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## **Americans for the Arts' State Arts Action Network**

**Executive Summary:** A network of 73 statewide organizations, the State Arts Action Network (SAAN), works to advance a national grass-roots movement to support arts and arts education across the country. SAAN requests an investment of \$300,000 for 36 months through the XXX grant program. An investment in SAAN to provide strategic resources focused on capacity building and policy research that will be far reaching and provide a state and national impact. The funded proposal will allow individual state organizations, members of the SAAN, to meet their missions and move policy forward at the state and national levels. With state budget deficits reaching an estimated \$112 billion for Fiscal Year 2012 and federal funding for the arts and arts education diminishing at the federal level, arts advocacy organizations are fighting drastic cuts to support the arts and arts education across the country.

Given the continued financial instability of state and federal budgets, over the past three years sixteen SAAN member organizations have successfully fought off attempts to completely eliminate funding for arts and culture in their states. While the focus of SAAN member organizations is on state arts funding, they are also faced with numerous challenges when working to advance their mission with limited resources. One of the most significant challenges faced by SAAN members is their own ability to build the capacity of their organizations. SAAN members are running fiscally and programmatically strong statewide organizations and are making much needed positive change for their states but often lack the opportunity to increase their capacity through new knowledge and skills. These fiscally fit organizations are operating from the vantage point of a firm foundation, which allows them to realize there is room and need for continual improvement, they also understand the need to increase knowledge and best practices, and recognize the challenges that face nonprofit organizations on a regular basis.

To address the need for capacity building the State Arts Action Network and Americans for the Arts seek to conduct high quality professional development sessions at each of the three in-person meetings held annually and quarterly professional development webinars connected to, and in preparation for, the sessions offered at the Network's in-person meetings. Further, the SAAN, will provide meaningful travel subsidies for its members to participate in the Network's three in-person meetings each year. The travel subsidies are guaranteed through funding from XXX, Americans for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## Applicant

**Program Description:** A collective of 73 statewide community-based arts and cultural education, service, and development organizations, the State Arts Action Network (SAAN) works to advance a national grass-roots movement to support arts and arts education across the country. Members of the Network shape public policy, set research agendas, provide meaningful professional development, and peer-to-peer networking opportunities. Members must either be an organization that serves as the statewide arts service or assembly organization or be the statewide arts advocacy organization for multidiscipline arts. In order for an organization to be part of the State Arts Action Network, it must be a member in good standing of Americans for the Arts.

**History of the Organization – SAAN:** The SAAN was formed on March 29, 2004, when Americans for the Arts announced that two previously independent national arts organizations, the State Arts Advocacy League of America (SAALA) and the National Community Arts Network (NCAN), had ratified an agreement to become part of Americans for the Arts.

The joining together of these two national organizations with Americans for the Arts was consistent with the bold five-year strategic plan of the early 2000's developed by Americans for the Arts as a result of a \$120 million gift from philanthropist Ruth Lilly. In that plan, created through a year-long planning process, Americans for the Arts identified the need to create a statewide advocacy organization and a statewide service organization in every state.

The State Arts Action Council and State Arts Action Network strengthen and build arts advocacy and service infrastructure in the United States at the national, state, and local levels. Among other outcomes, SAAN helps shape public policy, initiates effective advocacy campaigns, sets research agendas, provides meaningful professional development, and provides peer-to-peer networking opportunities.

In 2009, the members of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN), a national education program of The John F. Kennedy Center, joined the SAAN as members bringing the Network to 73 advocacy organizations serving 46 states. The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN) is a coalition of statewide non-profit Alliances for Arts Education working in partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to support policies, practices, programs, and partnerships that ensure the arts are an essential part of American K-12 education. As the KCAAEN strives to build collaborations, generate resources and position arts education both organizations saw a natural fit in joining the SAAN.

The State Arts Action *Council* is the governing body of SAAN and serves in an advisory capacity to Americans for the Arts on behalf of the membership of SAAN. The Council provides guidance on the development of programs and services that meet the needs of state arts advocacy or statewide service organizations. The Council represents the broad cross-section of professionals that comprise the State Arts Action Network.

SAAN meets in-person three times a year, once in conjunction with Arts Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, once at the Americans for the Arts Annual Conference, and once in the fall. The Network hosts several professional development conference calls to discuss issues of interest and concern to its members. Members of the Network also receive a weekly email newsletter detailing state and local arts news and legislative tracking across the country. The

Network is managed by the Director of State and Local Government Affairs and State and Local Government Affairs Coordinator within Americans for the Arts.

**History of the Organization – Americans for the Arts:** Americans for the Arts (AFTA) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. With more than 50 years of service, the organization is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. With offices in Washington, DC and New York, and more than 5,000 organizational and individual members and stakeholders across the country, the organization is focused on three primary goals:

1. Lead and serve individuals and organizations to help build environments in which the arts and arts education thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Generate meaningful public and private sector policies and more leaders and resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.
4. Ensure the operational stability of the organization and its ability to creatively respond to opportunities and challenges.

Local arts agencies throughout the United States comprise AFTA's core constituency. A variety of unique stakeholder groups with particular interests like public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, rural and small communities, state arts agencies, and emerging arts leaders are also supported. Through national visibility and local outreach, AFTA strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers who can make the arts thrive in America.

**Mission Statement and Goals:** The State Arts Action Network serves as the national convener of each statewide arts, culture and arts education advocacy organization and provides each with unique networking opportunities, professional development, strategy and policy research, and advocating in support of funding for arts, culture and arts education at the federal, state and local levels.

The goals of the State Arts Action Network include, but are not limited to:

- Sustain a nationwide network of the statewide arts, culture and arts education advocacy organizations.
- Support policy that ensures increased funding for arts, culture and arts education at the federal, state and local levels.
- Provide high quality professional development to member organizations' staff and Board members.
- Share and create individual, regional, and national advocacy strategies aimed at supporting the arts, culture and arts education.
- Provide a forum for members to exchange work products that represent best practices on a variety of issues.

**Current Projects:** The Network works towards its mission by providing members a number of valuable services aimed at achieving its goals. Americans for the Arts was a recipient of a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2008 to provide financial assistance and programs for SAAN members and \$40,000 in 2009. The grant provided by the NEA has allowed the SAAN to: develop benchmarks that place state activity within a national context; build more effective boards; adopt uniform financial best practices; manage leadership transitions; and replicate innovative models of programs and services. Current programming, formed from the assistance of the NEA grant, includes:

- Advocacy: Americans for the Arts, through its individual and organizational members, including SAAN, urges Congress and the president to appropriate annual funding for the arts and arts education through the National Endowment for the Arts, US Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. SAAN enables arts advocates to lobby for appropriations in their home states by identifying issues of concern and helping to motivate state arts advocates to take action.
- Professional Development: SAAN provides members opportunities for professional development. Members are able to take advantage of webinars, conference calls and in-person meetings. Topics have ranged from messaging and policy to fundraising and board development.
- Information: SAAN provides up-to-date reports on states' legislative activities, best practices for state service organizations, and other key information. SAAN's moderated listserv allows Network members to quickly and easily ask questions of their colleagues, volunteer answers, and provide best practices. SAAN members also receive *The SAANbox*, a weekly newsletter with the latest news and trends in the state arts arena via email.
- Arts Advocacy Days: Whether in Washington, DC, or in state capitals, arts advocacy days are an excellent tool for furthering policy agendas and promoting the arts and arts education. While Americans for the Arts organizes national arts advocacy days, SAAN offers assistance and best practices in helping states put together their own events.
- Networking and Outreach: SAAN provides opportunities for members to congratulate one another for a job well done and offers a forum to provide help and suggestions to a struggling member, further enabling members to meet their peers. Through the listserv, at meetings, on conference calls, or working with SAAN staff, there are many opportunities to learn more about the role of advocacy in supporting the arts.

## Need Statement

The SAAN is the only national convener of state arts, culture and arts education advocacy service organizations. It is crucial to offer services to the entire Network as every individual SAAN member fights for public funding for the arts and arts education while keeping their organizations fiscally and programmatically strong. The absence of a strong presence by all SAAN members at SAAN meetings leaves us falling short in reaching the needs of the full SAAN membership. SAAN aims to build off of the progress made possible by grants from the NEA by perfecting and expanding current programs while exploring new ways to make a difference.

While the SAAN works to achieve its goals, its guiding principle is to provide the resources necessary to sustain healthy statewide organizations to support their mission. With state budget deficits reaching an estimated \$112 billion for Fiscal Year 2012, we continue to fight drastic cuts to grant funding for the arts, arts education, and cultural initiatives through grants awarded by state arts agencies across the country. Over the past three years sixteen SAAN member organizations have successfully fought off attempts to completely eliminate funding for their state arts agency. Additionally, SAAN member organizations, under the leadership of Americans for the Arts, have taken the lead in their states in fighting off attempts in Congress to drastically decrease and eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts.

When surveyed, members of the SAAN stated that their biggest challenge was capacity building to meet their missions. While members are running fiscally and programmatically strong organizations, they realize the need for improvement and seek to increase their knowledge and skills to ensure best practices aid in their continued growth. This presents two challenges for the SAAN and its members – high quality professional development and travel stipends to bring SAAN members to the three in-person meetings held by SAAN each year. Americans for the Arts has been able to provide a small stipend to off-set expense for travel but it rarely covers more than 25% of the total cost. This leaves many organizations unable to participate and relegated to the sidelines – depriving them of working directly with other members learning best practices, experiencing and participating in the professional development sessions, and using these meetings to help sustain and grow their organization as a whole.

Professional Development: An October 2010 survey of the 73 SAAN member organizations (56 responded) found that 48% of SAAN member organizations have zero full time staff – relying solely on board support and volunteers. With 40% of organizations having one or two full time staff, only 12% have three or more staff members. With 88% of respondents having two full time staff or less, member organizations find it challenging to meet their mission while maintaining and advancing their organization internally and externally.

The SAAN, as designated by its members, serves as the convener and service provider to help fill in the gaps by providing high quality professional development. With support from the NEA and AFTA, the SAAN is provided an estimated budget of \$1,500 per year to secure professional development. Unfortunately, with such limited financial resources it is difficult to engage the best speakers and presenters. While the SAAN members have done all that is possible to embrace this predicament and find those who will speak for free or a significantly reduced rate, SAAN is often not able to provide the quality of professional development desired. Further, previous professional development was found to be helpful but not transformative given the new economic and political climates of the past three years. There is a strong need and desire to increase the resourcefulness of the Network's professional development to ensure an impact is made.

Increasing Network Participation through Travel Stipends: 54% of SAAN member organizations have annual operating budgets of \$99,999 or less. While 34% have annual operating budgets between \$100,000 and \$500,000, only 12% (seven organizations) have budgets of more than \$500,000. With more than half of the SAAN members operating with budgets under \$500,000, it is nearly impossible for many to take advantage of the three in-person meetings annually.

### **Benefit**

**Project Goals:** The short term goals of this project are to:

- Conduct professional development sessions at each of the three in-person meetings held by the SAAN.
- Conduct quarterly professional development webinars connected to and in preparation for the sessions offered at the Network's in-person meetings.
- Increase participation/attendance of the SAAN membership in webinars and at in-person meetings held by the Network.
- Provide SAAN member organizations with the high quality professional development and best practices needed to sustain and advance their missions.

The long term goals of this project include are to:

- Strengthen the capacity of SAAN member organizations to meet their missions.
- Conduct professional development sessions focused on researching new strategies and policies at the national level that can be used in states across the country.
- Provide SAAN member organizations with the high quality professional development and best practices needed to sustain and advance their missions.

**Measurable Objectives:** Short- and long-term goals and objectives will be monitored in relation to documenting progress, with a focus on long -term achievement. The measurable objectives include:

- By December 2014, the SAAN will increase participation in Network webinars and conference calls to at least 75% of the full SAAN membership.
- By December 2014, the SAAN will increase attendance at in-person Network meetings to at least 65% of the full SAAN membership.
- By December 2014, the SAAN will achieve 90% member satisfaction for each session conducted.

### **How**

**Project Description:**

Professional Development: The SAAN will conduct up to a total of nine professional development sessions at the network's three in-person meetings held throughout the year. Additionally, the Network will set-up and conduct quarterly professional development webinars connected to, and in preparation for, the sessions offered at the Network's in-person meetings. At the end of each year during the project the SAAN Programs Committee will be tasked with creating a focused plan to pursue specific professional development sessions and research and seek out professionals to conduct each session. The staff at Americans for the Arts will advise and oversee all preparation and research for the professional development sessions.

*2012 SAAN Professional Development Focus:* Developed from previously conducted internal member surveys, the SAAN Programs Committee has researched and approved relevant topics for each professional development session for 2012.

- ❖ April 2012 - Americans for the Arts' Arts Advocacy Day – Washington, DC – *Focus:* Messaging and Reframing the Issue
  - Seek out and engage a PR firm to conduct professional development on reframing issues.
  - Seek out a nonprofit that has been through a reframing process and engage them to present their process, challenges, and successes.
- ❖ June 2012 - Americans for the Arts Annual Meeting – *Focus:* Membership, Earned Revenue, Fundraising, Grant Fund Development. and Other Nonprofits
  - DAY 1 – Membership and Earned Revenue
    - Seek out and engage two nonprofit statewide organizations to share their organizational sustainability strategies and stories.
  - DAY 2 – Fundraising and Grant Fund Development
    - Seek out and engage a professional fundraiser to discuss strategies and best practices.
    - Seek out and engage a national or regional funder to talk about the changing landscape of grantmaking. They will share information that will help SAAN member organizations best position themselves for future funding opportunities.
- ❖ October 2012 – SAAN Fall Meeting - *Focus:* Research National Policy and Strategies surrounding arts, culture, and arts education.
  - Seek out and engage a policy researcher or firm to provide a national policy update and share strategies for setting a research and policy agenda at the state level.
  - Seek out and engage a strategist to provide a step-by-step process by which a research and policy plan can be developed and carried out.

Because the Network only meets in-person three times a year, webinars and conference calls are crucial to advancing the work of the SAAN. Grant funds will allow the Network to secure high quality professional development and provide a means to pay for technology allowing SAAN members to participate in each session from their computer. The SAAN will work with the staff at Americans for the Arts to research and obtain software and equipment that will allow each meeting to be broadcast live online and make truly engaged participation possible.

Increasing Network Participation: Grant funds will provide meaningful travel subsidies for members participating in the in-person meetings held three times each year. Coupled with other resources, the amount of the travel stipends will be based on the number of meeting participants as well as available funds. Currently SAAN members receiving travel subsidies from Americans for the Arts must have a membership in good standing and attend all scheduled Network meetings. The funds appropriated to the SAAN for travel subsidies will follow these guidelines, which were adopted by members of the SAAN as a measure of accountability.

The Network understands that money alone will not entice the entire SAAN membership to become engaged. The SAAN will create a peer-partner system, pairing a seasoned Network member with one who is new to the group or has yet to be engaged in discussions at the national level. The purpose of the peer-partner system is to educate new members on the benefits of participating in the SAAN as well as following-up with monthly conversations to offer advice and counsel. It is hoped that the peer partner system, coupled with travel subsidies, will

allow for new and existing members to become more actively involved in the SAAN – widening the Network's knowledge-base and providing high quality professional development to all its members across the country.

### **Who**

**Project Partners:** The SAAN will seek out partners within the arts, culture and arts education sector to utilize the resources of SAAN and Americans for the Arts' partners. Specifically the SAAN will seek to partner with the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network (KCAAEN), which is currently conducting a round of high quality professional development for its members in executive coaching and low-capacity organizational coaching. The KCAAEN holds an affiliate membership with the SAAN. The goal of the partnership will be to share financial and professional resources to provide the high quality professional development desired. Additionally, due to the already existent professional development programming at the KCAAEN, the SAAN will consult with the leadership of the KCAAEN in an attempt to partner on quarterly webinars – creating an added value to the relationship.

**Active Constituent Involvement in Project Planning:** The SAAN consistently surveys its membership to gauge their interest and ideas for specific professional development topics, which the SAAN Programs Committee then develops each year's professional development focus. Following the development of the yearly professional development focus, the general membership of the SAAN is asked to provide input and offer suggestions for individuals and organizations that possess the skills to deliver the selected areas/topics of professional development.

### **Timeline**

This proposed project will begin January 1, 2012 and run through December 31, 2014.

### **Evaluation**

**Plans for Project Evaluation:** Evaluation is a key component of the project because it will provide data and insights into the project's successes and future efforts that will support the sustainability of SAAN member organizations.

**Professional Development:** Evaluation of the Project's professional development program will consist of:

- ❖ Online member surveys that will be administered immediately following each professional development session in an effort to gauge the session's effectiveness.
- ❖ Online member surveys will be administered again, 8-12 weeks following each professional development session, to determine the impact of what was learned and then put into practice.
- ❖ Data will be collected about the number of participants, satisfaction of participation, change in professional staff's ability to better support their organization's mission, changes in the individuals state organizations due to increased skills and knowledge of staff leadership, and changes in engagement of SAAN leadership and those who increase their involvement due to a higher level of quality professional development and opportunities.

**Budget**

	Professional Development Budget					
	2012		2013		2014	
	Provider Professional Fees	Provider Travel and Lodging	Provider Professional Fees	Provider Travel and Lodging	Provider Professional Fees	Provider Travel and Lodging
April	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000
June	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000
October	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$2,000

	Travel Stipend					
	2012		2013		2014	
	\$ Per Member	40 Members	\$ Per Member	40 Members	\$ Per Member	40 Members
April	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000
June	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000
October	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000	\$600	\$24,000

	Miscellaneous		
	2012	2013	2014
Online Meeting and Video Streaming Software	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
Staff Time/ Program Development	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000

<b>TOTAL 2012</b>	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL 2013</b>	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL 2014</b>	\$100,000
<b>TOTAL GRANT BUDGET</b>	\$300,000