

North Dakota's 2010 Arts Public Planning Meetings

Report of the North Dakota Council on the Arts' 2010
Regional Arts Community Meetings



NORTH DAKOTA COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

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2010

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Executive Summary

The North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA) conducted a series of four Regional Arts Community Meetings as part of its strategic, long range planning process. The meetings were held the week of April 19 in Minot, Bismarck, Fargo and Grand Forks.

Former Director of the South Dakota Arts Council, Dennis Holub, facilitated the meetings through a planning contract with Dreeszen & Associates. The meetings were held to gather local insights on future directions for the arts in North Dakota and to supplement the online constituent survey prepared and conducted by Craig Dreeszen of Dreeszen & Associates.

At the meetings, which were designed to be listening sessions, participants were asked to respond to three questions:

- 1) What are the strengths of the arts in North Dakota that we can build upon in the future?
- 2) What are the most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota?
- 3) Are there changes you would like to see in how the NDCA operates?

During the meetings, individuals were asked to identify one dream, wish, or vision for the arts in North Dakota over the next three years. At the end of each meeting, participants were allowed two votes each to determine which dream, wish or vision would be reported to the NDCA at its planning meeting for possible inclusion in the council's new strategic three-year plan.

NDCA Executive Director Jan Webb attended all of the public meetings with Holub. Staff members Linda Ehreth and Amy Schmidt also attended the Bismarck meeting. Folklorist Troyd Geist attended the Fargo Meeting. Council member Marilyn Hudson was at the Minot meeting, and council member Jason Lindell attended the Grand Forks session.

The two-hour listening sessions were attended by 66 individuals. Attendees included board, staff and volunteers of local arts agencies, organizations and businesses in various disciplines. Also represented were historical museums, the media, arts educators and public broadcasting. A legislator and city council member attended the Grand Forks meeting. Two local school board candidates were at the Fargo meeting. Individual artists also attended. Out of the 66 attendees, 32 considered themselves to be artists even if they were attending as a representative of an organization.

Lively, spontaneous discussions took place at each of the public meetings. This report highlights common trends or suggestions from the meetings for consideration by the NDCA in developing the new three-year plan.

Strengths of the arts in North Dakota

- First and foremost, North Dakotans are fiercely proud of the abundance of well managed arts organizations and individual artists. Praise for arts at the local level was expressed at each public meeting.
- Audiences and the public are very supportive of the arts.
- The arts education programming that currently exists in North Dakota, whether it is provided by the NDCA, the college/university systems, K-12 education, or arts organizations, was always cited as being vital and strong especially in music.
- North Dakota's economy is seen as being robust especially with the new western oil development; private support of the arts seems to be adequate, but should grow.
- Accessibility to the arts is a strong point in both urban and rural areas.
- The traditional arts have been nurtured and are flourishing throughout the state.
- CulturePulse, the online events listing, was often identified as being a positive asset.
- Individual artists are quite comfortable living and working in North Dakota especially noting the low cost of living and acceptance within the business and social fabric of the entire state.

Most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota

- As in every gathering of people working in the arts, money surfaced as an ever present need including legislative support to the NDCA, donor giving or federal and private grants.

- North Dakotans like to network and come together to share experiences and ideas; people would appreciate more opportunities like the regional meetings to be offered in the future.
- Public awareness of the arts, whether it is called advertising, marketing or a PR campaign, was identified as a real statewide need.
- The need for the arts to be a strategic part of the State's Tourism efforts is a hot topic right now among the cultural organizations and artists attending the meetings.
- Improvements in K-12 arts education are something everyone wants to see, but very few concrete suggestions were forthcoming from the regional meetings.

Changes in how the NDCA operates

- In every location the NDCA staff and council received positive feedback from participants especially in the areas of customer service and current funding programs.
- Constituents would like to see more staff at the NDCA or the outsourcing of some administrative duties such as the newsletter.
- NDCA ought to develop a statewide public awareness campaign.
- More interaction with the State Tourism office was often recommended.
- Strong support for future advocacy efforts was voiced; participants of the meetings are encouraged by the development of the new Arts North Dakota organization.

Dreams, wishes, or visions for the future

Minot presented two visions since there was a tie vote among participants:

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

Bismarck:

- NDCA needs to create a statewide public awareness campaign centered on culture and creativity in everyday life.

Fargo:

- 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.

Grand Forks:

- NDCA ought to initiate a statewide artists' network providing information, communication and services to artists of all disciplines.

At the June 2nd NDCA meeting, council and staff members will have the opportunity to discuss these dreams, wishes and visions and decide if any should be added as a priority in the next long range plan. The council also may have a different dream, wish or vision that the group would like to pursue in the future.

The common trends or suggestions from the public meetings often mirror what was discovered in the findings of the constituent survey especially in the areas of public awareness, arts education, developing alternative funding strategies, support for individual artists and the promotion of cultural tourism. Common trends will be further discussed at the June 2nd NDCA meeting.

Notes from the 2010 North Dakota Regional Arts Community Meetings

Minot

Lillian and Coleman Taube Museum of Art, Minot, April 20

A total of 15 people were in attendance representing Three Tribes Museum, the Taube Museum of Art, Minot Area Council on the Arts, Western Plains Opera, Minot Daily News, ND Art Galleries Association, Mouse River Players, Minot State University and ND Council on the Arts. Of the 15 attendees, eleven considered themselves to be individual artists.

What are the strengths of the arts in North Dakota to build upon in the future?

- Healthy local, regional and statewide arts groups abound throughout the state.
- A low cost of living is conducive for artists, audiences and organizations.
- The North Dakota economy is booming right now especially with the western oil fields.
- North Dakota is nationally known primarily for agriculture, but the arts certainly are in abundance in the state.
- Appreciative audiences are looking for creative things to do.
- K-12 arts experiences exist which is healthy for future generations.
- Climate is conducive for creative activities indoors.
- Media in Minot is very supportive of promoting the arts taking place in the region.
- Having an air force base in Minot adds to the vitality of arts organizations.

What are the most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota?

- More arts specialists are needed in K-12 education, and this deficiency must be communicated to the Department of Public Instruction.
- Quality music experiences are available in larger communities, but lacking in rural areas.
- Communication of the financial needs of arts organizations must be a priority to the new oil companies operating in the state and other corporate offices.
- Minot has empty buildings downtown that could be utilized by artists.
- Patron support has reached a saturation point.
- Tourism could be a stronger patron for arts groups. It also generates new money into the entire community.
- Arts groups networking together is a critical need in this region.
- Revitalization of a statewide public awareness campaign would be helpful, e.g. with a poster and media ads.
- A guide to art galleries throughout the state is needed.
- People's volunteer energies are spread too thin.

Are there changes you would like to see in how the North Dakota Council on the Arts operates?

- Online CulturePulse calendar should be able to sort events by date.
- An arts marketing position would be a valuable addition to the NDCA staff.
- More exchange of information should be encouraged among visual arts venues, especially for shared exhibitions.
- Any help from NDCA staff on website development and new membership trends would be appreciated.
- Research of Development Corporation laws could identify benefits of turning unused buildings into artists' spaces.

What is your one big dream, wish or vision for the arts in North Dakota over the next three years? (The bold faced dream, wish or vision is the one that received the most votes from participants. Each participant was allowed two votes. In the case of Minot's meeting, there was a tie.)

- **More financial resources for organizations through the legislative appropriation, private funding and other sources are critical for the advancement of the arts at the local level. (6 votes)**
- **Working more closely with State Tourism must be the next major priority to further promote cultural organizations to visitors. (6 votes)**
- Outreach to Canadian audiences would greatly add to North Dakota cultural marketing. (2 votes)
- Reaching more young adults as audience members is vital to the future of the arts. (2 votes)
- K-12 arts experiences for all students in all schools on a regular basis should be mandatory. (1 vote)
- NDCA Teacher Incentive funding should be more user friendly. (1 vote)
- The creation of a booking agent within NDCA to tour performing artists throughout the state would be helpful for artists and rural presenters. (1 vote)
- Partnering with other state agencies would be beneficial. (1 vote)
- New promotional campaigns to reach baby boomers may increase audiences. (1 vote)

Bismarck

Bismarck Art & Galleries Association, Bismarck, April 21

A total of 15 people were in attendance representing the Bismarck Art & Galleries Association, Bismarck Mandan Symphony Orchestra, Dakota West Arts Council, Mandan Art Association, ND Federation of Music Clubs, Central Dakota Children's Choir, State Historical Society of ND, arts education specialists and ND Council on the Arts. Of the 15 attendees, six considered themselves to be individual artists.

What are the strengths of the arts in North Dakota to build upon in the future?

- The arts abound in small towns in North Dakota and are not centered in just large communities.
- Technology is being used well by the NDCA through the events calendar CulturePulse and the online newsletter.
- A strong tradition of folk arts has been nurtured by the NDCA.
- Arts organizations of all disciplines are well connected throughout the state.
- The NDCA is comprised of strong leadership on both the staff and council.
- North Dakota is blessed with strong music programs in most schools, colleges and churches.
- Artists in School residency program is a plus for the state.
- Excellent grants are available for organizations and artists through the NDCA.
- The arts are very accessible throughout the state, especially in music.
- Arts groups in North Dakota have name recognition with the public.

What are the most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota?

- More funding at all levels is needed, but especially from the private sector since sports receive more financial assistance than the arts.
- Additional collaborations at both the local and regional levels would be advantageous.
- More marketing would be beneficial; we should aim to get as much media as sports gets.
- Increasing arts literacy is a constant need.
- Support for public broadcasting is critical for the advancement of the arts statewide.
- Communicating why the arts are important to everyday life needs to be part of the public awareness message, e.g. focusing on utilitarian arts such quilting, knitting, etc.
- Encouraging local journalism students to do guest arts columns for the newspaper could help awareness.
- More visual arts exhibition space is needed in Bismarck.
- Connect to the new oil companies as much as possible for funding.

Are there changes you would like to see in how the North Dakota Council on the Arts operates?

- Best advice is not to change since staff and council do a great job.
- The NDCA provides excellent public relations at multiple levels.
- Staff communicates to constituents efficiently and effectively; they are always accessible.
- Experimenting with meetings for people who do not support the arts or participate might be helpful in finding out why they are not attending.
- It might be time to outsource some responsibilities such as marketing, public awareness and/or the newsletter.
- More money going into marketing would be a wise investment.

What is your one big dream, wish or vision for the arts in North Dakota over the next three years? (The bold faced dream, wish or vision is the one that received the most votes from participants, with two votes per participant.)

● **NDCA needs to create a statewide public awareness campaign centered on culture and creativity in everyday life. (7 votes)**

- Have regional arts meetings like these more often. (3 votes)
- The population needs to be nurtured to buy and value original art. (3 votes)
- The arts need to be offered in all schools and in all areas. (2 votes)
- Find a billionaire to become the North Dakota arts benefactor. (1 vote)
- North Dakota young adults with arts degrees must be encouraged to stay in ND. (1 vote)

Fargo

Plains Art Museum, Fargo, April 22

A total of 11 people were in attendance representing the Plains Art Museum, The Arts Partnership, Theatre B, Trollwood Performing Arts School, Fargo Moorhead Symphony, Fargo Moorhead Opera, Prairie Public Broadcasting, Fargo Moorhead Visual Artists, Arts North Dakota and ND Council on the Arts. Of the 11 attendees, four identified themselves as also being individual artists. Two of the participants are current local school board candidates.

What are the strengths of the arts in North Dakota to build upon in the future?

- Prevalence of the arts throughout the state is encouraging.
- Longevity of North Dakota arts organizations points to long-term success.
- A strong level of commitment to the arts demonstrates a passion and fierceness of past and present leadership.
- Local government support is apparent at all levels from city commission to school boards.
- Multi-cultural participation exists within the various arts disciplines.
- The public has an appreciation for the quality of life the arts provide in communities.
- Strong arts advocates exist.

What are the most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota?

- Increased funding would be beneficial.
- Regional outreach should be expanded via residencies and programs in more rural areas.
- Urban audiences need to attend more of what is available in rural areas.
- CulturePulse listing of arts events deserves increased usage by arts groups.
- A lobbyist at the state level is needed; this may be provided by the new advocacy and service organization Arts North Dakota.
- Better marketing of the NDCA should be a priority.

Are there changes you would like to see in how the North Dakota Council on the Arts operates?

- Overall praise was expressed to both the staff and council for grant programs, communication and arts education offerings.
- NDCA could provide suggestions for organizations to be more competitive in receiving out-of-state competitive funding.
- Staff at NDCA needs to increase or the council should find a way to outsource some services.

- More people should be attending the statewide arts conference via better marketing of the compelling content.
- Arts conference scholarships must be more readily available.
- The conference planning committee might be expanded for more local buy-in of sessions.
- An arts board boot camp for training is needed.
- The statewide conference needs more social, fun time.

What is your one big dream, wish or vision for the arts in North Dakota over the next three years? (The bold faced dream, wish or vision is the one that received the most votes from participants, with up to two votes per participant.)

- **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. (4 votes)**
- A stronger relationship among arts organizations statewide would be helpful. (2 votes)
- A for-profit ND State Art Gallery to market arts products should be established near the State Capitol building. (2 votes)
- NDCA should provide one or two new priorities each year for additional funding to regular grantees, e.g. touring. (2 votes)
- North Dakota needs to explore a statewide sales tax for arts and culture similar to Minnesota's new Legacy Tax. (1 vote)
- Neighborhoods and communities can be further developed through the arts. (1 vote)
- Arts North Dakota should lobby the legislature to create an annual major arts grant providing a large contribution to an important statewide project. (1 vote)

Grand Forks

North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, April 23

A total of 25 people were in attendance representing Grand Cities Children's Choir, Grand Forks Master Chorale, Langdon Northern Lights Arts Council, Fargo Moorhead Area Youth Symphonies, Greater Grand Forks Symphony, North Dakota Museum of Art, North Valley Arts Council, Greater Grand Forks Community Theatre, ND Ballet Company, University of ND Theatre, Art Fest, Arts North Dakota, Muddy Waters Clay Center, Nelson County Arts Council, Crimson Creek Players and ND Council on the Arts. Prior to the meeting, a representative of the Cando Arts Council emailed her comments. Of the 25 in attendance, eleven also identified themselves as individual artists. A State Representative from the legislature and a Grand Forks City Council member also were in attendance.

What are the strengths of the arts in North Dakota to build upon in the future?

- NDCA arts education and Artist in Residence grants are a big plus for the state.
- Communication with the public by the NDAC is appreciated.
- The state has a large number of artists as part of the population base.
- A strong interest in the arts exists statewide as evidenced in the rate of response to the recent online survey.
- There is a unique variety of arts available in the state.
- The younger generation is buying original art.
- Rural areas desire arts just as much as urban areas.
- A large number of music education opportunities exist in North Dakota.
- Due to the number of colleges and universities in the state, professional arts educators who are also artists add greatly to the professional level of arts in the state.
- Artists are interested in rural arts expansion.
- North Dakota is a very affordable place for artists to work and live.
- The arts community is small enough so artists and organizations can be known and well connected.
- North Dakota is a welcoming place for new artists moving into the state.
- An enthusiasm exists for the arts in both large communities and small towns.
- CulturePulse listing of events is a true asset to the state arts scene.

What are the most pressing needs for the arts in North Dakota?

- Financial support for emerging organizations is lacking.
- The communication network seems scattered and needs to be more centralized.

- A map to federal and private funding sources needs to be developed with information on how to secure these funds.
- There is a growing need for urban and rural reciprocity, possibly with an exchange of artists.
- Individual artists need more financial support and new opportunities for making money.
- Artists should have extended residency experiences rather than short-term residencies.
- Expansion of non-music disciplines at the North Dakota International Music Camp is needed.
- Improvement of arts education at the university level is badly needed for education majors.
- NDCA should develop a cultural guide of artists and organizations separated by regions.
- Other state agencies need to be educated on the potential of the arts in their area of expertise, e.g. Tourism, Commerce, Education and History.
- An artists' directory would be beneficial to have.
- Legal aid for artists ought to be made available.
- Arts organizations should outreach more to college/university arts majors in all disciplines.

Are there changes you would like to see in how the North Dakota Council on the Arts operates?

- There is a need for workshops on the use of CulturePulse for artists and organizations.
- The NDCA staff is excellent and extremely helpful so that should not change.
- More regional business-after-hours social events need to be held for the arts community.
- Monthly emails from the NDCA should be sent regarding deadlines, new programs and funding sources. (These should be simple, straight forward emails – nothing fancy or long.)
- Arts must be promoted in Tourism/Department of Transportation rest areas.

What is your one big dream, wish or vision for the arts in North Dakota over the next three years? (The bold faced dream, wish or vision is the one that received the most votes from participants, with up to two votes per participant.)

- **NDCA ought to initiate a statewide artists' network providing information, communication and services to artists of all disciplines. (6 votes)**
- The state may want to think about creating a Legacy Cultural Tax like Minnesota. (4 votes)
- North Dakota should create a State Percent for Art Program involving new construction and renovation of state buildings. (3 votes)
- NDCA ought to develop strong relations with select state agencies, e.g. Tourism, Commerce and Department of Transportation (the latter for arts maps and promotion at rest areas). (5 votes)

- The North Dakota Museum of Art's Rural Arts Institute ought to be promoted since it involves research and programming. (3 votes)
- A cultural homesteading concept should be marketed to bring artists to North Dakota; the concept needs to highlight the low cost of living and quality of life. (2 votes)
- North Dakota should have an arts incubator that would be a center for innovation. (2 votes)
- North Dakota must market itself as an arts destination for travelers. (2 votes)
- Funding needs to be made available to attract musical artists such as conductors and instrumentalists. (1 vote)
- A State orchestra must be established and tour the state every two years. (1 vote)
- There needs to be an art specialist with an art room in every school. (1 vote)