

South Dakota

Here are a few thoughts from my South Dakota perspective based on what I was hearing:

1. From a very rural state perspective, the NEA is absolutely key to maintaining a strong, financial support mechanism for the arts. Pretty much all of our communities are "small" and "rural." The NEA through their partnership with the SAA (South Dakota Arts Council) is a foundational infrastructure in SD. We need to voice continued support for that model. Any ideas for restructure, MUST continue include the state/federal split!
 2. The NEA's continued focus on rural initiatives is very important to South Dakota. As new programs, new partnerships or system changes are considered, the NEA must continue to support rural communities on a greater level. In our state, the NEA and South Dakota Arts Council (thru NEA support) is often the "only game in town."
 3. In South Dakota, so many organizations are very small. Creating a more efficient and "user friendly" process to apply for a direct grant is a game changer here. Many of our orgs have little to no full-time staff, not to mention a full-time development officer, making direct NEA grants a seemingly impossible challenge.
 4. Arts & Humanities cabinet level position would be a powerful statement!
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New York

A) In looking at the current NEA structure (leadership positions, programs, services, etc.) what if anything do you suggest to the incoming administration that is working or needs improvement regarding that structure? *I think they should relook at the NEA State/Locals program and revamp its budget upward. Now is the time when our services are more needed and decision making should be decentralized to the states and localities that are more in touch with the sector and the gaps in a state, region or locality. The Incoming Administration should fund a major source of one time only funding to distribute to the performance venues and performing arts, AND artists, particularly our musicians at this time and if possible.*

B) Within the context of the current budget for the NEA what programs or services do you think would be essential or valuable to add to the NEA's portfolio? *Mentioned above - I think the NEA should regrant and involve the Leg (to some degree) in that process so that it's clear that XXX dollars will be coming into state and going into the field (so this doesn't mean that the increases go to the State Arts Council necessarily). through "local" decision making.*

Are their areas that subsequently might need to be trimmed? *I can't imagine that this agency who's funding has been more or less static since the early 1990's is not underfunded in every category I don't believe it has any fat to be trimmed.*

C) If the NEA's budget was increased, what new opportunities, services, program areas would you suggest be added or restored? *Fellowships and as stated above Performing Arts and Venues shuttered longest and WPA type opportunities particularly for musicians or any artist that can't really sell what they do on line.*

D) Do you think it valuable for the NEA to connect with, and if so how might the NEA connect with any of the Biden Administration stated priorities of Racial Justice, Worker Empowerment, Covid 19, Climate, Healthcare, Education, or the overarching theme of Build Back Better. *Extremely valuable to connect with the Biden agenda and perhaps think about their mission of artistic excellence and turn that around to see if their grant making is excellent at least as it pertains to the stated Biden Administration priorities.*

E) Is there anything else that you would like to add? [Good place to add information about appointing a new Chair of the NEA.] *The NEA needs a National Spokes Person of Name recognition to speak about arts in a manner that connects to every American. This perhaps suggests more of an entertainer or populist who's talent connects across social strata and ethnicity. This would more likely be a new Board member perhaps - especially if the Chair needs to strategically keep their head down.*

Minnesota

High priority items highlighted in blue.

A. Suggestions on Improvements regarding the effectiveness of NEA structure:

1. Leadership positions including the Chairwoman and program officers are woefully lacking representation of BIPOC folks. Even the front page of the website does not represent the diversity of this country.
2. Invest in Diversity, Access, and Equity resources to support organizations to expand their work in those areas.
3. What if the leadership of the NEA went to a working artist (aka Elizabeth Alexander at the Mellon) rather than a friend of the administration or a donor to the campaign?
4. What if there were a position in the NEA to look at equitable practices of funding reaching culturally specific and BIPOC artists?
5. Can we bring back grants to individual artists?
6. Explore what barriers exist to access NEA funding:
 - SAM Registration, Duns #, and [Grants.gov](#) process is confusing, is there enough training for new grantees? What can be simplified?
 - High artistic quality standards can be a barrier (is there too high of focus on quality of recording samples, for example?)

A. Opinions about existing services and programs:

We would like to note that Program Officers are highly responsive and extremely supportive.

1. There should be a question on the application about how people are addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. And the answer to that question should make a difference in the grant-making process.
2. Project grants are overloading staff with reporting. Is it possible to go to general operating funding?
3. Timing is challenging with two-step SAM/[Grants.gov](#) registration process. They recommend you submit a week earlier than the deadline to [Grants.gov](#), but that's not always clear on the website/through the process.
4. Long timeline of announcement of grant award—applying a year in advance of the award is challenging for planning and also an access issue.
5. Design application process taking into consideration the most marginalized applicants.
6. Could Creative placemaking be an individual discipline as well as a program?
7. We need to have transparency in terms of NEA partnership programs. How do you even know about them?
8. Keep up efforts in Arts Education support & access

A. Suggested New Opportunities:

1. A WPA like program that helps the economy and gives jobs to artists. We need to look at how individual artists are going to thrive. This program could also offer summer jobs to youth providing income, specific skills, audiences for the future.

2. **Is there a way to have the arts play a major role in the reconciliation of the political and social divides in this country?**

A. **Connecting to the various Biden/Harris priorities:**

Yes, those connections should be made....

- Racial Justice both by having someone on the staff devoted to looking at that within the NEA and fieldwide and by asking applicants to talk about how their project/work advances racial justice in their community - make it part of grantmaking criteria.
- Worker Empowerment by devoting time/attention/resources to independent artists - connecting other Biden/Harris priorities like fair wages, healthcare, student loan forgiveness to NEA work with artists.
- COVID - 19 - more relief for artists/gig workers in the form of direct payments and supplemental unemployment - and more relief for arts orgs to get through this period.
- Climate - 2 ideas - some funding for climate related artmaking and/or work that activates creatives to be part of cross sector climate initiatives.
- Education - audience development/arts participation by connecting arts participation (not just for large institutions) to public schooling - also student loan forgiveness for artists.
- Healthcare - universal for everyone

A. **Other Suggestions**

Recognize that artists should be on the team looking at the 30,000 foot view of how all of these things connect - helping to design interconnected strategies for Building Back Better.