NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS: FOCUS GROUP AND FORUM RESEARCH REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background: This report summarizes the results of stakeholder research conducted on behalf of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts with 87 constituents from across the state of New Hampshire. Constituent input was gathered in eight focus groups and one public forum during the months of February-April, 2013. Participants represented a variety of fields, including substance abuse prevention programs in the state, Veteran's service providers, historical and traditional arts experts, cultural organization representatives, artists, business leaders, health care and disability specialists, amongst others.

Participants were asked to reflect on trends, opportunities, and needs in their respective fields, as well as how the State Arts Agency might play a role in supporting the work of their field. This research was part of the information-gathering phase of the State Arts Agency's strategic planning process and was complemented by three planning retreats with New Hampshire State Council on the Arts' staff and/or Councilors, two surveys (one directed to the needs and interests of New Hampshire organizations and schools and the other to New Hampshire artists), and eleven in-depth interviews with national and regional experts in a variety of arts-related fields. This report summarizes the results of the focus group and forum research.

Methodology: Each focus group was two hours in length. The forum information was collected at the conclusion of a half-day event in which recent research documenting the economic impact of New Hampshire's cultural nonprofits was shared and discussed[1].

New Hampshire State Council on the Arts staff and/or Councilors were present at each focus group and forum, and all focus groups were facilitated by Maren Brown. Participants were asked a broad set of questions that covered the following topics: previous connections with the State Arts Agency, trends and needs they were observing in their respective fields, exemplary work they were witnessing, and how the State Arts Agency could address the needs they described. Additional targeted questions were asked in each focus group that were pertinent to the area being discussed. Participants at the forum were asked to identify three key community priorities they perceived and how the arts could help to address these priorities.

Structure of the focus group and forum report: Because of the diverse nature of the participants and subjects of the focus groups and forums, the results of each focus group are presented

[1] This research was conducted by Americans for the Arts as part of their *Arts in Economic Prosperity IV* survey.

individually in this report. Findings for each focus group are organized into four categories: overview, trends, current and potential areas of intersection with the arts, and current and potential relevance to the State Arts Agency.

Overall focus group and forum research observations: A number of themes emerged in the focus groups and forum that offer useful information to guide the State Arts Agency's strategic planning process. Below we have clustered the overarching results of the focus groups into three broad themes: livable communities, arts in education, and underserved audiences.

Livable communities and creative economy

- Creative economic impact data and strategies are increasingly familiar and valued.
- Non-profit arts and cultural organizations in New Hampshire continue to experience challenges in their efforts to stay strong and provide high quality arts experiences for their communities.
- Opportunities exist for promoting arts and culture through tourism.
- Access to arts, culture, and entertainment are vital to attract and retain young people in New Hampshire.
- Social, collaborative, and interactive events attract younger audiences.
- Non-traditional venues and innovative means for engaging communities in the arts need to be explored.

Arts in education

- There is generalized concern over the decline of availability of the arts in K-12 public schools.
- Increased advocacy around the curriculum concept of "STEM to STEAM" is a promising avenue for making a case for arts education at the public school level.
- An emphasis on "high-stakes testing" in the public schools is limiting the time educators have to devote to the arts and nurturing creativity in students.
- After school programs offer a great potential for offering arts experiences to youth.
- Concepts of "real world learning" for K-12 and "service learning/internships" for college aged youth provide opportunities for young people to engage with the arts and their communities in innovative and meaningful ways.

Underserved communities

- Arts engagement is recognized as an effective tool for supporting various underserved populations, including at-risk youth, military veterans and their families, seniors, and immigrants/refugees.
- Arts programming for seniors is perceived as an area of growth and need.
- Cultural organizations are encountering a complex set of challenges in reaching recent immigrant and refugee populations for programming and building audiences.

- At-risk youth confront increasing challenges in the state.
- Family and community engagement are considered essential to reducing youth substance abuse.
- Youth with developmental and physical disabilities confront unique challenges that the arts can help to address.
- Peer-led programs are particularly successful in building youth leadership skills.
- Youth with disabilities need greater access to the arts.
- In New Hampshire, incarcerated youth with mental health issues have limited access to arts programming.
- There are many complex considerations when providing services and arts engagement for veterans and active duty service members and their families.

Acknowledgements: All focus groups were facilitated by Maren Brown, in consultation with New Hampshire State Council on the Arts' Acting Director, Lynn Martin Graton, and Chief Grants Officer, Cassandra Mason. We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of other staff members in this research: Arts in Education and Arts in Health Care Coordinator, Catherine O'Brian, Special Project Assistant, Julianne Morse (Part time), Assistant to the Chief Grants Officer, Elaine Loft (Part time), and Department of Cultural Resources Registrar, Carey Johnson. Finally, we deeply appreciate the individuals who willingly gave their time and expertise by participating in these focus group meetings and the forum.

Focus Group #1
Addressing the Needs of "Youth at Risk" Through the Arts

February 14, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, and Catherine O'Brian.*

- ***Marissa Carlson****, New Hampshire Teen Institute*
- ***Ann Crawford****, Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services*
- ***Corinn Dembkoski****, Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Service*
- ***Mary Drew****, Monadnock Alcohol and Drug Abuse Coalition*
- ***Claudia Ferber****, National Alliance on Mental Illness*
- ***Dan Habib****, Institute for Disability, University of New Hampshire*
- ***Pam Irish****, Tiger (Theatre Integrating Guidance, Education and Responsibility), Plymouth State University*
- ***Trish Lindberg****, Tiger (Theatre Integrating Guidance, Education and Responsibility), Plymouth State University*
- ***Amy Maki****, Tiger (Theatre Integrating Guidance, Education and Responsibility), Plymouth State University*
- ***Polly Morris****, Regional Coordinator, Monadnock Voices for Prevention*
- ***Bob Thompson****, National Career Pathways Network*
- ***Eric Snare****, Acting Out theater program*
- ***Sarah Sutherland****, Bridges to Prevention*

Overview:
This focus group brought together representatives from youth substance abuse prevention programs and juvenile justice programs. The group explored ways in which the arts can assist youth in developing better decision-making skills and setting them on a path for success in community life.

Trends:
Several trends were cited by focus group participants as challenges facing at-risk youth in the state, including: the large number of students who face challenges in avoiding substance abuse, self-harm, bullying, and incarceration; the reluctance of some youth to seek help because of stigmas around mental health; the prevalence of inhalant and prescription drug abuse among youth in the state; the high amount of alcohol abuse among athletes at the junior and senior high school levels; the doubling of truancy rates in some communities across the state; the "social acceptance" of youth substance abuse in some communities that serves to escalate the problem; and, the challenging transition from middle school to high school that often results in substance abuse.

Participants noted that changing the environment around at-risk youth is critical to prevention: addressing school climate, particularly at the middle and high-school level, and changing the perception of normative behavior community-wide are both necessary approaches. Parental education and involvement in programs designed to reach at-risk youth were also seen as essential mitigation strategies.

Youth leadership structures, wherein youth are involved in peer education, were identified as an important method of reaching and engaging youth. A "youth-led, adult-guided model" allows particularly strong youth "to become leaders; because they are tomorrow's selectman, state senators, community leaders." It was noted that this youth leadership model has been rigorously evaluated as an effective prevention strategy, due to federal requirements that stipulate evidence-based results ("a program that's done with fidelity and can show it had results").

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
There was general consensus that increased exposure to the arts could potentially address various needs of youth with substance abuse and "at-risk" behavior and can support efforts toward intervention and rehabilitation.

Engagement with the arts has the potential to reinforce community connections for youth. One participant spoke to the ability of the arts to counter isolation for at-risk youth: "I personally believe that so much of it is about a lack of connection – that as human beings we do not connect, and that interfaces perfectly with the arts because so much of the arts *do* connect people. And I think that's why they work."

Theater arts, particularly improvisational theater, seems to be an especially effective participatory art form that can empower and engage youth. A contributor disclosed the implicit intent behind theater activities for middle school children: "They think they are just playing fun improvisational games, but we're secretly working with them on leadership skills, giving and receiving effective feedback, how do you work as a team."

Visual arts and music activities can also be effective in working with at-risk youth. Focus group participants detailed several successful approaches, including: transportable mural art, photo/voice projects, journaling and photography, and sculpture with elements of poetry and music.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
There are multiple opportunities for the State Arts Agency to collaborate with youth development specialists.

Offer targeted funding to support the intersection of the arts and at-risk youth: One contributor recommended that the State Arts Agency award micro-grants for communities to access arts programming, with a requirement that the applicant partner with schools, higher education, mental health and community organizations. Other participants recommended that the State Arts Agency support ongoing, community-based events in its funding. There may also be opportunities to examine the intersection between the State Arts Agency's arts in healthcare initiatives and arts education programming.

Support youth arts education initiatives: Another participant suggested that the State Arts Agency collaborate with the public schools to engage New Hampshire filmmakers in developing public service announcements to support at-risk youth using the "youth leadership" model mentioned above.

Foster networking and information sharing between arts and youth development professionals: Highlighting best practices on the State Arts Agency's website, such as samples of prevention projects for at-risk youth that involve trained artists, was suggested as a strategy to consider. One of the participants recommended that the State Arts Agency help to foster partnerships between organizations doing similar work in prevention, so that efforts are maximized and not duplicated.

Forum

Creative Solutions: A Look at the Economic Impact of New Hampshire's Cultural Nonprofits

March 13, 2013

19 participants offered their anonymous input in surveys distributed at this public forum.

Overview:

This public forum was designed to highlight New Hampshire's statewide survey results conducted by Americans for the Arts as part of their *Arts and Economic Prosperity IV*. The survey was funded through private donations on behalf of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. At the conclusion of the forum, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire at their respective tables regarding their three top priorities and ways that the arts and the State Arts Council can help address these priorities. 50% identified themselves as arts administrators, 22.2% as artists, 16.7% as business owners/employees, and 11.1% as community members. Participants represented seven towns and cities within the state.

Trends:
Given the emphasis of the public forum on the economic impact of New Hampshire's cultural nonprofits, most participants identified trends that were thematically related to economic vitality.

Several participants discussed the challenges their communities are confronting in revitalizing their downtown areas. A number of trends were observed that are affecting downtown areas, including: high storefront vacancy rates ("Empty storefronts in downtown seem to be accelerating," and another identified a desire for "fewer vacancies on Main Street."), limited nightlife activity, a challenging economic climate, aging infrastructure, insufficient parking and the need for clear signage.

> *"There has been much discussion about being a 'destination.' Partnering with the arts MUST be part of that."*
>
> Forum Participant

Participants also described other trends in their communities, including: a need to attract visitors/tourism, retain young people, integrate "long-term residents and newcomers" to communities, manage growth, strengthen public schools, enlarge the tax base, attract more businesses to communities, make health care affordable, and counter high unemployment rates amongst marginalized groups (refugees, individuals recently released from incarceration, and those with mental health challenges).

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
Forum participants clearly saw a role for the arts in addressing several of these community trends.

The arts were perceived to be an antidote to many of the challenges of revitalizing town centers. Respondents suggested that offering more "visible and regular" arts events in downtown areas (such as "live music and downtown public art events to raise pedestrian traffic," "art crawls," "striking performances," and other programs) would help to enhance nightlife, draw foot traffic into retail establishments, attract tourists, and "raise the quality of life within the community." Pairing the arts with bike trails was offered by one person as another tool for improving the community.

It was also felt that the arts have an important role to play in restoring the infrastructure of communities, including engaging artists "in the planning, creation, mapping, and signage" of town centers, and in the building of new arts centers that will enhance the economic vitality of communities.

Other observed trends specific to the arts included: enhanced high school graduation rates when arts engagement is part of the school or community offerings, decreased attendance at art events, reduced private foundation support for small arts organizations, increased competition for local artists with nationally-recognized celebrities, and a reduction in media outlets that cover the arts.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Continue to document the economic impact of the nonprofit arts: The act of documenting the economic impact of nonprofit arts organizations in New Hampshire was an important first step for the State Arts Agency in raising awareness of the economic value of the arts in communities.

> ***"The arts can help to keep main streets thriving."***
>
> Forum Participant

Support initiatives that revitalize downtown centers through the arts: Participants were most concerned about the perceived deterioration of downtown centers and saw the arts as a way to enhance the business climate and quality of life in communities. The State Arts Agency could play a role in supporting projects that specifically targeted this issue in New Hampshire's communities, including support of cultural events, infrastructure improvements, and cultural tourism initiatives.

Focus Group #2

Arts Education and Accessibility – Reaching Youth with Mental and Physical Disabilities

March 20, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, and Catherine O'Brian.*

- ***Adrienne Evans****, Council Member, NH Council on Developmental Disabilities, NH Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders, NH DOE Advisory Committee on the Education of Children with Disabilities (SAC) and Crotched Mountain Board of Trustees.*
- ***Lynn Healy****, Art Instructor, Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC), a division of the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Juvenile Justice Services.*
- ***Kristen Murphy****, New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders*
- ***Claire Pstragowski****, Principal, Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC), a division of the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Juvenile Justice Services.*
- ***Mary Schuh****, University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability*
- ***Jillian Shedd****, Governor's Commission on Disability*

Overview:
This focus group brought together participants from programs serving individuals with mental and physical disabilities, as well as those who serve youth in the juvenile justice system, to explore how the arts can be used as an effective means for reaching youth with disabilities.

Trends:
When asked to reflect on trends in their respective fields that specifically address youth, a number of issues emerged, ranging from economic pressures and their impact on correctional facilities to difficult transitions for youth with disabilities.

Focus group participants discussed the difficulty for youth with disabilities in transitioning from high school into college or the work force. They also noted an increase in the number of people on the autism spectrum.

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
Participants in this focus group expressed a need for building awareness of the essential benefits of the arts for people with disabilities. A contributor felt that the general public tends to focus strictly on the basic needs of people with disabilities, considering "the arts as something extra, a luxury."

Participants noted a need for more arts education programs that provide equal access to students with disabilities in conventional settings. There was discussion about the importance of ensuring that youth with disabilities have opportunities to explore art in "typical" ways, and that cultivating welcoming, inclusive environments among existing arts programs was essential. Fully-integrated programs were described as mutually beneficial to both students with and without disabilities.

"We are statistically a wealthy state; we are statistically a healthy state; but people who don't have resources in our state are just as under-resourced as they are in any other state that has perhaps a greater percentage of people who are poor."

Focus Group Participant

It was also noted that there were few opportunities for afterschool learning in the arts for disabled students, and that there is a value in integrating artists with various challenges such as autism in afterschool art programs as they can serve as role models for youth with autism.

The arts were also viewed as an important therapeutic tool for youth with disabilities. A contributor noted the trend of using theater as a best practice because of its ability to improve skills in social engagement and verbal proficiency. Others noted the effective use of the arts in treating traumatic brain injuries: "Art is a great tool to teach functional skills, but for some reason, it's not used widely." Music was cited as a particularly effective therapeutic art form, with specific benefits for speech production and improving communication.

Participants observed that recent changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have spawned new questions and considerations for cultural nonprofits. It was felt that arts administrators were not fully conversant with the recent changes to ADA laws. In addition, it was noted that assistive technologies are an important tool to support people with disabilities who wish to participate in arts events and programs. And, there was agreement that enhanced accessibility to buildings with historical significance is necessary. One contributor expressed concerns about what they considered a common refrain about accessibility in historic buildings: "I hear far too often that the historic preservation needs trump accessibility."

There is a need to share best practices and tools in the intersection of arts and disability. A burgeoning social-media community on the topic of "artists and autism" is developing on Facebook: "There's been a heightened interest in the self-advocate community of people impacted by autism to get their artwork out there to show how they think of the world, and to show us a little bit about how they may be processing the environment that may be a little distinct from the way that we do it."

For youth in the juvenile justice system, access to the arts is challenging. While the school staff has been able to integrate arts activities, residential staff, who are responsible for students in the juvenile justice system beyond school hours, have less of an understanding of its efficacies and have a difficult time integrating the arts into programming and recreational opportunities for students.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
This focus group illuminated several possibilities for the State Arts Agency to support greater arts access for youth with disabilities.

Increase access to arts education for youth with disabilities: A participant recommended that funders in the arts should give priority to applications with a particular focus on people with disabilities. It was noted that afterschool programs for people with disabilities were lacking, as were arts education programs that provide equal access to youth with disabilities. The State Arts

Agency may wish to consider targeted funding opportunities for programs that serve youth with disabilities.

Recruit artists with disabilities for the State Arts Agency's artist rosters: It was noted that role models were needed for youth with disabilities, and disabled artists on the State Arts Agency's teaching artist roster could serve as positive role models for young people.

Highlight exemplars of the arts as a therapeutic tool in State Arts Agency conferences, convenings, and information services: Through its conferences, convenings and information services, the State Arts Agency has an opportunity to disseminate best practices on the therapeutic benefits of the arts. For instance, to help educate residential staff in correctional facilities about the benefits of the arts as a therapeutic tool (discussed above), the State Arts Agency could invite these professionals to participate in its conferences and events (such as the Arts in Health Care or Arts in Education conferences and Poetry Out Loud events).

Enhance awareness of new ADA regulations and the potential relevance to cultural nonprofits in State Arts Agency-sponsored workshops and grant programs: Participants noted that cultural nonprofits could benefit from further training on the new ADA regulations and urged the State Arts Agency to continue its Cultural Facilities grant program, which was seen as an important tool to help cultural organizations to become ADA compliant. "Pushing the awareness that by being more accessible and universally open, you're just opening yourself up to a whole new clientele, more diversity." The effective use of assistive technologies in cultural facilities could also be explored in training programs. The State Arts Agency has the opportunity to collaborate with other state agencies and/or community organizations (such as University of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, and others) in the development and delivery of these programs. Existing e-communication vehicles could also be utilized as a method for disseminating best practices.

Explore opportunities for training artists with disabilities on marketing their work: A contributor suggested that the State Arts Agency offer training for people with developmental disabilities to market and sell their artistic products. A recommendation was made to expand the artist business training programs to consciously include artists with developmental disabilities and help these artists to find new markets for their work. An example was provided wherein artists with disabilities could offer their work as a fundraising incentive for a cultural nonprofit organization.

Focus Group #3

Nurturing and Preserving New Hampshire's Heritage and Traditional Arts

March 20, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, and Catherine O'Brian.*
Councilors attending: *Elizabeth Morgan and Billie Tooley.*

- ***Wes Balla****, Curator, New Hampshire History Museum/Historical Society*
- ***Funi Burdick****, Executive Director, Canterbury Shaker Village*
- ***Nancy Jo Chabot****, Curator, Mount Kearsarge Indian Museum*
- ***Lynn Clark****, Director, Mount Kearsarge Indian Museum*
- ***Regina Delaney****, Irish harpist, singer, dancer, educator, Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant recipient*
- ***Julie Gilman****, Board Member, American Independence Museum*
- ***Lisa Sieverts****, Board member, Monadnock Folklore Society*
- ***Andy Stewart****, Traditional Fiddler, Community Researcher for New Hampshire Program at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival*
- ***Dolores Struckhoff****, Board Member, Enfield Shaker Museum*
- ***Kung Tai Tsay****, Chinese Dancer, Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant recipient*
- ***Larry Yerdon****, Executive Director, Strawbery Banke Museum*

Overview:
This focus group brought together leadership from a range of history and heritage-based organizations and museums and a few traditional artists who have extensive experience in presenting in community settings and schools to explore ways to support traditional artists, preserve traditional artistic expression, and educate the public on the richness of the living traditions in New Hampshire.

Trends:
Participants expressed a need to focus on families and children's programming in order to build support for heritage-based organizations and living history museums and to interest young people in the preservation of folk and traditional arts.

Increasing family attendance to programming and events was identified as an important goal, since those children that attend with their families, rather than with a school, are more likely to return. Special event

> *"We need to get families to bring their children [to the museum?], more than once, and have it be part of their family story."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

programming was seen as an important strategy to increase attendance. There was agreement that hands-on and experiential activities were the most successful for young people.

Heritage organizations have been finding success in increasing attendance at their facilities with coupon sites, such as Groupon and Living Social, as well as with social media sites, such as You Tube. A Living Social promotion garnered a much younger demographic for one organization: "It looked like a whole new audience to me: I mean we had baby strollers and we had much younger people. . . I am convinced that it's not so much what we offer, but how we're communicating that experience."

One participant noted that, while there are opportunities for promoting New Hampshire's heritage and traditional arts through the State of New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development, the expense of advertising can be prohibitive.

Programming and outreach to seniors in assisted-living and retirement settings is growing.

The cost of maintaining historic structures stewarded by heritage organizations was seen as a challenge for some organizations, especially for those who have a large number of them, while some felt having multiple facilities offered a range of opportunities for innovative programming.

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
Participants praised the State Arts Agency's expertise in being a resource for interpreting the heritage and traditional arts in appropriate ways. A contributor valued the State Arts Agency's strategic orientation in matching organizational needs with those of traditional artists. There was also agreement that the State Arts Agency provides invaluable opportunities for networking within the field that is not available elsewhere.

Contributors also commended the State Arts Agency's past work in organizing New Hampshire's contribution to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and noted that it offered valuable exposure to traditional artists in the state.

The Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program was lauded for its contribution to passing on traditions to the next generation: "The Apprentice program is maybe the most valuable thing that you do

> *"The [Traditional Arts] Apprentice program is maybe the most valuable thing that you do in this area . . . If we don't pass on the traditions, we won't have the traditions."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

in this area . . . If we don't pass on the traditions, we won't have the traditions."

A contributor acknowledged their "sense of validation" in being chosen as a traditional artist on the artist roster. New England Foundation for the Arts' matchbook.org platform (a collaboration with the State Arts Agency) was cited as useful to the traditional and heritage arts community in conferring credibility to the showcased artists.

There was discussion about the need to improve the display and promotion of work by traditional artists. There is demand for "museum-like" venues for the marketing of high-quality crafts by a wide range of traditional artists. There was an interest in creating opportunities to partner artists with organizations, perhaps linking artists with gift shops in these organizations.

Native artists in New Hampshire are not federally or state-recognized, and therefore have difficultly labeling their crafts and marketing them as "Native Made[2]."

Participants felt that there were limited opportunities for heritage and traditional arts specialists to meet and network in the state.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Participants in this group offered numerous ideas for the State Arts Agency to refine or expand its programs and services for the field.

Examine additional possibilities for expanding State Arts Agency traditional arts and heritage programs for youth: Participants suggested targeting high-school age children for the apprenticeship program. They noted that community service requirements in public schools may offer opportunities to engage young people in traditional arts programs. Heritage organization representatives also noted that home-schooled children were a growing audience. They also suggested engaging high school students as interns to document folklife.

Consider ways to increase the promotion and presentation of New Hampshire's traditional arts: Contributors wondered whether a variation on the Folklife Festival could be revived, perhaps with a group of artists traveling throughout the state offering a one-day heritage festival format. One participant wondered whether there were opportunities for traditional artists to link together with a "New Hampshire Made" effort. Contributors proposed possible collaborations within the field,

[2]Note: The Indian Arts & Crafts Act of 1990 passed by Congress has made this problematic for Native artists of Abenaki descent in New Hampshire.

such as convening a meeting of museum gift-shop managers to promote the work by New Hampshire traditional artists and establishing a touring artist initiative for the summer.

Convene members of the traditional arts and heritage communities to build the capacity of the sector: Participants felt that regular, regional meetings of heritage and traditional arts specialists would be beneficial, and that the State Arts Agency could play a role in convening this group, which is currently not being fulfilled by professional organizations or associations. This could be a model similar to the State Arts Agency's Creative Communities Network. Participants felt the increased cohesiveness for these professionals could help to strengthen the sector.

Explore possibilities for simplifying grant making procedures and modifying the existing structure of State Arts Agency grant programs: While participants highly valued the artist residency in schools programs, they expressed a desire to simplify the funding process, noting a lack of time and training on the part of many applicants. There also was discussion about the complexity of revising budgets when smaller awards are granted. Contributors offered recommendations for restructuring the length of residencies, including the concept of an "arts-to-go" program, which one participant described as a one-day residency for artists in schools, with a simple, one-page application that is collaboratively written by artists and schools.

Provide additional grant-related resources to applicants: Recommendations were made to develop a clearing-house of granting opportunities, with comprehensive links on the website, so that resources are cited, but not replicated. Participants also felt that providing sample press releases in grant packets could be informative for applicants.

Focus Group #4

Designing Communities for Livability and Prosperity through the Arts

March 21, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton and Cassandra Mason.*

- ***Byron Champlin****, Creative Concord*
- ***Robin Comstock*** *, Manchester Chamber of Commerce*
- ***Michele Cota****, New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism*
- ***Liza Poinier****, Main Street Concord Inc.*
- ***Mike Provost****, Rochester Main Street*
- ***Cathy Sununu****, Art Speak, Portsmouth*

New Hampshire State Council on the Arts' Focus Group and Forum Research Report

Overview:
This focus group consisted of business, arts and tourism representatives. They were asked to explore the ways that the arts can help to create communities that are prosperous and provide a high quality of life.

Trends:
Workforce recruitment, retention and training was perceived to be a strong concern for community leaders. Some contributors noted that communities in New Hampshire are losing population and getting older, and that inadequate transportation systems further complicate efforts to attract younger workers. Partnerships with higher education are starting to emerge to address the issue of workforce development and training. In one community, the goal is to retain 55% of graduates from a major university.

In 2013, the national Main Street program was spun off as a department of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and formed its own organizational entity. Nationally, there is a strong interest in using cultural districts as a strategy for community renewal (one participant noted that this year's Main Streets conference is focused on cultural districts).

Changes in marketing tools and strategies are opening up new markets and possibilities. One participant stated that social media is "the most fabulous thing invented," enabling communities to "break outside of the traditional box and think more globally." Print media is declining in many communities, though one participant noted that print media was still favored by her constituents.

Community leaders are interested in finding ways to enliven downtown areas and other community spaces, including arenas, ballparks, streets, and airports. There is a need to "create animated public gathering spaces" in town centers that "do not compete with other things going on in the community."

Cities and towns are utilizing downtown and entrepreneurial zones as strategies to attract new businesses to communities.

Tourism in the state is strongly focused on outdoor recreation, and there is a desire to widen this lens to include other aspects of the state including the arts.

> *"We should be pulling our [arts] seat up to the table as a business that exists on the same level as others."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
Participants expressed appreciation for tools such as the recent New Hampshire State Council on the Arts/Americans for the Arts' (AFTA) *Arts*

and Economic Prosperity IV study that quantifies the economic impact of nonprofit arts and culture organizations in the state. As one participant commented: "The way that many downtowns are evolving now and becoming reinvigorated is through arts, dining, and entertainment." Another commented that the AFTA research was "eye opening" and offered a "helpful baseline," though it was noted that it would be helpful to get better participation in the study in the future.

Access to arts, culture, entertainment, and improved transportation are vital to attract younger generations to New Hampshire. One participant commented: " We need to think about innovation in arts and culture and how we use that to attract and keep young people in the state. Those young people are the prospective employees . . ." A participant noted that advocacy should focus on this critical function of the arts in retaining younger employees for the state. One contributor mentioned that the New Hampshire Institute for Art was the "fastest growing school in the state of New Hampshire" and could be a potential marketing partner.

New Hampshire is not perceived to be a cultural tourism destination by regional consumers, according to one participant, though a new effort is underway to change that perception. A 2010 consumer perception study[3] found that awareness of New Hampshire's arts and cultural attractions could be improved, and because of this, the State of New Hampshire's Division of Travel and Tourism Development is planning to include the arts and culture as a "pillar" in its marketing efforts.

Some expressed strong interest in cultural districts, while others voiced concern about the potential for cultural districts to segregate the arts and culture within a community.

Artists and community leaders welcomed more public art installations and performances in unconventional community settings, including extending museum exhibition space into downtown areas.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Continue efforts to support creative placemaking in the state: A contributor commented on the usefulness of the State Arts Agency's Creative Communities Network and suggested that the State Arts Agency continue to "tie these discussions together." Another participant added that the State Arts Agency could become the "information source and facilitator for downtown revitalization through arts and culture," aggregating best practices and funding sources, and consequently developing an extensive advocacy network. An example was shared from Seattle for tax incentives that supported the arts.

[3] New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development. (2010). 2010 NHDTTD consumer perception survey summary. Unpublished report.

Consider partnering with the New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development in promoting cultural tourism: Participants noted a number of opportunities for information sharing and promotional opportunities between the State Arts Agency and the Division of Travel and Tourism Development to promote cultural tourism in the state. One participant suggested that a person within tourism be assigned to promote and market the arts and culture, which this informant said would be a corollary to the tourism division's "outdoor recreation person." Another suggested creating a "public arts trail," while another offered the possibility of a "tour of arts in the state." Many possibilities were offered that centered on information sharing (motor coach tour information, calendar listings, "hot deadlines" for major news outlets, and other communications).

Seek out stronger partnerships and build advocacy support with the business community: As one participant noted, "The Arts Council needs to forge very strong relationships with the business community. . . with the Chambers, . . . with the BIA, and with large employers."

Explore ways to better communicate the value of the State Arts Agency: There was discussion about a marketing campaign for the State Arts Agency to build awareness of the organization and its services. "If the Arts Council can be that connector and do much more forceful . . . marketing and communications, I think that would go a long way."

Examine how the arts can help retain younger residents: Participants felt that the arts could play a role in retaining younger residents and suggested that the State Arts Agency help organizations to engage a younger demographic in their arts programming.

Support the display and presentation of art in non-traditional spaces in communities: In addition to supporting programs and events in alternative community locations through its funding initiatives. the State Arts Agency's percent for art program also offers possibilities for presenting public art installations in non-traditional spaces.

Focus Group #5

Reconnecting New Hampshire Veterans to Community Life through the Arts

March 21, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton and Cassandra Mason.*

Focus group participants:

- ***Leah Fox,*** *Currier Museum of Art*

- ***Peggo Hodes,*** *Singer, conductor, voice teacher and creator of Vibrant Voice workshops*
- ***Peggy Senter,*** *Concord Community Music School*
- ***Daisy Wojewoda,*** *Easter Seals New Hampshire Veterans Services, Veterans Count Project*

Overview:
The artists, administrators and educators in this focus group considered the ways in which engagement in the arts can help veterans return to community life in constructive ways. They also explored what programs and services are relevant to the unique needs of veterans and their families.

> *"Everything about being a family that's deploying is a challenge."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Trends:
There are many considerations when providing services for veterans and active duty service members. One participant stated: "The biggest challenge in developing services or resources for service members and their families…is the false assumption that if you build it, they will come. They're not joiners; they do enough group stuff; and they hate red tape." Basic needs, such as food, gas, and caring for children, must come before traditional social service support.

The particular needs of Vietnam veterans were also discussed, with acknowledgment that as an aging population, Vietnam veterans confront challenges such as dementia, but that as a retiring population, they also have more time available for arts and culture engagement.

A participant commented that many service members were at-risk youth prior to joining the military and that an individual's level of functioning prior to service is a good indicator of how challenging recovery from physical and psychological injuries and re-entry to family and community life will be for that individual. Financial insecurity, difficulty in finding and sustaining employment, and domestic violence were mentioned as enormous challenges for military families.

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
When seeking to meet the needs of veterans' through the arts, the State Arts Agency may have more success by first providing arts access to the children of service members. One participant suggested: "Your big challenge is how to engage. We found that extremely flexible, extremely confidential, local, non-clinical engagement with a pocket full of food and gas cards was the way to do it." It was noted that "Family Readiness Groups" may be a good avenue for reaching deploying families. Discounted admission to art events/performances, as well as scholarships to community-based arts programs, were described as potentially a very helpful resource for military families.

When discussing services for veterans, expressive art therapies were cited as an effective approach to support those returning from military service. A participant discussed the long history of community schools of the arts in providing art therapy programs. Participants acknowledged that public perception needs to change so that expressive therapies are recognized as valid therapies for veterans.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Partner with veteran's service providers in a targeted effort to connect art programs with children of service members: Participants suggested offering scholarships to children of service members to attend art programs and events. Funds could be administered by veteran's service providers, who have robust systems to track outcomes. Arts organizations that had a strong track record in arts programming for youth could be identified by the State Arts Agency and funds allocated for children of service members in need to participate in these programs.

Focus Group #6
Higher Education and the Arts – Connecting with Future Arts Leaders and Constituencies

March 22, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, and Julianne Morse.*
Councilors attending: *Roger Brooks.*

- ***Foad Afshar****, Arts Education Department, New Hampshire Institute of Art.*
- ***Marcia Gardner****, Fine Arts Program, Manchester Community College*
- ***Robert Kostick,*** *Art Department, Keene State College.*
- ***Jennifer Militello****, Creative Writing Department, River Valley Community College*
- ***Spencer Topel****, Department of Music, Dartmouth College*

Overview:
Arts educators and administrators from the field of higher education in New Hampshire gathered to consider ways that the State Arts Council's grant programs and services can be relevant to young adults studying the arts in academic settings and how the State Arts Council may help to address future challenges on the horizon for higher education.

Trends:
Rising college costs and student debt are increasing parental and student concerns about future employability and workforce preparedness.

Participants were particularly concerned about the prevalence of high-stakes testing in the public schools, which they believe is negatively impacting the nation's "competitive edge" by underemphasizing creative and critical thinking skills. Some of the faculty in the focus group noted that incoming students are having difficulty with their writing and critical thinking skills.

Service learning and internships are offering opportunities for undergraduate students to engage with their communities. Some participants were integrating service learning or internships into their teaching.

In some institutions, undergraduate research money is being "poured into" STEM projects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

> *"I think one major opportunity on the STEAM side is picking up this idea of making New Hampshire the leader in digital arts, digital humanities."*
>
> Focus Group Participant

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
When discussing how students can increase their employability in the arts, one participant observed that high school students seek "internships for this practical, professional development," but they should be promoted more "as a way that the arts can help the community." One participant talked about how her students take on graphic design projects for community-based organizations, to gain skill in design and build a portfolio. A participant also appealed for the need to think creatively about art careers, which are stereotypically viewed by many as unprofessional. There was also discussion about the career path of administration in the arts and involvement in public policy making for the arts sector, and that this was a viable option for students.

Participants expressed concern that the intrinsic value of the arts is often superseded by an emphasis on workforce and employment issues. One contributor suggested that the economic impact of the arts can be a compelling argument for administrators, while another suggested that there were opportunities for messaging on the essential value of arts: "We haven't asked people to imagine their lives without arts." In some institutions, there was concern about the level of support for the arts among college administrators.

Increased advocacy around the concept of "STEM to STEAM"[4] is a promising development for arts education at the public school level. Participants stressed the need to elevate successful STEAM projects, with the hope of increasing funding for arts education. "We need to build a model of

[4] "STEAM" inserts the arts into this acronym: Science, Technology, Engineering, *Art* and Mathematics.

undergraduate research for arts and humanities." One participant felt there were opportunities for New Hampshire to take the lead in digital arts and humanities.

Participants discussed the general perception that local, community art is not considered significant. As one contributor stated, "I think there's the expectation of people coming to the arts; I think the arts need to come to the people." They expressed appreciation for non-traditional venues for community art.

Currently, there is no central place where college arts administrators and faculty meet to network and share ideas. For several participants, the focus group itself offered a new opportunity to meet art faculty at other colleges and universities in the state.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Highlight successful STEAM projects, with the hope of increasing funding for arts education. Several ideas were suggested, including "laptop ensembles" and exploring the fusion of arts and technology.

Raise awareness of the State Arts Agency's programs and services in New Hampshire's colleges and universities: Participants saw a role for the State Arts Agency in offering presentations to faculty, staff and graduate students in the arts about the state arts agency's programs and services, and to discuss what a state arts agency does to shape arts policy. They also saw a role for expressing the value of the arts to college administrators. "I think there is a piece of this that is about educating administrators on the value of what we do…the value of the arts economically." Another participant suggested that the State Arts Agency consider supporting a creativity workshop for college administrators, "where they had to go in and experience the arts in a hands on way."

Support engagement projects between higher education institutions and their local communities: Several community engagement projects were offered as examples of projects the State Arts Agency could help support: National Poetry Month, street art festivals like those in Burlington, VT, programs that pair art faculty with local middle and high schools to teach workshops, and programs in non-traditional community venues.

Convene college arts faculty in the state for information sharing and networking: It was noted in the focus group that arts faculty and administrators do not currently have a place to share information and ideas in the state. The State Arts Agency could convene these individuals to explore new collaborative ventures.

Focus Group #7

Building Strong Communities through Public Value Partnerships for the Arts

March 26, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, Catherine O'Brian, and Elaine Loft.*
Councilors attending: *Sara Germain, Amanda "Mandy" Merrill, Elizabeth Morgan and Billie Tooley.*

- ***Ben Anderson****, Prescott Park*
- ***Rebecca Blunk****, New England Foundation for the Arts*
- ***Joan Chamberlain****, Saint Kieran*
- ***Nicolette Clarke****, Capitol Center for the Arts*
- ***Greg Gathers****, Pontine Theatre*
- ***Justine Roberts****, Children's Museum of New Hampshire*
- ***Frumie Selchen****, Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire*
- ***DJ Potter,*** *Andy's Summer Playhouse*
- ***Patrick Stinson****, North Country Center for the Arts*
- ***Susie Lowe Stockwell****, League of New Hampshire Craftsmen*
- ***Bente Torjusen****, AVA Gallery and Art Center*
- ***Eric Valliere****, Symphony New Hampshire*
- ***Keri Wiederspahn****, Sharon Arts Center*

Overview:
This group brought together administrators in cultural nonprofit organizations to discuss issues and trends that are impacting their work, and what they feel the State Arts Agency should consider in its planning. The majority of participants represented organizations that receive operational funding support from the State Arts Agency.

Trends:
One contributor commented on what they perceived as unrealistic expectations placed on non-profit organizations. The perception is that "if we were really successful, we would be paying our own way. And, that we ought to be able to figure out a business model that doesn't require contributions." A lack of understanding of governance issues, a need for greater efficiency, and a shortage of board members were all cited as concerns for participants.

Social, collaborative, and interactive events are successfully attracting younger audiences. Social marketing efforts, open studio events, and partnerships with young professional networks have contributed to enhanced participation by younger audiences. Creating events that emphasize socializing – with food and drink incorporated – has also proven to be a successful strategy for engaging a younger demographic. Although, one arts organization representative expressed concern about this final expectation: "Sometimes I feel like in order to be successful, I need to be an Executive Director and caterer and bartender."

The importance of being able to serve wine and beer at an event and the unique requirements in New Hampshire related to a liquor license was cited as a barrier for some, with the suggestion made that organizations could band together and get some form of waiver from some of the unique elements of a license for cultural events.

Participants are finding it increasingly burdensome to market their events through publicity outlets. The difficulty of submitting listings to numerous online calendars was cited as one of many barriers to communicating to audiences about their programs.

Rural areas in New Hampshire continue to struggle economically, resulting in a challenging environment for arts organizations to operate.

Participants cited a decline in school visits to performances and exhibits. The attribute this to a combination of decrease in discretionary funding at the school level and curriculum shifts to "Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics subjects (STEM)", which leave less time in the school day for the arts.

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:

Within this focus group there was significant discussion about the decline of arts education in the public schools and the ramifications for arts organizations. An arts administrator observed that school tours used to be the "bread and butter" of their organization, and now they rely primarily on senior-citizen tours as a developing market.

Arts programming for seniors was perceived as an area of growth and "clearly an area of need" in the state by focus group participants. One individual observed that lifelong learning with an arts focus is a successful engagement strategy for organizations working with seniors. In one community, seniors were described as "the most underserved in all the county." Contributors also discussed: the need for more outreach into senior communities, such as assisted-living centers or rehabilitation centers, the need for funding for these programs, and the need for increased awareness about the value of the arts among healthcare providers.

One contributor noted that a STEAM emphasis [as opposed to STEM] had resulted in successes in attracting school groups to her arts organization: "If I look at the things that teachers are choosing to do: they want hands-on, project-based, real world, creative, interdisciplinary, fused experiences, but they're using an arts integration model."

Participants discussed various strategies for engaging young adults in the arts, including: diversifying programming, expanding collaborations, and increasing social media. "Angel ticket" programs (where free tickets are distributed to social service agencies) were viewed as a successful strategy for engaging low income families and at-risk youth. These programs have been underwritten by corporate sponsors in one instance. One organization hires artists to do residency programs in homeless shelters and homes for abused children as a strategy for reaching underserved populations.

Rural areas of New Hampshire continue to struggle economically, and therefore access to the arts is limited. Participants wondered if there were ways for performing arts organizations in more populated parts of the state to indentify the resources to travel to rural areas to perform.

Cultural organization representatives shared the difficulties they are confronting when reaching out to immigrant and refugee populations in the state. One participant revealed their museum's successful strategy for engagement: "What we've done is tried to position the student as an ambassador to the museum" through a community art show featuring work by immigrants and refugee youth. In this instance, the family was provided transportation to the museum. A contributor noted that, having used funds for transportation for immigrant and refugee populations in a similar way, the more difficult accomplishment was to engage families in repeat visits to the arts organization. Yet another contributor noted that while working with Mexican and Brazilian communities in Nashua, educational outreach to the schools was considered successful, whereas "reaching out to the broader community . . . where people live" was the bigger challenge. Also, it was noted that having mainstream art audiences appreciate and understand cultures beyond their own was a constant challenge. Funding to support these efforts was also difficult to secure.

Participants discussed successful approaches for increasing attendance for veterans and their families to arts and cultural activities, such as organizing business sponsorships for free or discounted admission for the military and their families and developing artistic content that is relevant to the veteran community's experience. One example was given of a theater production that integrated testimony from returning soldiers, with the performance attracting a large military audience of first-time theater-goers. Although, a similar production had mixed success for another organization. Military bands were very successful at attracting audiences "in droves."

Participants discussed the importance of making a strong and visible case for the value that the arts and arts organizations bring to the quality of life in the state. One contributor recommended a bold approach to advocacy: "I don't want to be bashful anymore. . . . There is a need for public investment in the arts." Another participant noted that, when funding for their organization was to be eliminated, parents and children came out to support the organization.

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Champion cooperative marketing efforts for cultural organizations in the state: Participants called for a statewide event listing for the arts, with an integrated calendar feature, that would allow administrators to submit one listing that would populate multiple calendars. A suggestion was made for the State Arts Agency to collaborate with the relevant state agencies on this idea. The trading of ad space or the development of attendance passes for multiple organizations was also suggested as a promising solution to marketing concerns. Some organizations are doing this in their communities and are experiencing success with these strategies.

Explore ways to remove barriers to liquor licensing for cultural nonprofits: Several participants agreed that liquor sales were an important amenity to cultural performances and that the difficulty of obtaining liquor licenses from the state liquor commission and imposing nuanced rules made providing this amenity difficult. The State Arts Agency might explore ways to express the needs of arts organizations to the Liquor Commission and enable nonprofit cultural organizations to more readily obtain these licenses, as well as receive one-day permits that exempt them from particularly difficult aspects of the licensing.

Increase funding for particular audience segments: Participants suggested that the State Arts Agency provide funding for artists from more populated areas to perform in rural areas of the state, underwrite work with immigrant/refugee populations so that it is less episodic, and support arts engagement for low-income seniors. One participant expressed concern that the increased cross-sector work by the State Arts Agency could limit their operating support grants however.

Subsidize transportation for arts education programming: Participants noted that transportation was a barrier to participation for both public school students and community members wishing to participate in events at cultural organizations outside the main center of cities and town.

Implement a streamlined grant programs to enable rural areas to more easily access the arts.: One participant suggested the State Arts Agency consider implementing a streamlined grant program similar to the Humanities Council's "Humanities to Go." According to this respondent, the programs are juried, a catalog of options is provided, and the "cost is minimal" for presenters. Everything is well "packaged and presented."

Partner with the tourism division on promoting cultural tourism: Several participants recommended that the State Arts Agency collaborate with the state Office of Travel and Tourism on promotion of the state's cultural assets. "Embrace arts trails and scenic byways" as well as "craft tours."

Focus Group #8

Arts Learning: PreK-12—In Schools and In Community Settings

April 2, 2013
Staff attending: *Lynn Martin Graton, Cassandra Mason, and Catherine O'Brian.*
Councilors attending: *Richard Ayers*

Focus group participants:

- ***Suzanne Birdsall,*** *Education Consultant, 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, New Hampshire Department of Education*
- ***Adam Blue****, Education Director, AVA Gallery and Art Center*
- ***Lynn Compton****, Music and Art Teacher, Peterborough Elementary School*
- ***David Chapman,*** *MC2 Charter School*
- ***Kim Emerson****, Elementary Art Teacher, Harold Martin School.*
- ***Patricia Ewen,*** *Early Childhood Consultant, New Hampshire Department of Education*
- ***Linda Francisco-Demers****, Art Educator, Kearsarge Elementary Schools*
- ***Jerry Frew****, Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District*
- ***John Hatab,*** *Art and Drama Teacher, Concord Elementary School*
- ***Cynthia Robinson****, Teaching Artist, Poetry Out Loud Co-Coordinator*
- ***Arlene Taranow****, Educator, Poetry Out Loud Co-Coordinator*

Overview:
This focus group gathered educators, administrators, and teaching artists to explore topics in the area of art education that are of particular relevance to the pre-K-12 community, including: nurturing creativity in an era of standardized testing, integrating the arts into other curriculum areas, advocacy for the arts in schools and communities, and professional development for arts educators.

Trends:
Dedicated and consistent exposure to the arts in public schools in increasingly becoming marginalized or cut completely. Contributors noted that block scheduling in the middle and high schools was seen as an obstacle to consistent exposure to arts education. Because art classes are an elective in high schools, one person commented: "Art is seen as a choice in middle and high school from a developmental point of view." Additionally, the trend is to prioritize math and English at the upper levels because of impending Common Core testing requirements. Concern was expressed that the increased focus on STEM[5] was having a negative impact on arts in the schools, though others saw this as an opportunity.

[5] "STEM" stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

One participant noted, "There is no room for the arts, except the state still requires 1-2 credits for graduation. That is not to say that the art teachers are not phenomenal. They are only there because they have to be. They are not taken seriously in our school district. As things start to change, more emphasis is put on STEM. That pushes the arts further away." Yet another said, "STEAM is a really strong vehicle for program delivery with afterschool programs." There was also discussion about the need to schedule art instruction for concurrent days to improve student achievement, rather than the current model.

Some teachers embraced the integration of the arts into other subjects: "For Common Core to be successful, we have to integrate… It is crucial for core standards that we are integrated with the classroom teacher. "

There was discussion about awarding credit to students who engage in art activities outside of school in a concept called "extended learning," but someone expressed concern that this could lead to schools cutting back further on arts education.

It was noted that schools often function as community centers in rural areas.

The state's early childhood standards are in the process of being revised.

Current and potential areas of intersection with the arts:
A participant discussed the pivotal role that the State Arts Agency funding had played in her vocation: "I became an artist on the AIE [Arts in Education] roster myself, so I profited from a lot of work, based on grants and connections to the Arts Council; so it's been a huge part of my career."

The networking and inspirational value of the Arts Education Conference was reiterated by several contributors: "It's a wonderful moment where artists and administrators and teachers all combine and share the work, and find out what inspires us all."

Educators in the focus groups viewed the Arts Education Roster as a critical resource: "The roster is very valuable. I think that for people who are looking for artists to come into their schools . . . it's the first place many people are going to look."

Teachers and artists discussed impediments to applying for the artist residency program funding from the State Arts Agency, citing a lack of grant writing expertise among artists and limited time for teachers to research and write grants. One teacher said that the combination of administering the residency and writing the grant resulted in feeling "exhausted afterwards," while another cited the challenge of applying for a grant, managing an artist residency, while balancing a full teaching

load as very challenging: "I'm feeling like an island, trying to write the grant and direct [and figure out] . . . how to coordinate [a residency] as you are teaching".

Participants noted opportunities in educating future art teachers about the value of the State Arts Agency in teacher training and graduate programs. They also suggested linking individual schools to the State Arts Agency's homepage as a way to increase awareness about programs and services that are available to the schools.

Arts were noted as an important part of early childhood education. One respondent offered the example of teachers who use live music versus recorded music, stating that recorded music actually "limits language" development in preschool age children.

Participants expressed a need for greater advocacy for arts education, including creating awareness of the parity that arts in public schools affords; that if art is not available in the public schools, it will become an elitist activity.

The State Arts Agency Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program was seen as a valuable arts education resource. "This is a really important program in this state and our region," said one participant. Traditional artists are "holding age old secrets, and we don't want those secrets to die."

Current and potential relevance to State Arts Agency programs, services and grants:
Explore refinements to the Arts Education Roster, so that it better meets the needs of teachers: Participants expressed interest in having a live forum for showcasing artists on the roster so they could preview artists in advance. An alternative idea of video footage on the State Arts Agency's website was also embraced as a vehicle for previewing artists. Other artist roster refinements were also suggested, including offering advance information about upcoming artist residencies for students to digest pre-visit. A suggestion was made to provide teaching artists training on how to integrate their art form into curriculum and "frameworks" standards.

Consider offering shorter residency options and simplified grants for artist residencies: It was suggested that the State Arts Agency offer grant support for shorter, more manageable residencies, with a streamlined grant-writing requirements: "If there was a way of menuing options, or certain types of artists that can do these one, full-day visits to a school, and they cycle around and see three or four classes." A contributor suggested that one-day visits would also function as promotion for extended residencies.

Continue to offer networking events and conferences, such as the arts in education conference: This program was valued by participants, who cited it as inspirational.

Explore the possibility of establishing student achievement awards: A participant recommended creating more art "competitions"/rewards for successful students at the high school level.

Mobilize more advocacy for arts education: Participants suggested engaging principals as arts advocates, and inviting legislators to view artist residencies in action.