



To: County Arts Network Members

From: Jay Dick, Senior Director of State and Local Government Affairs

Re: Public Partnerships End of Year Update

Date: February 10, 2021

2020 is in the books, we have a new president and Congress is controlled by one party. Lots of things have happened since my last report.

Americans for the Arts began teleworking on March 16th for “two weeks.” Then two weeks became “one month.” Then it went on and on to today where I write this from my home office. Like many of you, my family has been affected by Covid and all of us, continue to adapt.

Speaking of adapting. As 2020 progressed, adaptation became necessary with regard to Americans for the Arts’ Public Partnership Program. As we begin 2021, I wanted to give you an update on our work in 2020.

The year started off normal enough, we were able to host our Mayor’s Arts Breakfast at **The United States Conference of Mayor’s (USCM)** in January and participate at the **National Association of Counties’ (NACO)** Legislative Forum in March. Then, life changed and we had to find other means to engage our public partners and their members.

In addition to USCM and NACO, we continue to enjoy a close working partnership with the **Western Governors Association (WGA)** and Foundation, the **National Lt. Governors Association (NLGA)**, the **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**, the **National League of Cities (NLC)** and **ICMA**, the international city/county managers association. While we had planned on trying to expand some of our work with several of these groups in 2020, those plans will have to be tabled until 2021.

Americans for the Arts continues to be the only nonprofit arts and cultural organization to partner with these groups of elected officials representing the interests of you, our members. These groups represent all levels of government and Americans for the Arts is pleased to be able to impact their decision-making processes around the arts and culture. Further, we stand out in comparison to the corporate and other major organizations that work with these organizations and even then, we have a larger, more public role than most of these other companies/organizations.

So, as our members, thank you for your support of these activities which not only brings greater visibility to the arts and culture, but more resources.

Western Governors Association

Western Governors is not only our newest partner, but it holds the record for the partnership advancing the quickest into joint programming.

As you might recall, in early 2020, we were approached by WGA staff to identify ways to partner around a project. WGA introduced us to the Western Governors Foundation (WGF) which is their philanthropic arm. While WGF already manages "[Celebrate the West](#)," a regional art competition that challenges high school students to create works inspired by their state, they wanted to identify a new signature project to establish their priorities and focus..

Thus, Americans for the Arts and WGF agreed to focus on the topic of "Arts and Healthy Living in the West." After receiving feedback from the various governors, the project was divided into two equal parts:

Using the Arts in a culinary setting to not only teach basic cooking life skills to adults and their children, but to overlay this with a cultural lens. The project will engage with Native American/Indigenous individuals and/or non-profit groups to provide a series of virtual classes primarily focused on Native American/Indigenous families that not only introduces the histories of Native American/Indigenous foods and cooking techniques, but also teaches people how to cook modern versions of these dishes while keeping an eye to nutritional health. We are working with Share Our Strength's [Cooking Matters](#) program to provide the underlying framework for the classes while class leaders will determine the ingredients, recipes, etc.

The second program is centered around Creative Aging for seniors. Americans for the Arts and WGF is consulting with [LifeTime Arts](#) on the programming for senior adults in an effort to engage them physically in order to keep them healthier and happier. This program will be virtual as well.

We have yet finalized our local partners, those people or groups that will be providing the actual learning sessions, so if you would like to recommend a group based in the West, please let me know.

Coming up: Americans for the Arts will continue to work with WGA and WGF staff on the Arts and Healthy Living Project in addition to hopefully meeting in person at the WGF summer conference. Further, we will engage WGF on perhaps re-presenting our 2021 Governors Award for Public Arts Leadership.

National Lt. Governors Association

NLGA went completely virtual this year. To augment the loss of their three in person meetings, NLGA staff began a series of small coffee chats with one Lt. Governor and up to 6 partner organizations.



In this coffee chat, I join Maryland Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford plus four other partners along with an NLGA staffer.

These coffee chats are great ways to have quick, personal conversations with Lt. Governors about AFTA's legislative and advocacy issues.

NLGA has also created larger virtual events normally with two Lt. Governors where partners are invited to submit question that Julia Bossert, NLGA's Executive Director reads/moderates.



In this photo, Julia (large photo) is setting up questions for Louisiana Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser and New Mexico Lt. Governor Howie Morales. (smaller photos at the bottom).

In this particular event, I was able to ask Lt. Gov Nungesser, who oversees Tourism and the Arts in Louisiana about how he sees the arts and culture restarting the economy post Covid-19.



Lastly, NLGA also has created monthly newsletters that focus on a particular issue area. They invite partners to submit articles for inclusion. With the help of Randy Cohen, Americans for the Arts has had four articles included in these newsletters. We also put these articles on the ArtsBlog for our members to read. If you are interested, you can find the blogs here:

[Strengthening Healthcare Systems Through the Arts](#)

[Strengthening Education & the Workforce Through the Arts](#)

[Rebuilding Power of the Arts in Rural Communities](#)

[Arts and Mental Health](#)

Parallel to our work with NLGA, we were able to complete our State Military & Veterans Arts & Humanities Grant in 2020. The grant, which was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) allowed for three state summits in coordination with the Lt. Governor to promote the importance of the arts and humanities as they support veterans and active duty military personnel and their families. In 2019, we were able to host a very successful summit in Louisiana. In March, literally two days before lockdown we were able to host our Delaware Summit.



This photo is from Delaware's Summit. L-R, Major General Michael Berry, Delaware National Guard Adjutant General; former Adjutant General Frank Vavala, Lt. Governor Bethany Hall Long; Lt. Col. Tim Hoyle, State Partnership Director at the Delaware National Guard; Gen. Nolen Bivens (Ret.), summit facilitator and Jay Dick.

Our last summit was originally scheduled for April but was postponed. After our hopes for an in person summit collapsed, we arranged for an virtual conference in November.



South Dakota Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden welcomes the group virtually to the summit.

While a virtual summit was not the ideal situation, it did give us another model to use for future summits post pandemic where extreme distance might prohibit attendees from joining. For future summits, there will most likely be a combination in person and virtual components.



L-R: Kyna Iman, Government Affairs Consultant, Missouri Citizens for the Arts, Michael Donovan, Executive Director, Missouri Arts Council, Lt. Governor Kehoe and Ben Martin, former Executive Director, Missouri Alliance for Arts Education.

Americans for the Arts was also pleased to present Missouri Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe with the 2020 Public Leadership in the Arts Award. The Award is normally presented at NLGA's Annual Conference but instead was presented by remotely in Jefferson City, MO by several Americans for the Arts Members:

Coming up: Americans for the Arts will continue to attend and participate in virtual NLGA events with the hope that we can resume in person meetings either this summer or next winter.

National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties' (NACo) Arts and Culture Commission continues to virtually meet on a monthly basis in the absence of in person meetings. Americans for the Arts provides updates at each meeting and works to identify other speakers and/or topics for these meetings.



Americans for the Arts was pleased to virtually present our 2020 Public Leadership in the Arts Award to former Oakland County (MI) Commissioner [Shelley Taub](#) for her work in advancing the Arts not only in her county, but as the former chair of the NACo Arts and Culture Commission.

Americans for the Arts and NACo continue to partner around the Creative Counties Initiative. Alas, the Initiative has been put on hold due to the pandemic but will resume in 2021.

NACo also has an [arts and culture page](#) on their web site which anyone may access to see the latest county arts news.

Coming up: NACo will virtually host its 2021 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC in March and we hope that their Annual Meeting this Summer will be in person. No matter what, Americans for the Arts will participate in their conferences and at their Arts and Culture Committee meetings.

The United States Conference of Mayors



In June, [The United States Conference of Mayors](#) Incoming President Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer invited mayors to participate in a [City Song Project](#), inspired after Louisville’s highly successful and proclaimed “Lift Up Louisville” song and video project, which brought together musicians and artists from the city’s diverse music scene to raise money for the city’s COVID-19 response fund. Mayors chosen for the project were based on – strong mayoral leadership, a committed local arts agency, and a wide variety of artists and musicians in your city; and, feature a good representation of their region’s music genre and diversity. Produced in partnership with [Americans for the Arts](#) with support from the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), the City Song project is comprised of seven city-unique songs and videos released locally which have been compiled into one City Song Collection. [City Song Project](#) is comprised of nine city-unique songs and videos released locally which have been compiled into one City Song Collection. Participating Cities include: **Louisville, KY, Chicago, IL, Reno, NV, Detroit, MI, Austin, TX, Charleston, SC, Oklahoma City, OK, New Orleans, LA, and Burnsville, MN.** The national collection was released on December 1, 2020.

Nina Ozlu Tunceli, Americans for the Arts’ Chief Counsel for Government and Public Affairs continues to work with USCM and the various mayors to keep the arts and culture top of mind. On January 22, 2021, The U.S. Conference of Mayors held their annual Winter Meeting virtually. Nina was asked to speak at the Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment and Sports Committee meeting to discuss COVID-19 economic impact on the arts. Last year at this same conference, the last one to be held in person in Washington, DC on January 24, 2020, Americans for the Arts and The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) hosted their annual Mayors Arts Awards Breakfast at USCM’s Winter meeting, where our 2020 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards were presented to [Washington Governor Jay Inslee](#), [Mayor Becky Ames](#) of Beaumont, TX and [Mayor Jill Techel](#) of Napa, CA.



Americans for the Arts worked with our state leaders to “re-present” our 2020 Public Leadership in the Arts Award for State Arts Leadership to Washington State Governor Jay Inslee. While we had planned on doing this in person, we ended up doing it virtually.

In this screen shot, Governor Inslee, (upper left corner) speaks to some of the group, including Americans for the Arts’ Acting President and CEO Nolen Bivens (lower right corner). The call was arranged by Karen Hanan (center square), Executive Director of ArtsWA, the Washington State Arts Commission with assistance from Manny Cawaling (upper right corner), Executive Director of Inspire Washington, the state’s arts advocacy organization.

For more information, please contact **Nina Ozlu Tunceli**, our Chief Counsel of Government and Public Affairs at ntunceli@artsusa.org.

Coming up:

U.S. Conference of Mayor’s 2021 Annual Meeting in tentatively scheduled to take place in Austin, TX from June 19-22, 2021.

National Conference of State Legislatures



Americans for the Arts and NCSL was pleased to present Virginia Speaker of the House Eileen Filler Corn (center) with our Public Leadership in the Arts Award. The award is originally presented at NCSL's Winter meeting but due to Covid, we were not able to give it to her in person until this Spring when NCSL's President and CEO, Tim Storey (right) was in DC. The three of us met at the offices of ArtsFairfax to present the award to the Speaker. Americans for the Arts is currently entertaining suggestions for state legislators for our current award cycle.

Americans for the Arts continues to work with NCSL staff to ensure that the Arts and Culture are included in their agendas and members have access to arts research. NCSL has a members only Arts page on their website which contains Americans for the Arts' research along with other studies, etc.

Coming up: Americans for the Arts will participate at NCSL's Annual Conference this August.

ICMA (City/County Managers Association)

As I reported last time, Americans for the Arts participated in a panel discussion at the ICMA/ EPA Brownfields Conference which was held in Los Angeles in December 2019. Americans for the Arts had planned on expanding our presence at ICMA conferences in 2020 but that was delayed by Covid. We continue to have dialogue with ICMA staff and are looking for opportunities to work together.

Coming up: I will be working with ICMA to establish an award for a city/county manager.

National League of Cities

I continue to try to identify substantial ways for Americans for the Arts and NLC to work more closely together around a specific topic such as how to use the arts for economic development or safety. Stay tuned for more information as it becomes available.

Coming up: I continue to work with NCL leadership to establish an award honoring a city councilperson in 2020.

I hope you found this report useful. Thanks for reading and never hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay", with a stylized, cursive font.

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