month residencies in Japan for five individual creative artists in any discipline. While in Japan, artists work on an individual project which may include the creation of new work or pursuit of their individual artistic goals.
- The Performing Arts Global Exchange, which brings exemplary international music, dance, and theater to audiences across the U.S. Every year a new region of the world is highlighted. Fee-support grants are available to nonprofit presenting venues and units of state, local, or tribal government (based anywhere in the U.S. or its territories) who book artists from a curated roster.
- NEA Literature Fellowships in translation, which awards grants to published translators for rendering specific works of prose, poetry, or drama from other languages into English.
- The Arts & Artifacts Indemnity Program, which provides indemnification against loss or damage for eligible art works, artifacts, and objects in domestic and international exhibitions.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA's Office of International Activities (OIA) coordinates activity with the U.S. Department of State, especially to connect U.S.-based arts organizations with cultural attachés. Additionally, the OIA is a key point of contact for international cultural visitors from the State Department's International Visitors Leadership Program. OIA works with the State Department's Foreign Service Institute to educate new cultural attaché officers about the NEA as they prepare to report to U.S. Embassy posts.

Historically, too, the NEA has partnered with the State Department by managing the peer review process for the selection of participating U.S. artists and architects for the Venice Biennale, an international art exhibition, and by administering the grant review process for participating arts organizations.

Finally, the NEA periodically coordinates programming with the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), a global network of arts councils, ministries of culture, and government agencies representing more than 70 countries that advance arts and culture.

## Performance Goals

The performance goal for this objective is:

*The NEA supports opportunities for the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions, which yield demonstrable benefits for the arts and artists.*

This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of artists participating in the NEA-supported USArtists International program who report benefits for their professional and career development. Secondary measures will be the number of NEA awards that support the international exchange of artists and arts and cultural traditions, and the percent of NEA awards that support the translation of specific works of prose, poetry, or drama from other languages into English.

The NEA intends to examine the impacts of international exchanges on the careers of U.S. artists. Beginning in FY 2022, the NEA will implement an annual survey of grantees under the USArtists International (USAI) program, with a goal of developing a richer understanding of the program’s short- and longer-term impacts on artists’ careers. Additional research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 2**

### **Integrate the Arts with Strategies that Promote the Well-Being and Resilience of People and Communities.**

Over the last few years in particular, the nation has been tested with extreme pressure on its healthcare system, its economy and environment, and its sense of fairness and social justice. Throughout such traumas as COVID-19, racial violence, and natural disasters, the arts have been a force for healing and repair. Through direct grantmaking and strategic partnerships, the NEA will continue to support projects that integrate arts-based strategies in health, community development, and emergency preparedness and responsiveness. These systems-based approaches to achieve positive outcomes for towns and neighborhoods already have been central to arts-and-public health initiatives, to the arts’ deployment in disaster relief, to collective efforts to achieve equitable access in arts education, and to a variety of activities known as creative placemaking—the integration of arts, culture, and design with comprehensive community development. This strategic goal will permit more focused investments in communal spaces—but it also will bring greater visibility to the use of design and arts programs and therapies in improving health and well-being for individuals and communities.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.1**

### **Support Arts Projects with a Focus on Advancing the Health and Well-Being of Individuals.**

In partnership with U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and state and local arts agencies, the NEA directs Creative Forces<sup>®</sup>: NEA Military Healing Arts Network. The initiative places creative arts therapies at the core of patient-centered care at clinical sites throughout the country, including telehealth services, and increases access to community arts activities to promote health, wellness, and quality of life for military service members, veterans, and their families and caregivers. Furthermore, in partnership with the Mid-America Arts Alliance, the Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant program aims to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military-connected populations by empowering creative expression, building social connections, and improving resilience.

The lessons learned from implementing Creative Forces will inform other strategies to advance individual health and well-being through the arts. The networking, technical assistance, and the evaluation and learning that occur across the Creative Forces program are typical of the field-building activities necessary to realize this strategic objective for broader population groups. At the federal level, the NEA models this knowledge transfer by leading the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development, which meets quarterly to examine research projects and evidence-based practice at the intersection of the arts, health, and human development.

Indeed, apart from Creative Forces, the NEA regularly supports not only creative arts therapies (e.g., art therapy, music therapy, dance/movement therapy, and drama therapy), but also arts-in-health programs that occur in clinical and non-clinical settings. Additionally—through direct grants and through partnerships with SAAs and RAOs—the agency funds arts projects that support healthy aging and healthy childhood and youth development, as well as rehabilitation and recovery for people in trauma, or those in prison or juvenile justice settings.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of the Senior Advisor on Innovation to the Chair  
Office of Accessibility  
Office of Research & Analysis

## Strategies

- Through awards and strategic partnerships, support creative arts therapies or arts-in-health strategies—including projects that seek to assist with healthy aging and healthy childhood and youth development or with rehabilitation or recovery services, or that address currently and/or formerly incarcerated populations.
- Expand the NEA's Creative Forces initiative (through clinical and community-based projects) to new target populations or focus areas within military and veteran populations exposed to trauma. Supporting this effort, the NEA and its partners have conducted discovery-phase literature reviews and scans to better understand the needs of families of military service members and veterans and guard and reserve populations as part of Creative Forces' program development cycle.

In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.

## Contributing Programs

Projects that integrate the arts with strategies to improve individual health and well-being are supported by the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects program and by Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. In addition, the NEA offers:

- Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network, a leadership initiative that seeks to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for military and veteran populations exposed to trauma, as well as their families and caregivers.
- Shakespeare in American Communities: Juvenile Justice, a leadership initiative in partnership with Arts Midwest, enabling theater companies and organizations to engage youths within the juvenile justice system with the works of Shakespeare through theater education programs nationwide.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network is conducted in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs and the state and local arts agencies. Current partners also include the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, Americans for the Arts, and Mid- America Arts Alliance.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA supports projects and partnerships that engage individuals in activities with the intent of advancing their health and well-being through the arts.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of people who participated (in person or virtually) in NEA-supported activities focused on advancing the health and well-being of individuals through the arts. Two other performance measures will be the number of service members served by Creative Forces clinical creative arts therapists, and the number of therapeutic encounters facilitated by Creative Forces clinical creative arts therapists.

2. *Through convenings, research, and technical assistance, the NEA supports practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers at the intersection of the arts and health and well-being.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of NEA-supported convenings, research products, and technical assistance opportunities made available to practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers seeking to advance individual health and well-being through the arts.

## Evidence-Building

Through a cooperative agreement with the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, the Creative Forces program is investing in a comprehensive evaluation of its clinical programs and projects. Investments in these activities will lead to the identification of outcomes associated with Creative Forces clinical programs/projects and will determine the effectiveness of these activities. Evaluation activities also will support continuous improvement and help to ensure that the programs/projects are achieving their goals and objectives. Further, the evaluation findings will be used by Creative Forces and other organizations to determine which Creative Forces clinical programs/projects should be expanded to other sites and populations.

In a similar vein, the Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant program is launching in late FY 2021. Open to nonprofit organizations, units of state or local government, or federally recognized tribes or tribal communities, the program will make awards for non-clinical arts engagement projects for military-connected populations. Starting in FY 2024, data will be collected from subgrantees to monitor the program's outputs, grantee outcomes, and participant outcomes, as well as the role of arts engagement in advancing health, well-being, and quality of life for Creative Forces target populations.

Separately, and with a different population, the NEA will work cooperatively with Arts Midwest in FY 2022 to establish systematic data collections to support performance and outcome measurement for the Shakespeare in American Communities Juvenile Justice (SIAC/JJ) program. Through an agency contract, a data collection plan will be developed and relevant forms prepared and cleared through the federal Paperwork Reduction Act clearance process. The contractor will provide technical assistance, written guidance, and resources that will prepare Arts Midwest to implement the data collection plan.

Additional research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.2

### **Embed the Arts in System-Wide Initiatives that Strengthen or Heal Communities.**

Beyond supporting arts projects that advance individual health and well-being, the NEA rewards grassroots partnerships that integrate the arts with long-term strategies to heal a whole community, or to protect or revitalize its natural, cultural, and economic resources. On a local level, these strategies often take the shape of creative placemaking programs—such as those supported by the NEA's Our Town initiative—but they also involve collective impact models that ensure equitable access to arts education within K-12 school systems. Whether such projects contribute to community planning and development, a new national infrastructure for folk and traditional arts, emergency preparedness and recovery, or responses to climate change, they invariably require public-private partnerships that the NEA can help to catalyze and sustain across multiple sectors.

### Goal Leader/Lead Office

Design & Creative Placemaking Division  
Arts Education Division

## Strategies

This strategic objective is envisioned as a growth area for the NEA. For now, through its Arts Education and Design & Creative Placemaking divisions, the NEA supports discrete grant programs that seek to achieve positive outcomes for communities through systems-level change. Beyond these programs, which are described below, the agency will start to welcome grant project proposals that aspire toward systems-level change through the arts. The NEA also will start to welcome projects that use the arts to protect and revitalize natural, cultural, and economic resources within communities; and it will welcome projects related to emergency preparedness planning for arts organizations, the building of their protective capabilities, and trauma response and recovery efforts within communities.

In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.

## Contributing Programs

Projects that use system-wide approaches to strengthen or heal communities or the environment will be supported by the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects program and by Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. Examples of contributing programs include:

- Arts Education Collective Impact Grants, which transform schools and communities by providing access and engagement in the arts for all students through collective, systemic approaches. Projects aim to ensure that all students across entire neighborhoods, schools, school districts, and/or states—in communities of all sizes—participate in the arts over time.
- Our Town, the NEA's flagship creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, we support projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes.
- The Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD), a leadership initiative of NEA in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors. Since 1986, MICD has helped transform communities through design by preparing mayors to be the chief urban designers of their cities.
- The Citizens' Institute on Rural Design (CIRD), a leadership initiative of the NEA in partnership with the Housing Assistance Council. Focusing on communities with populations of 50,000 or less, CIRD empowers local citizens to use their unique artistic and cultural resources to guide local development and shape the future design of their communities.
- The National Folklife Network, a new NEA strategic partnership that will cultivate the development of seven pilot folklife programs—four in rural areas and three in urban areas. The four rural regions are the Northern Plains, Southern Plains, Intermountain West, and Alaska, while the three urban folklife programs will be in cities on or east of the Mississippi River. Each location faces its own unique challenges, including weak infrastructure, a diffuse population, and deeply ingrained poverty.
- The NEA provides financial support, technical assistance, and national leadership following man-made disasters and natural disasters such as hurricanes and wildfires. NEA staff have deployed multiple times to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands through the Interior Department and FEMA to work with state and local agencies on assessing and repairing damage to cultural and historical resources and to help advance the recovery of arts and cultural sectors. These functions have included capacity-building for nonprofit arts organizations so they are better prepared for future calamities.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- Appalachian Gateway Communities Initiative offers targeted technical assistance, cultural heritage and tourism assessments and planning, arts and culture workshops, and small grants for project implementation for these communities. The NEA works in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission to support this initiative.

- Save America’s Treasures awards grants to preserve nationally significant historic properties and collections that convey our nation’s rich heritage to future generations. The program is administered by the National Park Service in cooperation with the NEA, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).
- The NEA is partnering with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the CDC Foundation to support community-based arts and cultural organizations in engaging the arts to build vaccine confidence nationwide.
- As part of the National Disaster Recovery Framework, the NEA works closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Economic Development Administration, and other agencies to demonstrate how the arts can revitalize communities after natural and man-made disasters—including those resulting from climate change—and ensure that recovery policies in development include the arts sector. The agency also helps to ensure that the sector has access to recovery resources. The NEA is a supporting agency in the Natural and Cultural Resources Recovery Support Function and has worked extensively with the Economics and the Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery Support Function teams in response to COVID-19. In addition, the agency is a member of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and FEMA. Beyond these obligations, the NEA serves on the steering committee of the National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response (NCAPER), a public-private partnership that was formed “in response to the significant losses and devastation suffered by artists and creative economies in the wake of 21st century disasters,” as the group’s website notes.
- The NEA participates in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Interagency Working Group on Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience, and in its Analytic Measurement subgroup.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA supports grassroots partnerships that integrate the arts with long-term strategies to heal a whole community, or to protect or revitalize its natural, cultural, and economic resources.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of unique communities, across the strategic plan period (FY 2022-2026), in which organizations were awarded NEA funds for the purpose of embedding the arts in system-wide initiatives that seek to strengthen or heal communities.
2. *Through convenings, research, and technical assistance, the NEA strengthens the integration of the arts in system-wide initiatives.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the number of NEA-supported convenings, research products, and technical assistance opportunities made available to practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers seeking to integrate the arts with system-wide initiatives to strengthen and heal communities.

## Evidence-Building

Research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

# STRATEGIC GOAL 3

## Build Capacity and Infrastructure within the Arts Sector through Knowledge-Sharing, Tools, Resources, and Evidence-Based Practices.

Arts organizations, funders, and cultural policy-makers frequently look to the NEA for guidance on issues confronting the arts sector, and for research and information that can support their practice. Especially in the wake

of the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic hardships, the arts sector will require greater leadership, empirical insights, and technological capacity to rebuild better while serving all people and communities nationwide.

For the third consecutive five-year period, the NEA will launch a research agenda seeking to promote research about the value and impact of the arts. In conjunction with these projects, the NEA will support the creation and distribution of evidence-based guides, data tools, and other resources to assist cultural researchers and practitioners.

Leadership development for emerging, mid-career, and late-career arts leaders at organizations of all sizes will be essential to the arts sector's sustainability. Through grantmaking and strategic partnerships, the NEA will support these training opportunities in order for arts professionals to better navigate a shifting landscape for nonprofit arts organizations and their beneficiaries.

In response to other recent changes to the U.S. arts landscape, the agency will heighten investments in projects that use digital technology in the creation and/or delivery of art. Greater support for tech-centered artistic practice and for digital capacity-building within arts organizations also can yield positive results for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. This type of support will help to bridge digital divides within different segments of the arts sector—even as it will allow artists and audiences to contribute to and benefit from technological breakthroughs in arts creation and delivery.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.1**

### **Support the Development of Skills and Strategies that Will Enable Arts Leaders to Manage More Effective Organizations and Agencies.**

Although the NEA is primarily a grantmaking agency, it also provides leadership within the broader arts ecosystem—as noted in Strategic Objective 3.2, which emphasizes research and communications in the field. Another form of assistance centers on professional development and training opportunities for arts leaders.

Several factors have contributed to a demand for new and different skills and competencies for arts leaders than may have been required in the past. These factors include the following needs: to lead arts organizations effectively in a post-COVID-19 environment; to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts; and to ensure continuity of skills acquisition and learning for successive generations of arts leaders, including those working in policy and practice at the crossroads of the arts and other sectors (e.g., health, community development, the environment). To help fulfill such needs, the NEA will support peer-to-peer learning groups and workshops for arts administrators.

#### **Goal Leader/Lead Office**

Office of the Deputy Chair for Programs & Partnerships

#### **Strategies**

Through awards or strategic partnerships, the NEA will support:

- Development of a peer-to-peer network of experienced and emerging arts leaders.
- Technical assistance workshops in arts management, professional development and career transitions, grant writing, and board development.

In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.

## Contributing Programs

The NEA supports arts leadership training opportunities through the Grants for Arts Projects program and through Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. In addition, the NEA currently offers the following initiatives:

- The Creative Placemaking Technical Assistance Program is designed to help Our Town grantees and prospective applicants to the program implement successful creative placemaking projects that lay the groundwork for longer-term systems change.
- The annual Professional Development Institute for SAA arts education and folk and traditional arts managers, providing meaningful leadership development and technical assistance for this field.
- The State Education Agencies Directors of Arts Education (SEDAE), an annual leadership grant that supports professional development for state education agency directors of arts education.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

Regarding this objective, the NEA will explore—during the strategic plan period (FY 2022-2026)—formal and informal partnerships with federal entities such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department for Housing & Urban Development, and the General Services Administration.

## Performance Goals

The performance goal for this objective is:

*The NEA supports the development of skills and strategies that will enable arts leaders to manage more effective organizations and agencies.*

This goal will be measured by tracking the number of grantees reporting that NEA funding enabled them to build the capacity to manage more effective organizations and agencies. Another performance measure will be the percent of participants expressing satisfaction with the quality and value of services provided through NEA-supported leadership training and technical assistance initiatives (e.g., convenings, curricular assets).

## Evidence-Building

Research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.2

## Produce Research, Statistics, and General Information about the Arts for the Benefit of the Arts Sector and Beyond.

In addition to supporting leadership training and skills development within the wider arts sector, the NEA builds capacity for arts organizations through research and evaluation. Evidence-based practice guides, literature reviews, and statistical reports can assist arts organizations in more equitably serving the American public. The NEA also supports studies about the value and impact of the arts to individuals. This category of research can boost public recognition of the arts' benefits for society—thus validating the work of artists and arts organizations in terms meaningful to funders, policymakers, and cross-sectoral partners.

Beyond using research and evaluation to measure the arts' impacts, or to promote effective practices in the arts, the NEA communicates constantly with the arts and cultural sector and the general public about a range of topics, themes, programs, and opportunities in the arts. The NEA's Office of Public Affairs publishes this content on traditional and social media platforms, facilitates interviews between NEA staff and media outlets to further promote the arts, and supports convenings, speeches, and other events featuring the NEA. The NEA's website carries up-to-date information and resources for audiences and organizations from all backgrounds.



## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of Research & Analysis  
Office of Public Affairs

### Strategies

1. Through dedicated staff and awards and strategic partnerships, support priority goals aligning with the NEA's five-year Research Agenda.
  - Award guidelines for the Research Grants in the Arts and NEA Research Labs programs encourage:
    - experimental and quasi-experimental studies of the arts' impact on the health and human development of individuals, on education, and on economic growth and innovation; and
    - studies using diverse methodologies (including community-based participatory research) to examine the following topics: the arts' role in community healing and transformation; diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts; and the changing arts ecology.
  - Through the Creative Forces clinical program, support studies and publications about the impact of creative arts therapies on the health and wellness of military and veteran populations.
  - Through research partnerships with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis, support research awards and/or data collection or analysis that will benefit arts practitioners and others.
  - Through staff-conducted research and analysis, or through contracts, publish periodic research reports, briefs, and data visualizations that support the NEA Research Agenda.
2. Develop evidence-based tools and research and data resources that will benefit communities of artistic practice.
  - In award guidelines for the Research Grants in the Arts and NEA Research Labs programs, encourage development of these products and services for the greater arts community.
  - Engage a Technical Assistance Center to support evaluation, learning, and data science for arts practitioners at different levels of size and capacity.
  - Through the Creative Forces clinical and community engagement programs, support a National Resource Center featuring resources and information for creative arts therapists and community arts practitioners.
  - Through the Arts Education Partnership, support ArtsEdSearch, a clearinghouse of research about arts education.
  - Through the Sound Health Network, support a national clearinghouse of studies about music, neuroscience, health, and wellness, and promote networking and learning opportunities for researchers and practitioners at this intersection.
  - Engage a National Arts Statistics & Evidence-Based Reporting Center to serve alongside the NEA's National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture.
3. Through the NEA website and traditional and social media, showcase and discuss exemplary arts practices and projects, including but not limited to those supported by the NEA.
  - Place high-impact stories about NEA-funded activities in newspapers and magazines nationwide, place op-eds by the chair as appropriate, and monitor press coverage of the NEA specifically and of the arts generally.
  - Use social media channels to directly reach hundreds of thousands of people regarding important arts happenings and issues.

- Use the NEA’s blog and podcast series to provide information on exemplary art projects and artists across the country, encourage arts participation, and engage the public in national conversations about the arts to demonstrate their importance to individuals and communities.
  - Use the NEA’s magazine, *American Artscape*, to present detailed information on exemplary arts projects and artists across the country, showing how the arts impact communities large and small across the nation.
  - Produce and distribute fact sheets, infographics, and publications about various NEA programs and activities.
  - Produce and distribute monthly newsletters to constituents to update them on NEA activities, issues in the arts, new arts content on the NEA website and elsewhere on the internet, and upcoming events.
4. Convene arts practitioners, researchers, funders, and policymakers to network and discuss timely issues in the arts.
- Use webcasts to make the National Council on the Arts meetings open to the public; to broadcast special convenings on the arts in various artistic disciplines; and to share special NEA events with the public.
  - Make the NEA chair and discipline directors available in traditional and social media to discuss arts issues and position the NEA as a leader in the arts sector.
  - Work with the chair’s and chief of staff’s offices, as well as other NEA staff on travel throughout the United States, to encourage media coverage of events that demonstrate how the NEA supports the arts in American communities.

In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.

## Contributing Programs

- Research Grants in the Arts fund research studies that investigate the value and/or impact of the arts, either as individual components of the U.S. arts ecology or as they interact with each other and/or with other domains of American life.
- NEA Research Labs fund transdisciplinary research teams grounded in the social and behavioral sciences, yielding empirical insights about the arts for the benefit of arts and non-arts sectors alike.
- Sound Health Network is a partnership of the NEA with the University of California, San Francisco in collaboration with the NIH and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The Sound Health Network was established to promote research and public awareness about the impact of music on health and wellness.
- Creative Forces<sup>®</sup>: NEA Military Healing Arts Network invests in clinical research on the impacts and benefits—physical, social, and emotional—of creative arts therapies as innovative treatment methods.
- The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) operates ArtsEdSearch, an online database of research focused on the outcomes of arts education. AEP is supported by the NEA and the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Education Commission of the States.
- Creative Economy State Profiles and a database of state-level studies of the creative economy are maintained by NASAA, under an agreement with the NEA.
- The National Arts Statistics & Evidence-Based Reporting Center will analyze and report on national arts-related datasets according to a published schedule, and will produce evidence-based practice guides and topical reports for arts practitioners.
- The National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture is a NEA-funded public repository of arts-related datasets and publications.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) is a cross-sectional survey that occurs roughly every five years in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, the NEA partners with the Census Bureau to conduct a short-form version—the Arts Basic Survey— between waves of the SPPA.
- The U.S. Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account is directed in partnership with the Bureau of Economic Analysis to report, on a yearly basis, national and state-level data about the arts’ contributions to the U.S. economy.
- Sound Health, a partnership between the John F. Kennedy Performing Arts Center and the NIH, in association with the NEA, promotes research and public awareness about the potential impact of music on neuroscience, health, and well-being. In partnership with NIH, the NEA supports research grants on “Music and Health.”
- Currently, the NEA is partnering with the NSF to support a research workshop on the value of the arts to computer science education. The NEA also partners with NSF in supporting an Arts Module on the periodic General Social Survey.
- The Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development, a group consisting of members from 15 federal entities, strives to encourage more and better research on how the arts can help people reach their full potential at all stages of life.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are as follows:

1. *The NEA promotes the arts and engages with communities in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia through traditional media, social media, and the agency’s website and publications.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of states and U.S. jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, in which NEA-related articles appeared in news outlets. Another performance measure will be to track the percent of states and U.S. jurisdictions whose residents interact with the NEA through the agency’s website.
2. *The NEA advances research in the arts through the social and behavioral sciences to investigate priority topics established in the agency’s five-year research agenda.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of NEA website users who express satisfaction with the value of research information and publications on the agency’s website. Another performance measure will track the mean citation rate for projects resulting from NEA awards for research.

The NEA also will explore the ability to report, during this strategic plan period, on the various ways in which NEA-supported research is used by scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers within and outside the arts. Primary methods for understanding these factors may include the survey mentioned above, and/or qualitative analyses of narrative data collected through NEA research grantee reports.

## Evidence-Building

The NEA’s five-year Research Agenda (FY 2022-2026), which stemmed from a planning study and consultations with internal and external stakeholders, articulates priority topics and sample questions that will guide the agency’s investments in knowledge-building about the value and/or impact of the arts in American life. This agenda is distinct from the NEA’s Learning Agenda, which is used to identify and pursue research questions pertaining to the agency’s own activities and operations. For example, future evaluation of progress on the NEA’s research agenda, and of the agenda’s ability to affect the work of policy-makers and practitioners in the arts nationwide, may be included ultimately as a Learning Agenda item.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.3

### Invest in the Capacity of Arts Organizations and Artists to Serve a Broader Public through Digital or Emergent Technology.

For decades, artists and arts organizations have experimented with the use of digital and emergent technology as a creative medium, creating a dynamic but consistently under-resourced field of artistic practice. A NEA research report, *Tech as Art: Supporting Artists Who Use Technology as a Creative Medium* (2021), analyzes this field and the historic barriers and opportunities that have defined it. The report also highlights the cross-sectoral practices of tech-centered artists, their engagement with the larger societal issues of our time—ranging from racial justice to climate change—and their capacity to network and innovate.

Although data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis suggest that web streaming and web publishing are among the highest-growth categories of all arts-related industries, the work of tech-centered artists is poorly represented across the U.S. arts funding landscape, as shown by the Tech as Art report. And yet, the inclusion of these artists in the work of arts organizations promoting different artistic disciplines has become more critical than ever, now that the COVID-19 pandemic has forever altered the shape of arts programming and presentation. As in-person events came to a halt in early 2020, organizations were forced to turn to digital and hybrid programming. Over the next few years, the NEA will invest in greater capacity for arts organizations and artists to harvest lessons from the pandemic and offer digital opportunities for arts participation—inclusive of hybrid programming—to reach a broader and more diverse public.

#### Goal Leader/Lead Office

Media Arts Division

#### Strategies

Through awards and strategic partnerships, the NEA will support:

- Tech-centered creative practices and artist-driven explorations of digital or emergent technology across all artistic disciplines.
- Arts organizations' capacity to deliver tech-centered, digital, and hybrid arts and cultural programs to audiences and learners.
- Opportunities for professional development in tech-centered creative practices.
- The exploration of field-building initiatives that develop networks across artistic disciplines and relevant entities for investing in tech-centered creative practices and artist-driven use of digital or emergent technology.
- The exploration of strategies to share information among peer networks—and to raise awareness about—creative solutions and best practices for using digital technology, including accessibility requirements for websites, virtual programs, and other tech-centered activities.

#### Contributing Programs

Projects that support tech-centered artistic practice and greater opportunities for arts participation via technology are supported by the NEA's Grants for Arts Projects program and by Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs. This support is provided across all artistic disciplines.

In particular, through the Media Arts office, organizations can apply for funds to support digital and emergent technology projects across any artistic field, from dance, musical theater, and visual arts to arts education initiatives. The Media Arts program has a stated priority to support exemplary models and emerging practices in

digital storytelling; performance, visual, and cinematic arts; net art, or art that uses the internet as its medium; as well as immersive and interactive media, open-source software toolkits, and other forms of data visualization or computation, across all artistic disciplines, genres, and forms.

In addition, the NEA's Media Arts office and Office of Research & Analysis have conducted a national field scan on arts and technology, in partnership with the Ford Foundation and the Knight Foundation. The resulting publication, *Tech as Art: Supporting Artists Who Use Technology as a Creative Medium* (2021), is accompanied by ten commissioned essays from arts practitioners. The materials highlight historic barriers and opportunities for the field—illustrating, for example, how tech-centered creative practice can support greater equity and inclusion in STEM learning.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

- Through a cooperative agreement in partnership with the Sundance Institute, the NEA supports a national field-building network that promotes filmmaker-friendly policies, best practices, and strategies and creates a sustainable infrastructure that will strengthen the independent film and new media field through knowledge exchange, cross-sector collaboration, and research.
- Currently, the NEA is partnering with the NSF to support a research workshop on the value of the arts to computer science education.

## Performance Goals

The performance goal for this objective is:

*NEA grantees report that NEA funding enabled them to build the capacity for serving a broader public through digital or emergent technology or for supporting tech-centered creative practices.*

This goal will be measured by tracking the number of grantees reporting that NEA funding enabled them to build capacity serving a broader public through digital or emergent technology. Another performance measure will track the number of grantees reporting that NEA funding enabled them to build capacity for supporting tech-centered creative practices.

## Evidence-Building

The need to collect higher-quality data on virtual arts engagement increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an unprecedented expansion of virtual arts programming. Since FY 2015, the agency has asked awardees to report the number of unique visitors that accessed online programming and mobile applications during the award period. As a result of data quality concerns over the years, the NEA has periodically made small modifications to these indicators. During this strategic plan period, and due to the growing need for finer-tuned measures of virtual engagement, the NEA expects to make a significant effort to improve how awardees are currently asked about virtual engagement activities.

Additional research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

# STRATEGIC GOAL 4

## Pursue and Adopt Exemplary Practices to Support the Agency's Mission.

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

The NEA is the sole arts funding entity, public or private, whose funding reaches every Congressional District in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. jurisdictions, supporting activities within the arts and culture sector such as arts presentations, artist residencies, arts education and healing arts projects, research, creative placemaking, and technical assistance for organizational capacity building. With such an ambitious mission and extensive roster of programmatic activities, the NEA can succeed only because of its commitment to its employees and organizational excellence. Creating and maintaining a highly functioning organization allows the NEA to fulfill its considerable responsibilities to the American people.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.1

### **Continue to be Accountable and Transparent to the Public through Effective Operations that Promote Vigilant Stewardship of Funds.**

Bearing in mind the NEA's accountability to U.S. taxpayers, and to facilitate its mission, the NEA's staff engage in work practices and design work systems to be effective, efficient, measurable, and transparent. The agency maintains and continually improves upon policies, processes, and systems that ensure optimal transparency and accountability. Chief among these is the NEA's grant application review process, at the heart of which are review panels comprised of citizen panels—both experts in the various arts fields, as well as laypersons with knowledge in the relevant fields.

#### Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of Deputy Chair for Management & Budget  
Office of Information Technology Management  
Office of Guidelines & Panel Operations

#### Strategies

- Ensure use and effectiveness of the grant adjudication processes through sound panel selection and review processes.
  - Ensure adequate diversity and geographic representation on agency panels.
  - Streamline panel processes and facilitate increased accessibility for panelists to participate in the process.
- Invest in technology solutions to enable efficient, effective, accurate, accessible, and secure business operations in remote and office locations.
  - Improve cloud-based information technology operations.
  - Ensure the security of NEA information technology systems and the data they contain.
  - Ensure 508 compliance and full accessibility of systems and hardware for employees and the public.
  - Leverage proven systems and operations through shared services, e.g., financial management services through the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Enterprise Services Center (ESC), electronic grants management system (eGMS) through the NEH, and electronic travel services through ESC.
  - Inform agency staff about real-time technology changes.
- Monitor agency processes to ensure efficient, effective internal controls, integrity of work products, and compliance with NEA policies and government laws and regulations.
  - Annually review agency enterprise risk strategies and identify risk areas that need enhancement.

- Conduct regular reviews of the NEA's data systems to verify accuracy and compliance with the Privacy Act and records retention policies.
- Assess our work processes, work flow, and current internal controls to improve upon the transparency, accessibility, and effectiveness of our operations.
- Cooperate fully with government oversight officials and auditors in their work to support good governance and promote risk mitigation activities.
- Improve the NEA's compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220).
- Provide timely, accurate, informative, and accessible data through agency reporting, website updates, publications, and other materials.
  - Make data about grant awards, contracts, and research readily available to the public on the NEA website, USASpending.gov, and the National Archive of Data on Arts & Culture website.
  - Improve the quality of the NEA's administrative data, including data collected through NEA grant programs and from the NEA's national initiatives through a review and alignment of data elements across agency application and reporting forms.
  - Provide meaningful access for Limited English Proficiency individuals to NEA programs through increased translation of agency webpages and materials into other languages.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA collaborates with numerous agencies in pursuit of effective operations that promote vigilant stewardship of public funds. As an example, the NEA partners with similarly sized NEH in developing and operating the eGMS at a fraction of the cost of purchasing the service from one of the large agency- shared providers.

The NEA also leverages proven systems and operations through the use of numerous shared service agreements, with the larger ones including financial services through the FAA's ESC, employee payroll and benefit processing through the Department of Agriculture's National Finance Center, contracting services and Indirect Cost Rate agreement negotiations through the Department of the Interior's Business Center, and travel services through ESC. The agency continually reviews operations to identify opportunities for partnering with government service providers to implement more efficient and cost- effective processes.

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this objective are:

1. *The NEA is a vigilant steward of funds through accountable, transparent, and effective operations.*  
This goal will ensure annual receipt of an unmodified audit opinion and that the data and deliverables submitted to USASpending.gov and other required federal data systems are certified as accurate, complete, and in accordance with government-wide data standards. Another performance measure will track improvements to the agency's cybersecurity posture through the development and implementation of a zero-trust architecture and by upgrading the agency's infrastructure in alignment with the agency's multi-year IPV6 migration plan.
2. *The NEA recruits and engages citizens as panelists who reflect the nation's geographic and racial/ ethnic diversity.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of U.S. states and territories, including the District of Columbia, represented by individuals serving on NEA panels. Secondary measures are the percent of individuals, by race/ethnicity, serving on NEA panels; and the percent of NEA panelists who express satisfaction with their participation in the panel process.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.2

### Foster a Skilled, Agile, Diverse, and Cohesive Workforce.

Believing that the agency's most important asset is its people, NEA is committed to embedding principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access into the agency's work practices, to foster a safe place for employees to thrive. The NEA also invests in training, and staff recognition programs, and promotes strong employee morale and work-life balance in order to attract, develop, and retain a talented and diverse staff who are empowered and equipped to execute a shared mission and vision for the agency.

#### Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of the Deputy Chair of Management & Budget  
Office of Human Resources  
Office of Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity

#### Strategies

Strategies supporting this objective include staff recruitment, development, and retention strategies and actions to ensure optimal work conditions for the NEA workforce. Specific strategies include:

- Recruit and retain a highly motivated, diverse, and talented workforce.
  - Review staffing and succession plans to ensure adequate internal capability to meet current and future agency goals, and analyze these goals in conjunction with diversity and outreach goals.
  - Thoroughly analyze vacancy opportunities and potential areas for recruitment and areas where diversity can be enhanced.
  - Consistently consider a variety of hiring options and available flexibilities to recruit a talented and diverse workforce able to meet the NEA's mission.
  - Comply with OPM recruitment requirements to include consideration of current NEA qualified employees for employment opportunities.
  - Provide opportunity for staff input on planning/policies/processes across the agency.
- Ensure that all agency staff are developed and trained for opportunities to succeed while employed at the NEA.
  - Communicate and provide targeted opportunities for staff professional development and career advancement within the NEA.
  - Require managers and supervisors to annually communicate and work with their respective employees to develop comprehensive individual development plans that bolster strengths and minimize weaknesses so that employees are able to perform at peak levels.
  - Seek out innovative training and employee development methods that are compatible with the unique mission of the agency, including cross-training opportunities.
- Develop and maintain a work environment that is safe, diverse, and inclusive, with an emphasis on open communication and the well-being of NEA staff.
  - Develop work, health, and safety protocols, and policies and procedures designed to keep employees safe and thriving during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic period.
  - Ensure that all employees are trained annually in various aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.



- Maintain a no-tolerance policy for any behavior that infringes on the principles of achieving racial diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in NEA operations.
- Engage and foster free-flowing and open communication with staff regarding NEA activities.

*In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.*

## Contributing Programs

In addition to government-wide benefits—including the NEA’s Incentive & Awards Program, which consistently recognizes valuable performers for their efforts and achievements—other programs include family-friendly leave policies and flexible/alternative work schedules (including telework when appropriate). The NEA also provides wellness services—both health center access and an expansive Employee Assistance Program, through an interagency agreement with Federal Occupational Health. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the NEA has participated in cross-agency meetings (e.g., the Small Agency Council) and has consulted informally with other agencies on best practices for addressing the effect of COVID-19 on workplace operations and workplace safety.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

The NEA manages its workforce with support from other government agencies. In addition to the support in payroll processing provided by the NFC discussed under Objective 4.1, the NEA also works on staff recruitment with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) through an interagency agreement. The NEA works with the NEH to provide staff programs in connection with special emphasis observances implemented by Presidential Proclamation, Executive Orders, and Public Law, such as African American History Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

## Performance Goals

The performance goal for this objective is:

*NEA employees report a positive work culture and a high degree of satisfaction working at the NEA.*

This performance goal will be measured by tracking index scores for employee engagement and intrinsic work experience on OPM’s annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.<sup>6</sup>

# CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE

## **The NEA will Model Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Arts through All of Its Activities and Operations.**

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 resources, developed leadership initiatives, and strengthened its partnerships with SAAs and RAOs to realize the agency’s mission to foster and sustain an environment in which the arts belong to everyone in the United States.

The NEA continues to make progress in lifting barriers to arts participation across the nation. Most recently, an analysis showed that more than 43 percent of arts activities sponsored by NEA grants are held in census tracts where 20 percent or more of the population live below the poverty line. In addition, the NEA’s Partnership Agreement grants to SAAs and RAOs include funds for responding to the needs of underserved populations within states and regions.

<sup>6</sup> Adjustments to this measure may be required if FEVS indexes are changed in future years.

The agency will monitor the distribution of grants in support of widening its reach among diverse demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups. It also will explore methods for tracking and enlarging the diversity of organizations represented in the NEA's applicant pool and grants portfolio. Related factors may include the demographic characteristics associated with applicant/grantee organizations, their missions, budget sizes, geographic locations, and first-time applicant status.

This cross-cutting objective also refers to the NEA's internal operations. In its day-to-day functioning, the agency aspires to model the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and equal employment opportunity principles to ensure effective management and accountability of federal resources.

## Goal Leader/Lead Office

Office of Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity

## Strategies

To support this cross-cutting objective, the NEA will hew closely to the Equity Action Plan it submitted to OMB in January 2022. The document outlines new and ongoing activities, potential barriers, and mechanisms for tracking progress on equity in five domains: arts participation in underserved communities; community engagement; accessibility; data; and contracting and procurement. In FY 2023, moreover, the NEA will develop a long-term monitoring and evaluation strategy using outcomes data to assess overall effectiveness of the Equity Action Plan.

In addition, the NEA chair will bring field-specific expertise related to the pursuit of this objective.

Regarding staff operations as a whole, the NEA will establish a model Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program that will serve as the foundation on which the agency will execute its mission. Integral to this program will be the creation of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan and the monitoring of its implementation.

## Contributing Programs

Among the agency's funding programs, Grants for Arts Projects (to eligible organizations), Challenge America, and Partnership Agreement grants (to SAAs and RAOs) are expected to contribute toward the accomplishment of this cross-cutting objective.

The Office of Accessibility will coordinate with agency offices and the public to ensure access to the grant process, agency programs, and public engagement for people with disabilities.

Internally, the NEA's EEO program will be a significant contributor to this cross-cutting objective. The EEO office serves as a resource to agency managers and employees by providing direction, guidance, and monitoring of key activities to achieve a diverse workplace free of barriers to equal opportunity. The NEA's EEO program thus will help to maintain a workplace free from discrimination in any of its management policies, practices, or procedures, better enabling the agency to pursue its mission. In addition, the EEO office co-leads trans-agency working groups that will implement the NEA's Equity Action Plan and will develop a DEIA Strategic Plan.

## Cross-Agency Collaborations

NEA staff routinely participate in the following Executive Agency-level groups:

- OMB Equity Learning Community
- White House Equity Legal Working Group

## Performance Goals

The performance goals for this cross-cutting objective are:

1. *The NEA supports projects and partnerships that engage populations reflecting the nation's demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic diversity.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the percent of NEA awards supporting projects that engaged diverse demographic groups. A secondary measure will track the percent of subawards, through Partnership Agreements, supporting project activities that engaged diverse demographic groups. Two other performance measures will track: the percent of Congressional Districts in which organizations receive a NEA award; and the percent of NEA awards that supported project activities in rural areas or high-poverty neighborhoods. A secondary measure will track the percent of subawards that supported project activities in rural areas or high-poverty neighborhoods.
2. *The NEA will establish a model EEO program based on development of internal benchmarks.*  
This goal will be measured by tracking the completion of the six essential elements for a model EEO program as described in MD-715.<sup>7</sup>

## Evidence-Building

Through the grant application and final report processes, the agency collects self-reported data on the beneficiaries of federal funds awarded through its direct grant and Partnership Agreement programs. These records, however, do not include data on all the populations featured in the President's Executive Order (EO) on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities. In addition, the agency does not currently collect data on the leadership or staff of awardee organizations.

During FY 2022, the NEA will undertake projects to improve data collection methods that can support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) indicators. The agency will determine the feasibility of creating new fields on its grantmaking forms (including for SAAs and RAOs) to collect better data on the populations served, and, to the extent appropriate, on the leadership and staff of applicant and grantee organizations. The NEA further will expand its analytical capability to use existing data sources for identifying and reporting on underserved communities. Additional research and evaluation activities for this objective will be identified annually through the Learning Agenda process.

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<sup>7</sup> MD-715's model EEO program, pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 791 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-325).

