NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS: INTERVIEW RESEARCH REPORT

Maren Brown and Patricia Morrison
Maren Brown Associates
May 22, 2013

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **3**
Background 3
Methodology 3
Structure of the interview report 3
Summary of needs and trends 3
Summary of opportunities for the State Arts Agency 4
Summary of best practices and exemplars 4
Overall interview research observations 4
Acknowledgements 5
I. NEEDS AND TRENDS **6**
II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STATE ARTS AGENCY **10**
III. BEST PRACTICES AND EXEMPLARS **12**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background: This report summarizes the results of interview research conducted on behalf of the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts. Eleven in-depth interviews were held with regional and national experts who offered their thoughts into 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. The interviewees represented diverse disciplines that interface with the arts either directly or in significant ways, including experts in arts advocacy, creative economic development, traditional arts, health care, veterans services, immigrant and refugee communities, at-risk youth, and education (from Pre-K through higher education). The interviews were part of the information-gathering phase of the State Arts Agency's strategic planning process and were complemented by three planning retreats with New Hampshire State Council on the Arts' staff and/or Councilors, two surveys– one targeted to the interests and needs of New Hampshire organizations and schools and the other to artists--and nine focus groups and/or public forums. This report summarizes the results of the interview research.

Methodology: Each one-hour interview was held on the phone with one person, with the exception of one interview conducted with two individuals in the State Arts Agency's office. Interviewees were provided with a list of questions that probed previous connections with the State Arts Agency, the trends and needs they were observing in their respective fields, exemplary work they were witnessing, and how the arts—and more specifically, the State Arts Agency—could address the needs they described. Finally, interview participants were asked what they felt the State Arts Agency should pay the most attention to in the next five years.

Structure of the interview report: In addition to this executive summary, the results of the interview research are organized into three main parts: (I) needs and trends, (II) opportunities for the State Arts Agency in the next five years, and (III) best practices and exemplars.

Summary of needs and trends: Several needs and trends were identified by interviewees, including:

- There is a need to broaden access to arts participation and creation among underserved populations.
- Rural environments offer unique challenges in access to the arts.
- The health care sector is increasing in scale in New Hampshire as the population ages.
- There is growth in the recognition of the role of the arts in strengthening communities and fostering a sense of place.
- There are opportunities for experiencing art in unconventional venues, such as hospitals and healing centers.

- There is an increased need for afterschool and out-of-school arts opportunities.
- There is a general need for evidenced-based research and data in the arts.

Summary of opportunities for the State Arts Agency: Interviewees offered a multitude of suggestions for the State Arts Agency to enhance its impact in the state, which include:

- There are opportunities for the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts to develop mutually-beneficial strategic partnerships, particularly with unconventional and non-arts sector allies.
- Convenings, such as conferences and workshops, provide much needed networking opportunities for diverse constituencies.
- As resources diminish, the State Arts Agency needs to refine its current role as a funder.
- There is a need for more cohesive branding and marketing strategies to raise awareness of the value of the arts.

Summary of best practices and exemplars: Several exemplary programs, organizations, and initiatives were offered by interview participants to provide inspiration for the State Arts Agency, including those that represent exemplary programs in/for:

- Arts organizations and projects
- Immigrant and refugee community programs
- Educational partnerships
- Rural communities' models
- Other exemplars and resources

Overall interview research observations: The experts interviewed for this research offered new insights into opportunities for the State Arts Agency to increase access for the arts in New Hampshire, while also underscoring the importance of the State Arts Agency's core work in supporting the arts sector in New Hampshire.

Serving as a bridge between the arts in New Hampshire and other communities of interest emerges as a strong theme in the interviews, perhaps pointing to an enhanced role as convener for the State Arts Agency. For example, when considering how to address the need for greater youth development opportunities in the state, the arts emerge as an important part of a broader strategy to support immigrant and refugee youth, as well as working to prevent teen substance abuse. The State Arts Agency may have a role to play in bridging perceived divides between sectors. It may also wish to engage in selective partnerships that further coalesce these cross-sector coalitions.

Other observations emerged in the interviews that point to changing demographics in the state and the growth of the health care sector. It was observed that the arts could play a role in reversing the outmigration of younger residents by helping to build more vital communities that attract younger residents, particularly those with younger children.

As its resources contract, the State Arts Agency is challenged to maximize its impact within the state. Interviewees suggest several strategies to enhance the work of the State Arts Agency, ranging from marketing and branding efforts leveraged by social media, to more targeted grantmaking programs. Data on outcomes is also seen as an effective tool for advocating for the value of the arts in the state.

The observations of the interviewees significantly helped to guide subsequent focus group research, where some themes, such as youth development in the arts and veterans services, were explored in greater depth.

Acknowledgements: Interviews were conducted 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 are very grateful to those that willingly gave their time and expertise by participating in these interviews, including: Dr. Roger Brooks, Chair, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts; Eva Castillo, Director, New Hampshire Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees; Christine Dwyer, Senior Vice President, RMC Research; Joan Goshgarian, Executive Director, New Hampshire Business Committee for the Arts; Meri Jenkins, Program Manager, Adams Arts Program and Cultural Districts Program, Massachusetts Cultural Council; Mia Maegan Morrow, Music Therapist, National Endowment for the Arts' Operation Homecoming; Steve Norton, Executive Director, New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies; Erle Pierce, President of Pierce Public Affairs, LLC and Councilor, New Hampshire State Council on the Arts; Tym Rourke, Director, Program Department and Substance Use Disorders Grantmaking, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; Dan Sheehy, Director, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; and, H. Mark Smith, Program Manager, Youth Reach, Massachusetts Cultural Council.

I. NEEDS AND TRENDS

Each of the interview participants was asked to describe the trends and needs they observed in their respective fields. While the individuals represented a diverse cross-section of fields, there were strong threads of commonality between them. Below is a summary of the highlights of these conversations.

- **There is a need to broaden access to arts participation and creation among underserved populations.**
  - **There are pressing needs for the immigrant and refugee populations that could be addressed through the arts**. One interviewee noted a series of challenges confronted by immigrant and refugee communities in New Hampshire, including a chronic lack of employment opportunities, an imbalance of federal funds for refugees over immigrants, and a reliance on immigrant children to serve as English translators for parents, often limiting financial options for these children. According to this respondent, few programs support immigrant children in New Hampshire, and there is a strong negative bias against immigrants and refugees in the general population. This interviewee felt the arts could serve to uplift immigrant and refugee communities, both through positive artistic imagery and through celebrations of cultural heritage. It was noted that Manchester and Nashua have the largest immigrant populations in the state.
    - Media messaging around immigrants is predominantly negative. One interviewee noted that the arts could provide a more positive view, such as photographic billboards on the side of the road, featuring portraits of immigrants, or publicity campaigns highlighting the positive aspects of immigrant communities through the use of stickers for welcoming businesses. Publicity campaigns focused on highlighting the positive aspects of immigrant communities may be successful in New Hampshire. Dayton, Ohio and Shelbyville, Tennessee, as well as Michigan and Colorado all have launched successful campaigns.

> *"Positive messaging around immigrants is something that we really need. The arts could play an important role. Pictures say a lot more than words; images can be very powerful."*
>
> *Interview participant*

  - **Youth-at-risk would benefit from arts exposure and education.** Interviewees discussed the unmet demand for a comprehensive, coordinated care-management system for youth-at-risk. They noted that multiple barriers prevented access to the arts for these youth, including funding support, staff training, networking opportunities for care providers, and effective evaluation of impact. The arts were seen as a way to uplift

these youth. One interviewee suggested that opportunities for mentorships and apprenticeships in the arts would be helpful. It was noted that curriculum for the juvenile justice system is expected to have specific features that are defined as workforce development activities, such as a resume writing class. Arts activities that target youth in the juvenile justice system need to be designed to meet these requirements.

- **Participation in arts activities can help returning veterans, particularly those with PTSD and brain injuries, to adjust to life after active combat situations.** One interviewee noted that music therapy is a particularly effective method for veterans to release emotion and tell their story: "Have music therapy or art therapy in your interdisciplinary team; make it the norm, a standard program, just like speech therapy and all the others." Yet, it was noted that there is limited access and availability to art therapy opportunities statewide. A contributor offered examples of how music therapy can be used to address the needs of "returning warriors," such as using iPads to play instruments, or managing pain through video games.

"We're made to be creators as human beings. It's the best thing we could be doing in our lives . . . . A lot of soldiers, they feel isolated when they get home: nobody relates to them, nobody can understand what they went through . . . So, having a place where they can come together and meet other people that actually did the same thing they did - they're getting to have another sense of independence again, and getting to create again."

Interview participant

- **Rural environments offer unique challenges in access to the arts.**
  - **Because of transportation issues within rural communities, public schools are seen as a critical hub for rural youth who want to engage in the arts.** It was noted that there are equity and access challenges for youth in New Hampshire, particularly those that reside in the "North Country."
  - **There is a need to acknowledge the distinctions between an urban agenda for cultural development and a rural one.** One respondent noted that rural initiatives are often underfunded and initiated by individual artists, not through cultural organizations. Rural areas are unique spaces without downtowns, and as a consequence, there is a need for different constructs, such as clustering artists with the goal of attracting tourists to purchase the work (an example was given of an artist trail).
  - **Cultural districts need to be conceived differently in rural areas.** Should the State Arts Agency wish to implement a cultural districts program, it may consider the unique

needs of rural areas in its design. "In designing an initiative, part of your mandate is to serve the whole state, so with a [cultural] district program, in a place like New Hampshire, how do you do that?" It was suggested that "micro-districts" could lead to a regional strategy that is useful for rural cultural districts.

- **The health care sector is increasing in scale in New Hampshire as the population ages.**
  - **Health care is a growing industry in the state.** One interviewee commented that the health care sector is the only industry in New Hampshire that has grown, noting that there are 24 hospitals in the state, with over one billion in assets.
  - **New Hampshire's shifting demographics signal an aging population.** According to a 2012 study by the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies,[1] there has been an out-migration of 20-30 year olds from New Hampshire for the last 40 years.
  - **This trend towards aging could also signal less spending on the arts.** One individual observed, "As people age they spend less and less of their income on arts and going out to dinner and the like, and they spend more on health care and housing."
- **There is growth in the recognition of the role of the arts in strengthening communities and fostering a sense of place.**
  - **The social impact of successful arts endeavors can be profound**. As one interviewee stated: "Engaging in the arts is a way for people to become a part of our community." A contributor also commented on the value of creative placemaking: "Cultivating a stronger sense of place builds stronger local communities, because there's a stronger sense of identity that comes from these touchstones of commonality or community, and also gives people from outside the opportunity to know that there's some place special when they go."
  - **The arts are increasingly recognized as an economic driver in communities.** One interviewee noted that awareness of the economic value of the arts has "crossed a threshold."
    - While applauding the arts for their power in strengthening communities, one interviewee cautioned against suggesting that the arts will save money for other sectors.

"Certainly, the trend in our state, and I think many other places too, is for communities, cities and towns to really begin to understand—in a way that they hadn't before—what the role of the arts sector is…not only the economic implications, but the quality of life implications for their communities….It's clear that communities have crossed a threshold in understanding that."

Interview participant

[1] Barrick, D., Dennis, & Norton, S. (2012). From tailwind to headwind: New H trends. Concord, NH: New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies.

- **The exception to the demographic flight of younger people from New Hampshire is the in-migration of 30-year olds with children** (in-migrants are primarily drawn to good schools, low-housing costs, and a general proximity to Boston). There may be opportunities for growth in the arts sector by attending to the needs of these parents and children.

- **There are opportunities for experiencing art in unconventional venues, such as hospitals and healing centers**.
  - **Hospital waiting rooms, filled with contemporary art, can become museum-like experiences for visitors.** "I spend more time in the hospital – even when we were healthy, than I did at a museum. I was more highly exposed to Melissa Miller's work because I sat in this waiting room than the fact that she was exhibited at the Currier."
  - **There is a need for environmental design and renovation in hospitals/healing centers for veterans.** "They could relax their minds more and participate."
    - It was noted that percent for art funds could be used to hire veterans to create art installations in public buildings, "using curved and natural materials and colors…decorated with veteran's creations."[2]
- **There is an increased need for afterschool and out of school arts opportunities.**
  - **The afterschool sector continues to evolve and formalize, and there is a need for more out-of-school arts education.** In some cases, access to arts education has moved outside the realm of public schools, into afterschool programs and alternate venues such as music schools and theater camps.
- **There is a general need for evidenced-based research and data in the arts**.
  - **Economic research has provided a critical, supportive role in the development of awareness in the value of the arts and its impact on the quality of life.** One interviewee expressed a need for more economic research on the arts, noting that there is "little concrete information that's being provided to policy makers, which allows them to understand the impact of the arts."
  - **Evidence-based music therapy is increasingly recognized as an effective tool for rehabilitation.** Some music therapists are able to bill their music therapy to insurance companies, and as a result, are more likely to be supported by hospitals. One interviewee suggested that there is a need for general awareness of the importance of art therapists and, more specifically, recognition that it can be affordable for a facility to have an art therapist on staff.
  - **Public health resources have tightened for youth and require specific, evidence-based impacts.** The arts need more data to support the role of the arts in helping youth.

[2] Note that percent for arts funds do not permit this use in the state of New Hampshire.

II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE STATE ARTS AGENCY

Interview participants were asked to reflect on opportunities for the State Arts Agency to play a role in supporting the work of their field or to amplify the impact of their work in the state. Below is a summary of the highlights.

- **There are opportunities for the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts to develop mutually-beneficial strategic partnerships, particularly with unconventional and non-arts sector allies.**
    - **Educational community.** Schools are beginning to approach out-of-school arts providers for support throughout the school day, with the intent of decreasing discipline problems and increasing attendance, engagement, and leadership development. One interviewee suggested the State Arts Agency could help to network art, music, and dance therapists with various arts organizations in the state.
    - **Veteran's services.** There is a need for outpatient settings in local communities that offer therapy to returning veterans, with possibilities for community artists to be involved.
    - **Disability services.** Art therapists can work with individual artists and with teachers to amplify the impact of the therapeutic process for various constituency groups, including those with autism.
    - **Juvenile justice system.** According to one interviewee, a new state plan for the juvenile justice system is currently in development, with the intent of keeping youth out of the justice system or moving them on successfully. This will be focused primarily on increasing opportunities for community support of youth.
    - **Substance abuse networks.** There may be an opportunity for partnering with New Hampshire's 13 Regional Prevention Networks for substance abuse and public health, through which health care is delivered to at-risk youth.
    - **State agencies.** Partnerships with other state agencies, such as tourism, transportation, and others were suggested, even though the collaboration may not be immediately productive.
    - **Municipal governments.** Opportunities were perceived to be at the municipal level by one contributor, who advocated for the State Arts Agency to concentrate its focus on forging municipal partnerships. Others suggested partnering with community leaders and even forming an advisory board of these leaders to enhance the impact of the State Arts Agency's work at a local level.

> *"How do we ride on existing infrastructures that, while they may not be arts specific, give us a vehicle through which to do this work?"*
>
> *Interview participant*

- **Convenings, such as conferences and workshops, provide much needed networking opportunities for diverse constituencies.**

- **Conferences, regional exchanges, and the State Arts Agency's general role as an information resource are seen as strengths.** One interviewee referred to this as "sowing seeds."
- **Explore the possibility of virtual gatherings**, such as training webinars, as a cost-effective tool for networking and professional development.
- **Consider ways to bring together arts and non-arts sector constituents to dialogue about common areas of interest.** Interviewees noted that this is an unmet need.
- **There is a need for a national conference for state arts agency representatives to discuss their cultural districts programs.**

- **As resources diminish, the State Arts Agency needs to refine its current role as a funder.**
  - **Several suggestions were offered about how the State Arts Agency could strategically redesign its grantmaking role for greater impact**, including:
    - Shift the focus from operating support to sustaining an organization with larger grant awards to fewer organizations or by offering operating grants for a longer duration
    - Concentrate support on partnership grants.
    - Enhance accountability measures for grant recipients to amplify impact. One interviewee suggested that the State Arts Agency offer a menu of options that measure "operating-relevant outcomes," such as an increase in audience participation, a growth in the number of bequests, the development of new partnerships, among other indicators, to make sure that desired outcomes are met.
    - Consider a funding initiative for at-risk youth that teaches skills in how to use social media as a tool for art creation.
    - Consider grantmaking initiatives that encourage communities to think regionally in their creative economic development concepts, such as examining how to "cluster" small communities together.
    - Design a program explicitly connecting the arts with community development and job creation.
    - Develop a statewide arts award, focused on folk arts.
    - Consider how to connect the State Arts Agency's folk arts apprenticeships to arts education.
- **There is a need for more cohesive branding and marketing strategies to raise awareness of the value of the arts.**
  - **The arts can provide positive media messaging for various underserved communities**. A number of contributors suggested an important role for the arts as a tool for positive messaging for underserved communities. For example, billboard campaigns for immigrant and refugee populations were described by one respondent as

particularly effective in some states. Another suggested teaching high-risk youth how to create videos about their lives as a therapeutic tool, using social media to spread the word.

- **Micro-districts could offer marketing opportunities to promote the arts.** Cultural districts are one strategy for marketing regions to visitors both within and outside of the state. One interviewee noted that micro-districts offer the prospect of branding entire regions as arts destinations.
- **Support the use of social media to promote the value of art therapy in working with veterans.** One interviewee noted the power of social media in connecting the work of art therapists on a national and international level and saw a role for the State Arts Agency in fostering this effort on a state level specifically focused on veterans services.

- **Enhance marketing strategies to more effectively advocate for public funding of the arts in the state and to promote the work of the State Arts Agency itself.** Several contributors saw a role for more sustained and effective advocacy: "How do they get that story out there better?" Another felt the State Arts Agency should increase its focus on getting their message out through media - beyond their website. A suggestion was also made to establish a speakers bureau where State Arts Agency staff and volunteers could speak about the work of the organization at various community service groups like the Lions Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. Advocacy requirements were also discussed as an expectation of organizational support grant recipients, and it was recommended that the State Arts Agency give regular updates to legislators throughout the year.

> *"Advocacy is a constant beat of the drum."*
>
> *Interview participant*

III. BEST PRACTICES AND EXEMPLARS

The following organizations, programs, initiatives, and individuals were recommended to the State Arts Agency for their exemplary work. Brief summaries were provided by the contributors.

Arts organizations and projects:

- **3S Art Space**[3] A multi-arts center that is noted for their ability to thoughtfully partner with a diverse group of individuals and organizations, for their focus on a low-cost experience that features the work of young artists in the community, and for their desire to create a non-exclusive gathering space for the local community.

[3] http://www.3sarts.org/

- **Sharon Arts Center**[4] An arts organization that has started an initiative called Community Supported Art, modeled after Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture, as a way to connect artists with the buying public.
- **Boston Youth Arts Evaluation Project**[5] This project has created metrics for evaluating effectiveness of youth arts across five organizations, based on three domains: creative skills, expressive skills, and problem solving.
- **Massachusetts Cultural Districts Program**[6] This program is a revenue-neutral model based on legislation that can be examined and replicated.

Immigrant and refugee community programs:

- **Holy Cross Family Learning Center**[7] A group of retired teachers have volunteered at the Holy Cross Family Learning Center to teach students to prepare for citizenship exams. Class sizes are small, and the experience is noted as positive and affirming for participants.
- **Welcoming America**[8] An organization that fosters "respect and understanding" by "focusing on the receiving community, as opposed to all previous efforts that focused on the immigrants themselves" said one contributor.
- **Other model successes in immigrant and refugee communities**. Several organizations and initiatives were singled out for their exemplary work with immigrant and refugee communities: UCC Immigration Work Group, American Friends Service Committee, New Hampshire Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, and Granite State Organizing Project.

Education:

- **Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership**[9] This statewide afterschool partnership program brings together multiple constituencies that provide afterschool learning and social experiences for young people, several of which offer arts programming. Partners include boys and girls clubs, small community-based organizations, and extended-day programs, among others.

Rural communities:

- **Model successes in rural settings**. Three communities in Massachusetts were offered as rural exemplars: Provincetown Arts Association and Museum, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, and the Cape Cod Artisan Trail.

---

[4] http://www.sharonarts.org/
[5] http://www.byaep.com/1/Welcome.html
[6] http://www.masscultural council.org/applications/culturaldistricts_guidelines.asp
[7] http://www.hclearningcenter.org/
[8] http://www.welcomingamerica.org/
[9] http://www.massafterschool.org/

- **Statewide rural cultural district initiatives.** Four states were highlighted for their rural cultural district programs: Montana, Wisconsin, Colorado, and New Mexico.

Other exemplars and resources:

- **Dr. Michael Thaut**, **Colorado State University**. Dr. Thaut has done extensive research on sensory motor, cognition, and communication that has profoundly impacted the field of music therapy.
- **Walter Reed National Military Medical Center**. The facility has a neurologic music therapy program that uses an evidence-based approach.
- **Terra Rising Records**. This organization is making a documentary film, called Phoenix Rising, which follows music therapists around the state that could be used in advocacy.