

# 2013-2015

# Strategic Plan



NEBRASKA ARTS COUNCIL

# PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Every three years, the Nebraska Arts Council engages in a strategic planning process to create a dialogue with Nebraska's cultural community, and to align our efforts with the needs and priorities of the arts in our state.

Contained in these pages are the components of our 2013-15 Strategic Plan, which sets the direction for the NAC for the next three years. Our planning process included input from both a statewide public opinion survey, conducted by an independent marketing firm, and a statewide constituent survey. Additional information was also incorporated from public meetings held across Nebraska to gather information and refine our plan.

This plan was developed with input from NAC constituents, council members and staff. Methods for monitoring and evaluating each goal are also included to provide indicators that will measure progress on the achievement of each program priority.

The six agency priorities serve as the heart of our three-year plan. Our annual agency Top Ten list is created to identify specific activities to implement the agency priorities and build on the strategies for the next year. These are measurable items assigned to a specific team of staff members, with a timeline for completion.

A similar list will be developed for years two and three of the plan. Staff will report periodically to the council and to constituents on accomplishments and outcomes related to this work plan on an annual basis.

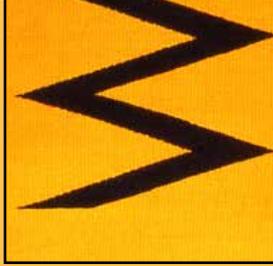
We look to this plan over the upcoming three years to give direction and focus to our mission of promoting, cultivating and sustaining the arts for the people of Nebraska.

## CORE BELIEFS

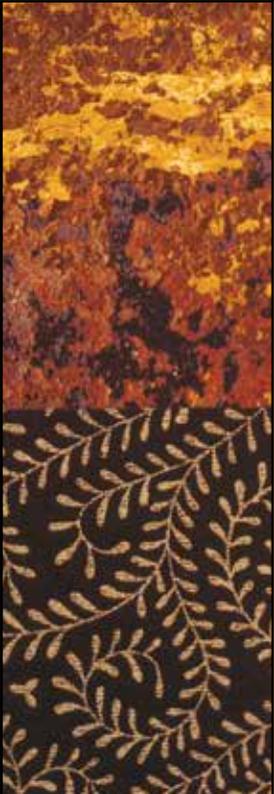
- All Nebraskans deserve access to the arts.
- The arts are a catalyst for promoting understanding among cultures.
- Arts education is basic to lifelong learning.
- The arts are essential to imagination, creativity and innovation.
- The arts drive creativity in its purest form.
- Engagement in the arts enriches quality of life.
- The arts are an integral part of a vital economy.
- Human, financial and technological resources sustain creative communities.

## PROCESS AND TIMELINE

- **STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT DECEMBER 2011**  
Staff meeting focused on analysis of our planning process, examination of external forces/issues, NAC mission, core values, goals and objectives.
- **STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT TO NAC BOARD (TOP TEN LIST) APRIL 2012**  
An evaluation of the previous year's Top Ten list was presented and new action items were discussed; resources were allocated with a timeline for completion.
- **ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY: ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IV RELEASED SPRING 2012**  
In partnership with Nebraskans for the Arts, economic data was collected about the arts impact on Nebraska and how it is applied to communities within our state, including the cities of Omaha and Lincoln, and Platte, Adams and Buffalo counties.
- **CONSTITUENT LISTENING FORUMS - OFFICE ON WHEELS SUMMER 2012**  
Small, informal group meetings in Sidney, Columbus, Hastings, Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha with close attention paid to holding forums in ethnic minority neighborhoods and ensuring rural forums are easily accessible to isolated communities.
- **LEGISLATIVE SURVEY OF ELECTED OFFICIALS FALL 2012**  
11 out of 49 state senators were new members of the Nebraska Legislature in 2012. This survey gauged awareness, appreciation and understanding of the NAC by both new and returning members of the Unicameral.
- **"WHAT NEBRASKANS ARE THINKING ABOUT THE ARTS" PUBLIC SURVEY OCTOBER 2012**  
MSR Group, an independent market research firm, contacted a randomly selected group of Nebraska households for a telephone survey. This served as a benchmark on arts attitudes providing a previously unavailable look at the general population's opinion about the arts.
- **CONSTITUENT SURVEY NOVEMBER 2012**  
This survey gathered info from NAC grantees, artists, arts organizations and arts educators regarding NAC grants, programs and services.
- **FORMATION OF PROGRAM PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES AND THE RESULTS WE WANT WINTER 2012-13**  
All of our various surveys, meetings and research were synthesized and compared to our previous Strategic Plan. Priorities were revised and a new final draft was assembled for public comment.
- **FINAL DRAFT ASSEMBLED AND DISTRIBUTED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT APRIL 2013**
- **APPROVAL BY NAC BOARD JUNE 2013**



The Nebraska Arts Council promotes, cultivates, and sustains the arts for the people of Nebraska.



NEBRASKA ARTS COUNCIL

NEBRASKA ARTS COUNCIL • 1004 FARNAM STREET • OMAHA, NE 68102 • 402.595.2122  
[WWW.NEBRASKAARTSCOUNCIL.ORG](http://WWW.NEBRASKAARTSCOUNCIL.ORG)

# MODEL LEADERSHIP AND VISIBILITY

# ENSURE ACCESS AND INCLUSION

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

In our public opinion survey, 66% of the respondents reported that they were aware of the NAC, and of those, 70% had a favorable opinion. This is particularly significant since these respondents were from households selected at random, and truly represent a cross section of Nebraskans. **In our workshops, meetings and through our constituent survey, we consistently hear that the NAC is an important resource for networking, guidance, information and assistance.**

Organizations tell us that NAC funding is seen as a seal of approval indicating high artistic and administrative capability.



*of those surveyed had a favorable opinion of Nebraska Arts Council.*

## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Build a definitive base of arts information and resources
- Convene arts leaders for dialogue to promote policy favorable to the arts
- Create interagency programs that promote cultural communities
- Gather and share information through meetings, forums and social media
- Expand the visibility of the NAC among the creative industries of Nebraska to create new opportunities for collaboration

## THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The NAC will be recognized as a statewide leader in the arts
- The NAC will be known as a source for connecting Nebraska's creative community
- The NAC will be a partner with other agencies and organizations to expand Nebraska's cultural community

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Data regarding participation in the arts is collected and analyzed in the NAC's grants management database. Distribution of grant funds is evaluated to encourage participation across Nebraska's three Congressional and 49 state Legislative districts. Nebraskans for the Arts, a citizen advocacy organization, works closely with the NAC to identify emerging arts leaders and expand NAC visibility. The number of visits to both the NAC social media sites and website are tracked to monitor the extent of our visibility.

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

The arts add to our overall quality of life. The overwhelming majority of our survey respondents felt that the arts contribute positively to their community's livability and **91% of arts groups in rural areas reported that NAC support was very critical.** The NAC recognizes its responsibility to help all Nebraskans regardless of economics or geography, especially those with disabilities. Access to arts facilities and events is vital for all, whether as visitors, patrons, artists, educators, performers, employees or volunteers. Additional advice and assistance is needed in sparsely populated areas and for specific underserved populations.



*of arts groups in rural areas reported NAC support very critical.*

## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Fund incentives for utilizing adaptive services for persons with disabilities
- Emphasize the importance of geographic diversity in grant distribution
- Actively seek out communities that have not used NAC programs and services
- Create effective tools and strategies to increase access to the arts
- Promote activities that ensure people with disabilities have greater access to the arts

## THE RESULTS WE WANT

- Barriers to active participation in the arts will be eliminated
- The arts will be celebrated and supported throughout the state
- Connections to new audiences will be developed

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

The NAC supports the work of local arts agencies and other community groups in rural areas, and tracks arts participation and grant distribution across Nebraska's 93 counties via our database. Onsite visits to underserved communities are part of the NAC staff's Office on Wheels program, providing technical assistance and outreach. Access by persons with disabilities to NAC-funded programs is a required component of the NAC online grant system, thus ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

# PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND ENGAGEMENT

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

The arts are a vehicle to promote tolerance and understanding in communities in transition, as ethnic populations continue to diversify Nebraska. Only 37% of constituents surveyed indicated that multicultural arts programs were highly evident in their community, yet 96% support NAC efforts to increase multicultural arts opportunities. **Survey results indicate that 84% of Nebraskans believe that the arts contribute in a positive way to diversity and welcome NAC assistance** in bringing communities together through the arts. Artists and organizations with diverse backgrounds consistently approach the NAC to ask for help in supporting their efforts.



## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Develop organizational capacity for culturally specific communities and organizations through targeted technical assistance
- Offer grant programs that identify, reach and actively engage underserved audiences
- Provide financial support and assistance to folk and traditional arts
- Cultivate arts leadership in diverse communities
- Advocate for diversity as key to vital and dynamic communities

## THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The arts in Nebraska will reflect the state's diverse communities
- Distinctive cultural traditions will be honored and preserved
- The arts will be a catalyst to engage communities

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Service to diverse audiences and underserved communities is part of the evaluation criteria for all grant programs. Goals for increasing the diversity of artists in the NAC's online Artist Directory are set and evaluated annually. Professional development opportunities are made available to ethnic-specific arts organizations to increase administrative skills such as grant writing, evaluation and fundraising.

# ELEVATE ARTISTRY AND CREATIVITY

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

The Nebraska Arts Council recognizes that individual artists need an infrastructure of support. Artists also desire additional opportunities for training and promotion of their work. **Lack of financial resources and exhibit/performance opportunities are seen as major challenges facing artists living and working in Nebraska.** Of the artists surveyed, 69% indicated that they engage in other non-arts work as a source of supplemental income. Artists in rural areas also cited isolation and lack of opportunities for networking and marketing as challenges.



## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Develop awareness of Nebraska's creativity and creative industries through marketing, awards and public recognition
- Provide support for professional artists through fellowships and professional development opportunities
- Increase visibility for artists and writers through the NAC website, exhibition venues and readings
- Create employment opportunities for artists through the Artists in Schools/Communities and Touring programs
- Promote public art through marketing, assistance and online gallery
- Manage the 1% for Art program via ongoing inventory and assessment

## THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The arts will be a recognized economic force
- Artists will have access to resources that will enhance their creative practice
- Artists and their creative work will be recognized and celebrated
- Communities will benefit from efforts to embrace and foster creativity

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Targets are set for providing a variety of training, marketing, exhibition and performance opportunities for artists. Participation by artists in NAC programs is tracked to determine the range and scope of artists being reached. A database of 1% artwork is monitored for the number of condition reports and assessments completed on an annual basis. Budgeted amounts for fellowships, AiS/C and touring grants are totally expended annually. Final reports of artist activity are submitted and evaluated for effectiveness.

# BUILD RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Financial support for the arts remains a major focus of the NAC. A recent arts economic impact study indicated that the arts are a \$174 million industry for the state supporting over 6,400 full time jobs. Public funds are an important part of a diverse mix including earned income, private donations, and corporate support necessary for the arts to sustain and grow. **Despite the national economic downturn, 73% of arts organizations' surveyed reported that attendance and participation has increased or stayed the same compared to three years ago.** The survey also revealed that funding and audience development remain the greatest challenges facing arts organizations.



## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Maintain the commitment to provide financial support and technical assistance to Nebraska's cultural infrastructure
- Assess NAC grant programs and respond to changing needs
- Assist the Nebraska Cultural Endowment in the cultivation of donors and resources to increase funds to the agency
- Cultivate partnerships with funders to expand community initiatives
- Advocate for increased resources from federal and state partners

## THE RESULTS WE WANT:

- Organizations will have increased opportunities for growth
- The NAC will be recognized as a source for providing networking and professional development
- Financial resources will be responsive to demand and sensitive to changing economic conditions
- Federal and state partners will provide consistent, reliable funding

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Funding across legislative districts is tracked to ensure that underserved areas receive NAC support to present high quality arts programs. NAC staff and board work in tandem with the Nebraska Cultural Endowment in raising private donations that leverage public funds. Evidence of grantee communication with elected officials is required in all final reports. Targets are set for providing a variety of training including marketing, strategic planning and organizational development to arts organizations statewide.

# EXPAND EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

Research in education continues to affirm the fact that all students benefit from the opportunity to learn about and experience the arts. **Eighty-six percent of those responding to the NAC's public opinion survey felt that it is important for all Nebraska schools to offer arts education.** The NAC constituent survey also revealed that instructional time and lack of visible community support are the greatest challenges facing arts educators. The arts were also cited as important to personal growth and continued learning by 73% of those responding to the public opinion survey.



## WHAT WE NEED TO DO

- Partner with national and statewide education leadership in support of Fine Arts Standards and other arts education initiatives
- Increase scope of professional development opportunities for educators and teaching artists
- Expand arts learning opportunities in community settings
- Advocate for the importance of arts as basic to the school curriculum and 21st century workforce readiness
- Challenge arts organizations to contribute expertise and resources toward educational programming

## THE RESULTS WE WANT

- The arts will be a core component of every child's education
- Arts learning opportunities will be widely available to all citizens in a variety of settings
- Arts education will be recognized as essential to 21st century workforce skills
- The next generation of Nebraskans will hold a deep appreciation for the arts, having had the benefit of arts education

## HOW WE WILL MONITOR AND EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS

Arts education programs are monitored for effectiveness through site visits, final reports, artist evaluations and participation numbers. Organizations that receive general operational support and Statewide Arts Education grants are evaluated based on their demonstrated commitment to arts education. School-based project grants are evaluated based on their understanding and use of educational learning standards.