

Report of the North Dakota Council on the Arts Long Range Planning Meeting

June 2, 2010



NORTH DAKOTA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

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Prepared by Dennis Holub**

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Planning Participants The North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA) held its strategic long range planning meeting at the Bismarck Art and Galleries Association during the afternoon of June 2, 2010. All nine Governor appointed Council members were in attendance as well as staff members Jan Webb, Executive Director, Linda Ehreth, Arts Education Director and Troyd Geist, Folklorist.

Through Council members' various associations, careers and backgrounds many elements of North Dakota culture were represented. Professional artists were well represented as were arts educators. Specific organizations that Council members are involved with include the Jamestown Arts Association, Roosevelt Nature and History Association, Three Tribes Museum, Bismarck-Mandan Civic Chorus, Wahpeton Parks and Recreation Association, and the newly established arts advocacy organization Arts North Dakota. The Native American community also was included as was the business sector, healthcare and broadcasting.

Survey Results Using a power point presentation, Dr. Craig Dreeszen from Dreeszen and Associates reviewed the findings of the constituent online survey conducted during February and March. Dreeszen developed the survey and analyzed the results in collaboration with NDCA staff. Dennis Holub, a consultant working with Dreeszen and Associates, then outlined the key issues raised by participants in the four regional planning meetings held in April. Holub facilitated the regional meetings, which also were attended by Jan Webb.

The Council members were genuinely impressed with the 54% response rate of the survey. Dreeszen mentioned that the response rate for similar online surveys can be viewed as good with a 25% response rate. The invitation to complete the survey encouraged organization leaders to forward the survey link to their members, so it is not possible to calculate a precise rate of response. However, 429 replies from an initial invitation email reaching 800 individuals are very impressive.

The high ratings and positive comments about the operations of the North Dakota Council on the Arts and its staff were appreciated. They point to strong satisfaction from citizens of the NDCA work and programs.

The K-12 arts education findings of the survey reinforced what was learned at the public meetings. Larger schools and communities have the best opportunity of a well rounded arts

education for students. Music education seems to be the strongest statewide, but for many rural young people music may be their only opportunity for arts learning in the school setting.

With the recent formation of the new arts advocacy organization Arts North Dakota, the Council felt that the survey reinforced the need for such a group and that respondents generally felt that they would participate.

Constituent Visions Dennis Holub facilitated a discussion on the five visions for the future coming from the regional public meetings. Holub explained that he likes to use the terms “dreams, wishes or visions” during the brainstorming exercise since they can accommodate new directions that might not be possible but that people want to express such as the dream of a touring ND State Symphony Orchestra or the wish for a major private donor for the arts statewide. Visions that were discussed by the NDCA and staff were those receiving the most votes at the public meetings. Two were presented from the Minot meeting since the local voting resulted in a tie.

Minot Vision: More financial resources for organizations and artists through the legislative appropriation, private funding and other sources are critical for the advancement of the arts at the local level.

Discussion centered on the directives given by the Governor on next year’s budget proposals submitted by state agencies. It was agreed that the Governor dictates the budget. Due to the current economic conditions in the country, agencies are to submit a status quo budget and a budget that represents a 3% decrease. A large arts budget increase is not likely in the next biennium. However, the NDCA might want to seek a small increase in the technology grants that they received from the Legislature during the last biennium. The \$10,000 in the funding category was all used within the first year of the biennium pointing to a strong need for assistance in this area. It may be possible to receive a modest increase for the category from the legislature.

It is unlikely that the NDCA could find a major pool of private funding for the arts statewide since it could find itself in the position of competing with local arts organizations for private resources.

Minot Vision: Working more closely with State Tourism must be the next major priority to further promote cultural organizations to visitors.

Cultural tourism is an area that the NDCA staff has tried to pursue with the State Tourism office but without much encouragement since tourism lacks interest in promoting nonprofit groups. However, with the new online CulturePulse, which lists events by region and has a directory of artists, a new direction can be explored through online marketing with tourism. A plus is that the

web manager for CulturePulse previously worked for the State Tourism office on web matters, which may help with the formation of a new partnership and communication with tourism staff. Since interstate rest areas also provide an opportunity for marketing, developing a relationship with the Department of Transportation in addition to the tourism office could be explored.

Bismarck Vision: NDCA needs to create a public awareness campaign centered on culture and creativity in everyday life.

The NDCA currently has an excellent arts education public awareness campaign that is promoted when funds are available. The campaign can still be used and expanded. It is an area that should be explored for the future as part of public awareness planning. Financially it would not be possible to mount a completely new public awareness campaign in the near future, but enhancing the existing arts education public awareness campaign could be a reality. It was also felt that the online CulturePulse could be used more for marketing of the NDCA.

Fargo Vision: A North Dakota Arts Pass should be created for audiences to attend events anywhere in the state with an interactive cultural map included with the pass, providing information on arts and literary events as well as galleries and museums.

Generally it was felt that the North Dakota Arts Pass is a concept that could be explored at the local level such as in Fargo-Moorhead since there are abundant arts organizations and events that could work together in the marketing region.

Grand Forks Vision: NDCA ought to initiate a statewide artists' network providing information, communication and services to artists of all disciplines.

A NDCA visual artist listserv exists and certainly could be expanded. Also the online CulturePulse has a listing of artists and is moving in the direction of being a network for artists. The concept of an artists' network is currently being discussed by the newly formed Arts North Dakota especially considering the demise of New Bohemia, which was an artists' organization with about 30 members. As an advocacy organization it will be important for Arts North Dakota to encourage artists to join since they receive many benefits from NDCA programs and should advocate for the arts in the state.

In the discussion of the public meeting visions for the future, one council member found it interesting that arts education surfaced as a major need for the future at each meeting and in the online survey, but did not evolve into a strategy vision for the Council to consider. Satisfaction with the NDCA arts education programming indicates that it should be continued and expanded if possible. The outstanding work in folk arts by staff was also applauded and encouraged for the future by the Council.

NDCA Council Visions Members of the NDCA were encouraged to express their own visions for the future and three concepts emerged:

- When looking at what is happening with other state arts agencies across the country, survival and maintaining NDCA existing programs during the current economic times are at the core of future directions.
- Since Council members are appointed on a regional basis, some Council members' wish for the future is to get to know constituents better in their region so that they truly can serve their area of the state.
- An important visionary aspect of the future is to work closely with the State Heritage Center in the capital city of Bismarck during its renovation since opportunities exist. The center will have an art gallery and Heritage staff members have expressed interest in exhibiting NDCA Fellowship Grant artists. It could also be a market place for artists wishing to sell work.

Next Steps The next steps in the NDCA long range planning process will be to have a staff retreat on June 25 facilitated by Dennis Holub at which time the current strategic long range plan will be reviewed and updated. Once the plan is updated it will go to the NDCA Executive Committee for approval in late July.