

# WASHINGTON STATE ARTS COMMISSION

## NEA PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT APPLICATION NARRATIVE

### QUALITY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

In August 2007, the Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC) entered a planning process in a time of enthusiasm and possibility: the state budget appeared strong, staff and Commission were respected, and it seemed “strategic opportunities abound.” The plan was completed in May 2008.

As we write this application today, 18 months later, WSAC faces challenges that are requiring new thinking and tough decisions about our programs, services, and organizational capacity. In May 2009, the Commission approved a proposal to reposition WSAC for the 2009-2011 biennium, “a series of steps ... to advance the arts, demonstrate leadership, and channel our resources toward the highest level results.”

### ABOUT WASHINGTON STATE

**Land and Water:** The complex geography of Washington State includes highly varied landscapes and numerous microclimates: lush rain-drenched forests of the Olympic Peninsula, rolling prairie grasslands of the Palouse, remote San Juan Islands, and the hilly plateaus of the Okanogan Highlands.

Geographically, the state is large (66,582 square miles) and bisected by the “Cascade Curtain,” a mountain range that divides the state’s

more rural and agricultural east from the urbanized Interstate-5 corridor and the coastal west.

**People:** Washington is the nation’s 13th most populous state with 6,668,200 residents in 2009<sup>1</sup>. 2009 population estimates reveal that minorities comprise 23.8% of the state’s population, with the seventh largest Asian population and ranking 13th in the number of Hispanic/Latinos. 11% of the state population lives in poverty, 12% live in rural areas, and 22% live on the more rural eastern side of the state. Seattle, and King County in which it is located, comprise the economic and cultural center of Washington with nearly a third of the state’s population concentrated there.



*Washington State by Creative Vitality Index. King County has the highest regional index at 2.51.*

<sup>1</sup> [State Population Estimate](#), 2009, Office of Financial Management (OFM)

**Student Learning:** Washington State has strong policies in place to support K-12 arts education. We are one of 37 states that define the arts – including dance, music, theatre, and visual arts – as a core subject area. Currently, one credit in visual or performing arts is required for high school graduation; this year our State Board of Education passed a proposal that, if funded by the legislature, would increase the graduation requirement to two credits in the arts starting in 2013.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has clear goals for comprehensive, sequential, and standards-based arts instruction<sup>2</sup>. Assessing student learning in the arts has been a high priority for OSPI in recent years. Starting in the 2008-2009 school year, it became a requirement for schools to assess students in at least one arts discipline, and to submit an assessment implementation report to OSPI.

A new Superintendent was elected last year. While much of his current focus relates to statewide testing in reading, writing, math, and science, he has stated his commitment to arts education, and we look forward to continuing positive relations with OSPI staff. Staying connected to OSPI's continually evolving work on arts standards and assessments is an important aspect of our commitment to nurturing partnerships between arts organizations and public schools.

**The State Economy:** As of September 2009, the economy in Washington State appears to be entering the recovery stage; most measures of economic activity and revenue had already bottomed or are in the process of bottoming out<sup>3</sup>. However, the recovery in state revenue is expected to trail economic recovery, and could create a budget deficit in 2011 that matches or exceeds the deficit experienced during recent budget development.

Washington's economy is highly diverse: software, biotech, medical, aerospace, wholesale, retail, and creative industries play key roles and the state remains a leading national producer of apples, wheat, and timber. Agriculture and the food industry employ more people than any other business or industrial sector in the state. Tourism and related services are also important: in 2008 alone, visitors to Washington spent \$15.7 billion in the state, and accounted for \$1 billion in local and state tax revenue<sup>4</sup>.

**Arts and Culture:** Great arts organizations, bustling bookstores, a lively music scene, well-designed buildings, thriving art galleries – these indicators of the creative economy, evident in communities across the state, are tracked in WSAC's *Creative Vitality Index*. The Index shows Washington's creative vitality at 1.32 as compared to the baseline 1.0 for the nation as a whole. In 2008, 51% of Washington households reported attending a music, drama, or dance performance, not including school performances, and 47% reported visiting a museum, gallery, or art center<sup>5</sup>.

In June 2009, WSAC contracted with Helicon Collaborative to assess the impact of the recession on cultural organizations outside the Puget Sound area. This analysis, *Arts and Recession: The Economic Recession's Impact on Cultural Organizations in Washington State* (PDF), builds on previous assessments; in early 2009, WSAC was part of a coalition of arts funders who commissioned an analysis of the impact of the recession on Puget Sound cultural organizations. Related studies

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<sup>2</sup> [Essential Academic Learning Requirements \(EALRs\) in the Arts](#) (OSPI)

<sup>3</sup> [Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast](#) (PDF), June 2009, Economic and Revenue Forecast Council

<sup>4</sup> [Washington's Tourism Program](#) (PDF), 2009, Report to the Legislature, Department of Commerce

<sup>5</sup> [State Population Survey](#), 2008, OFM

included ArtsFund’s December 2008 survey<sup>6</sup> of arts organizations and Artist Trust’s, *Artists and the Economy Survey*<sup>7</sup>, of individual artists. Together, these studies show that most organizations experienced declines in income last year and expect further declines in the future (some more than 30%); attendance is holding steady, though ticket income is declining; the recession is highlighting the pre-existing strengths and weaknesses of arts organizations; adaptability and leadership distinguish organizations who are navigating successfully through the economic challenges; and most arts leaders see “the economic situation is an opportunity to rethink and adjust what we do and how we do it.”

## PLANNING PROCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“We envision a Washington where the arts are thriving and celebrated throughout the state – woven into the fabric of vital and vibrant communities.”* – [WSAC Vision](#), 2006

In August 2007, WSAC staff and Commissioners (four legislators and 19 governor-appointed citizens) launched a strategic planning process to build on current strengths and explore strategic opportunities. The Commission agreed this was not a “start from scratch” plan, but would build on the existing framework of past planning processes. In September, WSAC contracted with Lund Consulting to design and guide the strategic planning process. The Commission’s Interim (Executive) Committee served as the planning committee, working with the consultant and WSAC’s Executive Director. The planning process included five phases:

- Phase 1: Identify goals and research needs
- Phase 2: Conduct research and write report
- Phase 3: Findings and principles for recommendations
- Phase 4: Recommendations
- Phase 5: Write report and communication tools

Research and findings required examining existing information (demographics, economic trends, arts participation, and public policy); reviewing research by arts organizations (Artist Trust, Washington State Arts Alliance, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Americans for the Arts); an online survey of grantees<sup>8</sup>; constituent meetings; an assessment of grantee reports; and ten stakeholder interviews (conducted by our consultant) with key leaders from business, government, and education. “Top Line Findings” were presented to the Commission for discussion in February 2008, followed by a Commission work session<sup>9</sup> in April 2008 that shaped recommendations. The Commission approved the plan in May 2008.

Three **Strategic Pathways** formed the plan’s framework, with goals and strategies identified for each pathway:

**Education:** Pathway to learning in, through, and about the arts for children, youth, and adults. Directs funding and services to arts learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults to improve individual and community quality of life.

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<sup>6</sup> [State of the Arts: Impacts of Current Economic Conditions on Puget Sound Region Arts Organizations](#) (PDF), 2009, ArtsFund

<sup>7</sup> [Artists and the Economy Survey](#), 2009, Artist Trust


<sup>8</sup> [Strategic Planning Survey Report](#) (PDF), 2008, WSAC

<sup>9</sup> [Strategic Plan Process Review](#) (PDF), 2008, Lund Consulting

**Community:** Pathway to cultural vitality of communities throughout the state. Directs funding and services to strengthen communities and to provide arts opportunities for the public, including a wide diversity of peoples. Strategies along this pathway will nurture creativity and will contribute to quality of life, community aesthetics, and cultural vitality.

**Stewardship:** Pathway to vital artistic resources through development, conservation, and promotion. Directs funding and services to provide stewardship of the state art collection and to nurture and promote artists, arts organizations, and traditional and folk arts.

## AGENCY RESPONSE & CONTINUED PLANNING

A short version of the plan was published as a [Strategic Plan Brochure](#) (PDF)  <sup>10</sup> and distributed at Arts Day at the Capital (February 2009) and at numerous events and conferences. The plan was announced in eNews, and posted on our website – [Washington State Arts Commission 2009-2013 Strategic Plan](#) (PDF).

The plan shaped WSAC's request for additional funding for the 2009-2011 biennium, and was submitted in August 2008 to the Governor for consideration in the 2009 Legislature:

- \$300,000 to advance K-12 arts education, including new partnerships with the Education Service Districts, plus training, evaluation, and infrastructure.
- \$120,000 to develop arts opportunities in Washington communities, including a new initiative involving cultural planning to link the arts to local priorities.
- \$150,000 to support conservation and maintenance of the State Art Collection.

Shortly after this request was submitted, the state budget began to fall apart; the State of Washington faced a nearly \$8 billion shortfall in the 2009-2010 two-year budget, one of the largest in the country.

In August 2008, the Governor announced a hiring freeze, restrictions on out-of-state travel, contracting, and technology purchases; as a result, most WSAC staff cancelled plans to attend the 2008 NASAA meeting in Chattanooga. In the next few months, the agency lost \$86,000 in a mid-year budget cut. One bright spot, in November 2008, the Wallace Foundation announced a four-year, \$1.6 million grant to WSAC to develop a learning network to increase arts participation in the Seattle/Puget Sound areas, called the Arts Participation Leadership Initiative.

For the 2009 Legislative session, Commissioners organized for advocacy work. In February 2009, the Commission meeting agenda was restructured as a discussion facilitated by Lund Consulting (who had guided our planning process), preceded by a report on the economic pressures on the states, state arts agencies, and the arts.

The Legislature adjourned in May, leaving WSAC with a 26% budget cut and reducing our staff from 17.6 to 15.1 full-time equivalents. By then, the WSAC's Executive Director had worked with the Interim Committee and staff to shape a proposal, grounded in the Commission's February 2009 discussion and the still-new strategic plan, for [Repositioning WSAC](#) (PDF) – "to advance WSAC priorities with reduced resources, and to increase the relevance, accountability, and efficiency of this agency." The proposal was unanimously approved by the Commission and continues to guide the difficult decisions before us.

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<sup>10</sup> Items with a folder icon are included in the Supplemental Material Binder

Included in the proposal:

- Focusing on priorities
  - Make smarter grants to arts organizations and arts projects.
  - Target community investments to support quality arts experiences, connect the arts with local priorities, and leverage local support for the arts.
  - Sustain a strong commitment to K-12 arts education.
  - Shape policies and processes for the Art in Public Places program to enhance the public value of the State Art Collection, minimize future maintenance needs, and preserve the State's investment.
- Strategic approaches
  - Rethink how we use technology (including grantmaking, networking, and documentation).
  - Maximize impact of Wallace funded Arts Participation Leadership Initiative.
  - Establish a promotions plan.
  - Pursue internal efficiencies.
  - Reduce Commissioner meeting expenses; revise meeting schedule to include fewer in-person meetings and convene two webinar meetings.

To better focus on our core activities and services, we are reducing program emphasis in Folk Arts and Community Arts Development. We are not eliminating our involvement in these areas, but making changes to staffing and structure to better advance the arts and ensure the relevance of this agency. Effective October 1, 2009, three current positions are being eliminated: Financial Analyst, Community Arts Development program manager, and Folk Arts program manager. Fiscal operational support will now be provided through a new partnership with another state agency, and an agency re-organization is underway that includes adding two new multi-tasking positions: a full-time Program Manager with supervisory responsibility for a newly established team that includes arts education, grants to nonprofit organizations, folk and traditional arts, and other community services; and a part-time Community Projects Manager position.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WSAC's strategic planning continues to shape agency investments in order to advance and support arts and culture in Washington State.

### ARTS EDUCATION

The education pathway demonstrates WSAC's commitment to learning in, through, and about the arts. Our key arts education goals are to support high quality and effective arts education programs for all K-12 students across the state through community-based arts learning partnerships; to develop the arts teaching workforce of classroom teachers and teaching artists; and to promote access to quality arts education for young children.

**Investments in Arts Learning:** Our "flagship" arts education investment is through our [Community Consortium](#) grant program, and the smaller [First Step](#) grant. These grant programs support community-based partnerships with shared goals around expanding and improving in-school arts education. The partnerships include schools and arts organizations at their core, with broad buy-in from other community partners such as local arts agencies, teaching artists, district leaders, parent/family groups, consultants, and local businesses. These grants support arts teaching and learning in K-12 public schools, require alignment with Washington State arts standards, and

push for sustainable and systemic change in local school districts. This grant program was cited in the recent RAND publication, *Cultivating Demand for the Arts*<sup>11</sup>, where it was noted as a particularly rigorous and comprehensive example of a state-funded arts education partnership program.

In addition to the direct funding, consortia grantees have received ongoing support through an annual convening, designed to foster a growing learning community. The convening provides peer learning and professional development, as well as an opportunity for WSAC staff and grantees to communicate in person and build stronger relationships.

The Community Consortium grant program is in a period of some transition. After a decade of success with this model, we are addressing some key questions: namely, the classic dilemma of sustained support for successful, long-term (8+ years) grantees vs. seed money for start-ups that allow more frequent redistribution of our resources. Over the past several years, we have explored these issues with the help of consultants and have engaged our long-term grantees in focus group discussions and interviews. Several changes have already been implemented: beginning Fiscal Year 2009, we increased expectations for more experienced grantees. Grantees who have been funded for more than four years must now demonstrate assessment of arts learning increases; grantees funded for eight or more years must allocate a portion of their WSAC funding to support “knowledge sharing” activities, wherein concerted efforts are made to communicate about their work outside of their core partnership. In Fiscal Year 2010, all Consortium grants were awarded on a consistent, two-year funding cycle. In the next funding cycle, we will implement the more significant step of this transition: moving towards a “bell curve” model of funding, in which long-term grantees will not lose eligibility for funding, but we will decrease the maximum amount for which they can apply, which serves our twin goals of continuing to support successful partnerships while freeing up money to serve other areas of the state.



*Student Participant at Jack Straw Productions, a Community Consortium grantee.*

Several years ago, we initiated a small Professional Development Support (PDS) mini-grant program that is specifically for our AIE community. Only key partners on a consortium grant, or members of our Roster of Teaching Artists, are eligible to apply. Through the PDS grant, we are building the capacity of artists, arts professionals, and teachers who we already know are committed to strong arts education practice.

Although our core AIE program has focused on K-12 schools, we have started to explore our role in the early learning (“birth-to-five”) community. In 2008 we initiated a two-part project: the first part involved a contracted researcher who conducted an environmental scan and literature review to help us consider our potential roles in supporting the arts in early learning. As a result of this work, we initiated a pilot project in 2009 to provide arts-focused professional development for early childhood educators. This project is led by Arts Impact, recipients of multiple U.S. Department of Education “model development and dissemination” grants, as well as a long-time community consortium grantee. This pilot project, and its documentation and evaluation, are funded with NEA funds.

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<sup>11</sup> [\*Cultivating Demand for the Arts: Arts Learning, Arts Engagement, and State Arts Policy\*](#), 2008, RAND Research in the Arts

Additional ways in which the Arts Commission has expanded its leadership role in, and connections to, the arts education community include:

**Statewide Research:** We are nearing completion on our second round of research<sup>12</sup> to assess the state of arts education in Washington State public schools. Our [Arts Education Research Initiative \(AERI\)](#) was first launched in 2004–2005, and was developed to help us learn more about what’s working in our state, where we can improve, and how multiple stakeholders can work collaboratively to provide high-quality arts education for our state’s students. This initial project was intended as a baseline report, and we were eager to pursue a follow-up study.

Working with two contractors, and informed by meetings and support from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Association of Washington State Principals, ArtsEd Washington, and other stakeholders, we developed a new survey and solicited responses from school principals from late fall 2008 through late winter 2009. Site visits were conducted at nearly 40 schools around the state to provide quantitative data and add further depth to the survey reports. At the time of writing this narrative, the full 75+ page Research Report is being finalized, and work has begun on developing two shorter publications that will highlight findings and focus on policy opportunities. These publications will be released in early 2010, and will be distributed to all 295 of our school districts, legislators, our grantees, and other key stakeholders and partners in arts and education. The first AERI report helped focus energies around some common goals and common language; we hope to build on that work with this second effort, and use it as a catalyst for conversation with decision-makers around the state.

**Arts Education Alliance Partnership:** ArtsEd Washington, our state’s Kennedy Center-affiliated arts education alliance, is a key partner for us; this partnership was formalized with a Cooperative Partnership grant that has been funded since Fiscal Year 2008. Our funding supports ArtsEd Washington’s efforts to expand their statewide reach, to coordinate information and activities around our state’s Arts Education Month, and to support the AERI through community conversations and messaging with key stakeholders. Our AIE Program Manager serves as an *ex officio* board member for ArtsEd Washington, and works closely with their Executive Director on a number of collaborative projects.

**Teaching Artist Support:** In 2007, we retired an early version of our teaching artist roster and launched our new online [Roster of Teaching Artists](#), with the goal of identifying and promoting those teaching artists who were most experienced, skilled, and well-suited for the demands of working in the K-12 environment. We have refined the guidelines and the evaluation criteria in each subsequent year, to concentrate on teaching artists who are highly skilled and experienced in their art form, and knowledgeable about state standards and assessing student learning in the arts. We continue to be engaged in the development of a Teaching Artist Training lab that we hope to offer to all of our grantees in the coming years. Our AIE manager has been involved as a local advisor and we provided some initial funding for the Teaching Artist Research Project (TARP), led by Nick Rabkin at the University of Chicago, which is including the Seattle/Tacoma region in its national survey.

**National Leadership:** Our Arts in Education Program Manager is a current member of the Arts Education Advisory Group for NASAA, and is serving as co-chair in 2009. In this capacity, she has played a key role in the collaborative planning process for the Arts Education Managers’ annual

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<sup>12</sup> [AERI Draft Excerpts](#) (PDF), 2009, WSAC

Professional Development Institute (PDI). For this year's PDI, she was particularly involved in planning and implementing the orientation session for new AIE managers, and a session about the NEA's Education Leaders' Institute.

## UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

WSAC defines underserved as communities or populations that are geographically isolated, economically disadvantaged, ethnic, and/or people with disabilities. Key efforts include:

**Project Support:** Applications to WSAC's Project Support program are reviewed by staff to determine if they are working in/with underserved communities and are therefore eligible for underserved funding. In Fiscal Year 2009, WSAC provided \$63,220 in NEA Challenge America funding through Project Support grants to support such projects, including audio description of theater programs through Arts and Visually Impaired Audiences (AVIA); the Asia Pacific New Year Celebration in Tacoma; and a "Sagebrush Celebration" of western music, cowboy poetry, and Native American drumming in the small central Washington town of Omak.

**Arts Participation Initiative:** To build the capacity of arts organizations in underserved communities, WSAC established the Arts Participation Initiative (API) in 2002 with funding from our participation in the Wallace Foundation's START Initiative; additional support was provided by the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and the NEA. The program offers multi-year grants, emphasis on evaluation, and focused training to build capacity.

[\*Building Strong Communities Through the Arts\*](#) (PDF) describes the 15 organizations from the first three years of participation. A National Assembly of State Arts Agencies' "State Spotlight" article, [\*Engaging Washington Communities through the Arts\*](#) (PDF), describes the API's impact in Wapato, a small town in south central Washington State, where our investment contributed to economic and community development, and diverse cultural participation. This project was also presented at the Americans for the Arts Convention in Seattle in 2009.

API supported 41 organizations in its nine years, but will be discontinued after Fiscal Year 2010 due to budget cuts. We intend to continue the capacity building through inclusion of these organizations in training as part of the Wallace funded Arts Participation Leadership Initiative.

**Accessibility:** To expand access to the arts for artists and audiences with disabilities, WSAC established an advisory team of people with disabilities. Since 2002, the Commission membership has included one person with a disability, thanks to active recruitment and good support from the Governor's office. In partnership with Artist Trust, VSA Arts of Washington, and other colleagues and experts, WSAC has provided workshops for artists with disabilities and for arts leaders; developed and distributed information to guide assessments and meeting planning; and provided training for staff, board members, and artists.

In 2008, the Commission approved an accessibility complaint procedure that is now referenced in agency publications but to date has not been used by any complainant. WSAC has provided scholarships and other support to enable persons with disabilities to attend the statewide Cultural Congress, an annual professional development retreat organized by our cooperative partner, the Washington State Arts Alliance Foundation.

## FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

The Folk Arts Program was created in 1991 to document, identify, honor, and assist in the perpetuation of traditional and folk arts in Washington State.

Key efforts include:

- Folk Arts [Fellowships](#) recognize outstanding traditional artists for their contributions to their culture and community. The unrestricted awards are based solely on recognition of past and continuing merit in maintaining cultural traditions.
- Folk Arts [Apprenticeships](#) help communities preserve their traditional arts by providing stipends to master artists instructing students of their choosing.
- The [Folk & Traditional Arts in the Parks Program](#), a partnership with the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and WSAC, brings traditional music, dancing, and art-making to Washington State Parks.
- [With Our Hands: World Folk Art Traditions of Washington](#), a ten-month partnership with the Washington State History Museum, featuring artwork from past WSAC folk art award recipients and a two-day festival that included opportunities to participate in Japanese Kabuki dancing, Chinese knot tying, Yakama bead working, Latvian embroidery, and much more.



*Tloke Nahuatl Aztec Dancers at the Wenatchee Confluence State Park Latino Folk Arts Fiesta part of the Folk Arts in the Parks program.*

WSAC is not seeking support under the folk and traditional arts partnership component this year.

#### OTHER LEADERSHIP & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

**Wallace-Funded Arts Participation Leadership Initiative:** In November 2008, WSAC was selected by the New York-based Wallace Foundation to partner in a four-year program of learning activities in the Seattle/Puget Sound region. WSAC will receive \$1.6 million to implement these programs, including a series of forums, workshops, research, and technology applications designed to develop the skills and expertise of leaders of arts organizations. Themes include building arts participation, especially among youth, young adults, and diverse populations, and expanding access to the arts through new technologies. We are contracting with a team of consultants led by Jerry Yoshitomi to develop the learning framework that will include speaker forums, workshops, and online tools.

**WESTAF:** WSAC is a member of WESTAF (Western States Arts Federation), and participates in numerous initiatives, including policy seminars and technology initiatives. Kris Tucker, WSAC's Executive Director, is on the WESTAF board of directors. Recently, WSAC and WESTAF collaborated on a combined online application process for the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act stimulus funding.

**Arts Northwest:** Supported by the state arts commissions in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, Arts Northwest holds the region's premier touring and presenting conference, showcasing artists, and facilitating scheduling and training. This cooperative partnership extends WSAC's support for artists, performing groups, and statewide presenters beyond the scope of our direct programs.

**Artist Trust:** Founded in 1987, Artist Trust is a not-for-profit organization dedicated exclusively to supporting Washington State artists working in all creative disciplines. WSAC's Cooperative Partnership with Artist Trust provides much needed support for artists in Washington state. For more than a decade, they have administered [Artist Trust/WSAC Fellowships](#) to individual artists, and served as an important partner in providing training, resources, and support for artists. The Washington Artists Health Insurance Project (WAHIP) is an ambitious effort to forge new strategies to improve artists' access to health insurance in Washington State. WAHIP is a pilot project of Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) in partnership with Artist Trust, and supported with funding from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Ford Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and WSAC.

**Heritage Caucus:** Organized in 1990, the Heritage Caucus is a bi-partisan gathering of state legislators and other elected officials; staff from state heritage, arts, and cultural agencies, and nonprofit organizations; and citizens interested in supporting Washington's culture, heritage, and the arts. The Heritage Caucus is co-chaired by Republican and Democratic legislators and co-staffed by the Washington State Historical Society and WSAC. The Heritage Caucus meets weekly during the Legislative session to discuss heritage, arts, and other cultural and recreational issues.

#### IMPACT: SOME KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Revising Grants to Organizations:** Research and findings from our *2009-2013 Strategic Planning* process documented an increase in the number of arts organizations, along with a rising cost of business, and the need for more services to underserved areas of the state. The WSAC budget for grants had been static since a 19% cut in 2003, and our 2007-2008 planning process confirmed that WSAC operating support grants were too modest to have the impact intended. Outside of a few major cities and counties, there is little government or private support for arts activities. The Commission agreed to make significant changes in key grant programs for the 2009-2011 biennium to achieve "greater statewide impact while maintaining efficiency, user-friendly procedures, and panel processes that involve constituents and result in fair decisions." Revisions were finalized in November 2008 after rigorous discussion by a task force and Commissioners, as well as focus groups and surveys. Prior to the application deadlines, the changes were communicated through e-mail and our e-newsletter, in two workshops, and a webinar. Key changes:

- Discontinue the formula-funded Institutional Support Program, a closed category. Establish a new program of two-year public benefit grants, distributed in two categories (Large Arts Institutions and Midsized Arts Organizations).
- Applicants must now identify the specific service that WSAC will fund and how this will be evaluated. Examples include expanding the diversity of participants, preserving and caring for publicly held arts resources such as artworks or cultural heritage, and enrichment activities or learning projects for out-of-school youth.
- Add geographic representation as a review criteria (as well as artistic merit, management capability, and public benefit).
- Transition to an online application platform. This was delayed in 2008 by state budget and contracting freezes, but has been resumed to be completed in the coming year.

**Art Jobs Support:** WSAC received \$323,700 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, to provide one-time grants to preserve jobs in the arts. WSAC worked with WESTAF, the Office of Arts and Culture (City of Seattle), and 4Culture (King County Cultural Development Authority) to coordinate guidelines. 98 applications were received and 24 funded.

**Improvements and Efficiencies for Art in Public Places:** New efforts have improved WSAC's processes for acquiring public art, and our ability to provide stewardship for one of the nation's largest public art programs. WSAC's [Art in Public Places Program](#), established in 1974, facilitates the acquisition, placement, and stewardship of artwork in state-funded building projects throughout Washington State. ½ of 1% for Art funds are generated by new construction projects in state agencies, community colleges, universities, and public schools. The State Art Collection now includes more than 4,600 artworks, including two- and three-dimensional, free-standing, and integrated artworks.

Passed by the Commission in 2006, [ArtCare: A Collections Management Framework for the Washington State Art Collection](#) (PDF) is a public document that outlines collections management policies and procedures, including those on artwork conservation, deaccession, and rights and reproductions.

A successful request to the Legislature in 2007 allowed WSAC to establish a half-time art Conservation Technician position to provide more consistent and long-term oversight, planning, and cost-efficient solutions to technical issues of artwork care and maintenance. WSAC has since added a conservation review as part of the art acquisition process to ensure standards for fabrication, installation, and materials, so that artworks are effectively maintained and conserved. In 2008, WSAC revised our artist commission contract and interagency agreement for agencies hosting sites for the State Art Collection to reflect best practices, address the Visual Artists Rights Act, and focus on stewardship.

Also in 2008, WSAC transitioned to a new public art database for collections management and acquisitions. For the first time, WSAC accepted applications for our Public Artist Roster, a roster of professional visual artists eligible for ½ of 1% for art projects, in digital format via an online application. Our move to digital was positive. Given today's technology, more artists are working with digital images and the online competition resulted in a record number of new applications, with over 330 received by the June deadline. Additionally, the move to digital has streamlined acquisition processes – allowing project managers to display hundreds of artists' images with the click of a mouse – as opposed to hauling around bulky slide projectors and two suitcases full of slide carousels. Within the next two years, digital images of the State Art Collection will be available online, allowing visitors to search by location or artist.

**Poet Laureate:** In December 2007, Governor Gregoire named Samuel Green to serve as [Washington's Poet Laureate](#) for a two-year term. This was the result of a multi-year effort of a coalition including WSAC, Humanities Washington, the Washington Poets Association, poets and poetry lovers, and key legislators. Among a long list of activities, Green has worked with students in classrooms across the state, judged the state finals for *Poetry Out Loud*, read at the Washington State Library, opened the Washington State House and Senate legislative sessions with a poetry reading, and provided keynote readings and workshops throughout Washington.

#### If You Had To

If you had to make the quill  
pen in the old way, stripping  
the feathers, cutting the well,  
splitting & shearing the tip  
off clean; if you had to grind  
the ink, holding the cake  
straight against the stone,  
circling until your wrist ached  
to get the proper tone of black;  
would you wonder, as you sat before the paper  
what sort of poem was worthy of your labor?

"If You Had to" by Samuel Green from his book  
*The Grace of Necessity*, 2008. Used with permission.

**Cultural Tax District Seminar:** In February 2008, WSAC and WESTAF convened a two-day seminar to discuss the structure and impact of cultural taxing districts. The agenda included presentations and facilitated discussion about existing and proposed tax districts, intended and unintended consequences, practical aspects and policy/theory perspectives – including an opening presentation on regionalism by David Thornburgh, former executive director of the Pennsylvania Economy League. The seminar was prompted by an effort to establish a cultural tax district to benefit the Puget Sound region, similar to the Denver-area Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. The Puget Sound effort has continued, although its prospects are uncertain; the proceedings<sup>13</sup> of the seminar were distributed and discussed in a September 2009 meeting with Seattle-area stakeholders.

## EVALUATION

Numerous evaluation effort are named above, including those related to strategic planning, the Arts Education Research Initiative, the Creative Vitality Index, the Arts and Recession assessment, and ongoing evaluation of WSAC grants and other programs and services. Some additional evaluation efforts include:

**Priorities of Government:** WSAC participates in the statewide Priorities of Government (POG)<sup>14</sup> process, a results-based budget prioritization of state activities that includes culture and recreation among the state’s top ten priorities. WSAC is part of the culture and recreation “results team” that also includes State Parks and Recreation Commission, State Historical Society, Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and Fish and Wildlife Commission. Although the state budget crisis resulted in cuts to all agencies in this team, the POG process and resulting collegiality gave higher visibility for WSAC’s investments, and built broader understanding of the public value of the arts among the Governor’s budget staff and state agency colleagues.

**Performance Measures:** In spring 2009, agency performance measures were evaluated by the Office of Financial Management. The resulting report<sup>15</sup> found that:

The Washington State Arts Commission has recently taken significant steps to improve the relevance, timeliness, and comparability of its performance measures. Some systemic problems may prove difficult to resolve, and the work of the agency poses some challenges in establishing strong performance measures: Budget/policy development audiences are primarily interested in results (outcomes). There are few immediate outcome performance measure options for an agency whose purpose is to “...cultivate a thriving environment for creative expression and appreciation of the arts...” Therefore, the best default measures of agency performance track subjects like participation, progress toward completion, efficiency, and stewardship of existing artworks.

**Stewardship of the State Art Collection:** A graduate student from Seattle University surveyed and interviewed colleagues in nine Washington school districts that house works from the State Art Collection, as well as researched other public art collections to establish best practices for

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<sup>13</sup> [Perspectives on Cultural Tax Districts](#) (PDF), 2008, WESTAF

<sup>14</sup> [Priorities of Government](#), OFM

<sup>15</sup> [Budget Activity Assessment: Washington State Arts Commission](#) (PDF), 2009, OFM

artwork care. With this new information we have refined our policies and communications tools regarding stewardship of artwork in public school settings.

**Documenting Public Value:** A graduate student from University of Washington undertook a study of methods that WSAC and other state arts agencies use to document the value of grants, and included recommendations for how WSAC can improve reporting requirements to better define and quantify the value of public funding for arts organizations.

## COMMUNICATION


In addition to publications and communications tools noted elsewhere in the narrative, WSAC relies on a variety of tools to distribute information, build networks, and promote the arts.

**Website:** Since 2004, the agency website ([www.arts.wa.gov](http://www.arts.wa.gov)) has experienced significant and steady growth in the number of unique visitors. WSAC's website is a vital link with constituents, providing grant information for applications, opportunities for artists and arts organizations, and a wealth of arts and cultural information. Continued enhancements include an online gallery feature; one example, [Celebrating 30 Years of Public Art](#), highlights an artwork from each of the first 30 years of the collection.

**Film:** [American Masterworks](#), funded by NEA American Masterpieces, is a series of five short films, available on our website, that focus on the excellent arts and artists of Washington: traditional Mexican musician Salvador Baldovinos, multi-media artist Ross Palmer Beecher, sculptor Philip McCracken, potter Allen Moe, and traditional Cambodian dancer Moly Sam. Another film, [Walla Walla Bound](#), documents the creation and installation of two artworks by artist Buster Simpson for the State Art Collection on the campus of Walla Walla Community College.

**eNews:** WSAC sends a monthly [eNews](#) newsletter to over 2,700 subscribers throughout Washington and is also published and archived on our website. eNews is a great resource for arts opportunities, events, and general information.

**Arts and Recession:** In September 2009, following the release of the Arts and Recession survey findings mentioned above, we held an online interactive conference call - [Arts and the Recession Webinar](#) (PDF) with constituents from around the state. The webinar featured an online presentation and discussion of the effects of the recession on Washington arts organizations.

**Creative Vitality Index:** With WESTAF and the Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, WSAC developed the [Creative Vitality Index](#) (CVI) , a tool that has expanded our ability to discuss and demonstrate the economic impact the arts have in our state. Using readily available, inexpensive data, the CVI tracks arts-related employment and community participation in the arts for the state, the city of Seattle, and twelve workforce development areas. The CVI has been a valuable tool in discussions with the Governor's office, legislators, and other state government agencies, providing a framework of understanding that allows WSAC to participate in emerging conversations about the creative economy. The CVI is now being used by Oregon; Denver, Colorado; and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, among others. WESTAF continues to manage this project.

**Calendar:** In partnership with the State Department of Printing, WSAC produced a poster sized [2009 – 2010 Wall Calendar](#) that features photos of artworks from the State Art Collection, students and their projects from our Community Consortium grantees, and events from our organizational grantees. The posters were distributed to over 60,000 Washington state employees.

BUDGET – FISCAL YEAR 2011

Category, Program or Initiative	Description	\$ Amount	Legislated?	Education?	Underserved?
Arts in Education Grants	Community Consortia and First Step grants	\$527,110		Y	Y
Operating Support Grants	Grants to arts organizations and statewide partnerships	\$637,700		Y	
Project Support Grants	Grants to support specific arts events	\$120,090		Y	Y
Art Jobs Support Grants (ARRA)	Support arts jobs, evaluation and documentation	\$10,000			
Arts Leadership Initiative	Arts participation, changing demographics and technology	\$384,475			Y
Local Investments	Grants, services and community collaborations	\$143,200			Y
Folk Arts	Supporting folk arts	\$55,000		Y	Y
Art in Public Places	Acquisition	\$1,872,000	Y		Y
	Conservation	\$50,000	Y		Y
Poetry Initiatives	Poetry Out Loud	\$20,000		Y	Y
	State Poet Laureate	\$13,000	Y	Y	
Technology Tools	Creative Vitality Index, website enhancements, online grants, technology applications	\$10,000			
Public Relations and Promotions	Promotions, communications projects, Governor's Arts & Heritage Awards	\$30,000			Y
Regional and National Alliances	Fee support to AFTA, NASAA and WESTAF	\$38,523			
Commission Support	Commissioner travel, meeting expenses, etc.	\$12,000			
Agency Staffing, Administration, and Program Expenses	Staffing, administrative costs, goods and contractual services, travel and equipment purchases	\$1,491,842			
<b>AGENCY TOTAL</b>		<b>\$5,414,940</b>			