

MID ATLANTIC
ARTS FOUNDATION



Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation

Strategic Plan

October 2011

Executive Summary

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Introduction

In August 2010, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF) engaged AMS Planning & Research to update its strategic plan as it neared the conclusion of its 2007-2011 plan. The work took place in 2010 and 2011 which was a time of significant economic volatility, robust discussion of the future of the arts and culture sector, and shifting patterns of participation and consumption of the arts. In this complex setting, MAAF sought to re-affirm its value, identify priority areas for leadership and respond to the changing landscape.

The MAAF five-year plan seeks to adapt to the changing environment by strengthening areas of core competency, aligning resources to priorities and affirming a holistic integration of programs to achieve its goals. In an environment of both resource opportunity and constraint, it seeks to balance breadth of service with depth of impact, responsiveness with innovation, and collaboration with entrepreneurialism. MAAF is uniquely situated to understand and share challenges and opportunities in the region and the sector, and to bring resource partners together to address those challenges and reinforce success.

With this plan MAAF continues to evolve. The plan strengthens the organization's role as a leader in providing a landscape view of the sector and coupling resources with need. It invests in convening and communicating, to instigate innovative solutions not just identify problems. It capitalizes on MAAF's strength and knowledge in touring and providing access to an array of excellent and diverse artists and art forms. And it reinforces the value MAAF provides as a knowledgeable and efficient program partner in moving art and ideas across borders.

Regional Arts Organizations

With authorizing legislation through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) beginning in the early 1970s, Regional Arts Organizations were formed at the initiative of the states to administer support for programs handled most cost effectively on a multi-state basis. Regional Arts Organizations addressed the NEA's interest in more effective mechanisms to deliver certain services (especially those related to touring and presenting the performing arts), and state agencies embraced the opportunity to address common multi-state issues and to increase NEA support for their artists and communities.

MAAF is unique among Regional Arts Organizations for the geographic diversity and artistic richness of the community it serves. Its constituent states and territories range from the

U.S. Virgin Islands and the states of Delaware and West Virginia to some of the nation’s most populous states and recognized cultural centers – New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. One-half of the acknowledged “major museums” in the U.S. are located in the region, and twenty-four percent of the artists in the U.S. labor force work in the mid-Atlantic states. In 2010 state legislative appropriations to the nine mid-Atlantic state arts agencies represented 37% of total state arts agency appropriations in the United States¹.

In the mid 1990s, most Regional Arts Organizations began to explore partnerships that would assist private foundations with some of their emerging priorities. More flexible than the public-sector agencies, these private, non-profit regional entities became program partners and leaders in bringing diverse arts activities to local, regional, national and international communities. Now each provides a distinct mix of services informed by priorities of the state arts agencies, NEA, and private funding partners.

Current Environment

The arts and culture sector faces unprecedented challenges early in the 21st century. Studies in every performing arts

¹ National Assembly of State Arts Agencies *State Arts Agency Review*, March 2010

field show troubling indicators of stress—an increasing percentage of organizations with deficits; an erosion of audience base, especially among subscribers; changing interests, and fundamental questions about way the arts and culture are delivered. Endowments, which had long been seen as means to sustain organizations, have values that are falling below the protected corpus investment level and thus are providing little resource to enable change.

In many areas of the country, government support for the arts continues to decline, and some state arts agencies are in jeopardy of total elimination in state budgets. Congress is intent on significant reduction of the federal budget, and eager to eliminate bureaucratic excess and reduce the role of government.

The long-term impact on MAAF of this public sector funding volatility in the region is unclear. In 2010, the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania suspended their individual artist fellowship programs, traditionally administered on their behalf by MAAF. While some restoration of those programs occurred in 2011, MAAF’s funding from State Arts Agencies remained flat at the lower level.

MAAF's NEA funding increased 76% from 2005 to 2009, and another 23% in 2010. However, this most recent increase was in Special Projects funding and largely related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which is not anticipated to recur.

As MAAF plans for the future it recognizes that the relative balance between public-sector funding support and private-sector funding support has changed, and that given the uncertainty of several key funding streams, evaluating priorities and planning for multiple possible scenarios is a key element of the strategic planning initiative.

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation Today

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation is positively regarded as a well-run organization with strong leadership and knowledgeable staff. The organization is credited for its ability to support artists across geographic boundaries, its effectiveness at bringing art and artists to communities that wouldn't otherwise be served at this level, and its ability to adapt to changing priorities.

Key Stakeholders

MAAF's work is enabled by three discrete sets of authorizers. In the public sector, MAAF has critical partnerships with the National Endowment for the Arts as well as the nine state arts agencies, which recognize that MAAF is able to broaden services that otherwise would be bound by bureaucratic or geographic constraints. With private foundation relationships, MAAF can identify unmet needs and devise flagship programs to address them as well as provide operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

Impact and Reach

In 2010, MAAF provided over \$3.1 million in grant support through 690 discrete grants. This investment supported nearly 14,000 artists engaged in 770 performances and nearly 1,400 separate outreach activities, and reached approximately 561,000 individuals.

Programs and Funding

MAAF total investment in program funding declined from \$4,597,478 in 2009 to \$4,208,538 in 2010 (-8.5%), and is projected to increase to \$4,340,709 (+3%) in 2011.

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation programs are categorized into four discrete segments, briefly described below.

Performing, Touring & Exhibiting

ArtsCONNECT, American Masterpieces, Special Presenter Initiatives, Folk Arts Outreach, Jazz Touring Network, Mid Atlantic Tours, On Screen/In Person, PennPAT, Southern Exposure, USArtists International

Performing, Touring & Exhibiting encompasses all outreach and touring programs and is responsible for approximately 60% of all program expenses. Programs in this area receive roughly equal support from the NEA and private foundations, as well as significant but lower support from the State Arts Agencies. Investment in this area remained constant until

2010, when economic constraints caused a reduction of about 22%. FY11 budgets reflect only slightly increased funding in this category.

Artist Support, Projects & Residencies

Artists & Communities, Creative Fellowships, French-American Jazz Exchange, Jazz Living Legacy Award, State Fellowships Administration (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania)

Artist Support, Projects & Residencies provides direct support to artists in the form of fellowships, residencies or awards. Funding for these programs has traditionally been largely derived from the State Arts Agency partnerships, and as such, has experienced a steep decline since 2009. Funding support for individual artists has eroded in the private sector as well, and enabling support for individual artists remains a concern for Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation.

Knowledge Building

Jazz.NEXT, various travel & convening grants

Knowledge Building incorporates a range of programs, convening, symposia and other efforts designed to share information and expertise to build the capacity of artists and arts organizations. Funding for these initiatives was historically covered out of unrestricted funding to the agency,

with some targeted support from the NEA and private foundations. This pattern changed in 2010 with a significant gift from Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to support a new national Jazz initiative. Jazz.NEXT is designed to encourage innovative approaches facilitated by the use of technology to help shape operating practices among jazz artists, organizations, and presenters.

Special Projects

This final category of programs covers special projects or one-time initiatives that help to advance the organization's mission. The majority of support is from the NEA and is comprised of funding for Poetry Out Loud as well as periodic initiatives such as the 2009-10 stimulus package.

Looking Ahead

MAAF is ideally situated to draw upon its highly-regarded depth of knowledge and recognized leadership in the field to build on its strengths in enabling and sharing advances in jazz, international and regional touring, and support for individual artists and underserved art forms. It brings valued relationships with state arts agencies, the NEA and major private foundations together with artists and ideas to inspire innovative solutions and enable success.

As it looks to the future MAAF recognizes that it has the unique opportunity to provide leadership in bringing resources, artists and communities together. Its priority remains to provide expanded opportunity for artists, audiences and communities to explore new and diverse art forms, transcending traditional boundaries and enabling excellence in artistic expression.

Five Year Strategic Direction

The strategic plan is crafted to provide focus and clarity to the value that Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation provides to the arts and culture sector, and to establish program priorities and leadership goals. Its emphasis continues to be on providing access to artistic diversity and excellence through connecting artists, presenters, resources and audiences. Regional arts organizations were formed to assist in moving art and ideas across borders, and this remains MAAF's primary focus today.

Vision

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation envisions a vital arts and cultural sector enriched by the movement of a vibrant and diverse environment of artists and arts organizations engaging audiences across geographic, artistic and institutional boundaries regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Mission

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation develops partnerships and programs that reinforce artists' capacity to create and present work, advance access to and participation in the arts, and promote a more sustainable arts ecology.

Values

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation believes that art is essential, that it has the power to transform individuals and communities, and in so doing helps define our society. *Excellence, integrity, service, inclusion, and engagement* are fundamental tenets of its commitment to the arts.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies & Tactics

Goal 1

Foster expanded access to the arts by connecting artists, communities and resources, and by exploring new forms of creative expression and methods of presentation.

The presentation and touring of excellent and diverse forms of artistic expression remains a cornerstone of MAAF's work. With support from both the NEA, its partner State Arts Agencies and private sector funders, MAAF is able to expand the access to, and reach of, artists throughout the region, the nation and the world. With this goal, MAAF intends to expand markets for artists and their work; to introduce communities to art forms they otherwise may never experience; to encourage exploration of new ideas and art forms; and to ensure efficiency of delivery as well as expansion of reach.

Objectives:

- Implement programs that encourage movement of artists across artistic and geographic boundaries regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Increase exposure excellence in a diverse range of artistic expression for broad audiences.
- Provide resources and opportunities for greater understanding and appreciation of artists' work.
- Forge strategic partnerships and build networks that engage new constituencies and increase participation in the arts.

Regional touring programs are the cornerstone of MAAF's work. Over the years MAAF's expertise has enabled these programs to grow into new areas such as international touring and Jazz. MAAF will continue to emphasize partnerships, artistic excellence and geographic reach as it works with program partners to strengthen or re-envision existing programs such as PennPAT and Artists & Communities; grow international touring and jazz programs; and consider new initiatives in media and film and individual artist residencies.

Goal 2

Provide leadership in the development and delivery of model programs and partnerships to address access, creation, presentation, and the expansion of markets for artists and their work.

Many artists, funders and presenters highlight MAAF's ability to see the broad spectrum of ideas and issues in the field as one of its greatest assets. Goals 2 and 3 capitalize on that strength by first, identifying resource partners and creating flagship programs to invest in areas of significant need in the sector; and second, to share learnings with others and strengthen the field overall (see Goal 3, below).

Goal 2 looks to focus investment where MAAF's existing strengths and expertise can add most value: to identify critical program areas with inadequate or no existing programs to address them; to develop resource partnerships to enable new initiatives; and to deliver programs with outcomes of efficiency, reach and effectiveness.

Objectives:

- Understand and communicate priorities, issues and challenges in the field.

- Establish priorities for investment including touring, international cultural engagement, Jazz, and programs that preserve the artistic legacy of the mid-Atlantic region.
- Provide opportunities for artists representing a diverse range of artistic disciplines to create work.
- Cultivate new models for artistic delivery and resource development with public and private sector partners.

With this goal MAAF intends to build on its signature work in Jazz by expanding Jazz.NEXT out of its pilot phase and broadening participation in the Jazz Touring Network. In addition to an emphasis on Jazz, MAAF will continue to focus on programs that are unique in the sector, including international touring and Folk & Traditional Arts. A critical need in the field continues to be investment in support of fellowships for individual artists, and MAAF will strengthen its partnerships with state arts agencies to deliver efficient administration of individual artist fellowship programs.

Goal 3

Provide resources, knowledge and connections to enable artists and organizations to build audiences and relationships, and to explore new approaches that enhance their operational and creative practice.

Goal 3 focuses on fostering connections, building knowledge and sharing information. While currently there exist many resources and efforts to build capacity of individual artists and organizations, MAAF is uniquely positioned to create and support broader and more efficient systems of knowledge sharing through convenings and technology. Its relationship with the nine state arts agencies enables an efficient and effective knowledge-sharing network and helps build capacity throughout the region. Whether topically focused, discipline specific or geographically defined, these efforts can help identify critical issues, share best practices and develop solutions by aggregating thought leaders and expertise.

Objectives:

- Invest in sharing information, expertise and best practices through technology and convening.

- Lead investigations with service organizations, funders, and other thought leaders on issues of shared interest to maximize collective efforts and impact.
- Recognize and promote excellence in the arts.

Through its network of existing strategic partnerships (and its ability to engage in new ones) MAAF will establish regular convenings to leverage knowledge, share information, and inform advocacy networks. With a continued focus on establishing opportunities for artists and audiences, MAAF will showcase artists, grantees and award winners (Living Legacy Award, French-American Jazz Exchange), and incorporate the best use of technology to share knowledge and connect artists, presenters, partners, and other cultural workers.

Goal 4
Represent excellence and best practices in management and governance.

MAAF's continued success is due in part to continued commitment to institutional integrity, inclusion and transparency. With a restructured board of directors and new program partners, MAAF must build relationships, ensure engagement and communicate successes. With its long-standing stakeholders (including its state arts agency partners) MAAF must continue to ensure that partners' priorities are addressed, that they are fully aware of its efforts on their behalf, and prepared to respond to changing needs and opportunities. And, as the pace of change continues unmitigated, recruiting and retaining knowledge and talent on the staff and board is a critical key to success.

Objectives:

- Maintain a diverse and appropriately engaged board of directors with the knowledge and resources to support its vision and advance the mission of the organization.
- Engage in leadership development and succession planning for both professional staff and board leadership.

- Employ a staff with the skills and expertise to realize the goals and objectives of the organization.
- Ensure efficient, effective and transparent operations
- Seek and cultivate partners to support the work of the organization.
- Communicate success in achieving program goals.

Critical to the ability to achieve its goals is the institutional strength from which MAAF operates. MAAF derives significant learning and benefit from its relationship with state arts agency and other resource partners. MAAF will continue to provide opportunities for state arts agency directors and chairs to convene with MAAF board on a regular basis, as well as create opportunities for potential funders to see MAAF programs in action. A strong emphasis on the priority to build new relationships, identify new strategic partners and extend resources will be enabled by continued efforts to attract and retain talent at the board and staff level, and implementation of a strategic communications plan for greater recognition and understanding of MAAF and its programs.

Scenarios and Resources

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation recognizes that this is a time of funding volatility, uncertainty and change in the sector, and while it has worked to sharpen its priorities and focus its resources, flexibility will be required as partner priorities evolve. While continuing to be responsive to the field and funding community, MAAF has adopted priority areas for investment, underscored programs to be maintained, and addressed areas which could become constrained should fewer resources become available.

Defining Success

An essential part of the plan is to understand what success looks like to determine the allocation of leadership, staff and financial resources. MAAF has adopted the following measures of success in determining priorities:

Quality: Programs of distinction and excellence; models

Impact: Demonstrable impact to artists, organizations and communities; connecting artists with audiences regionally, nationally and internationally

Relevance: Willing partners; seen as a valued organization by the field and by funders.

Effectiveness: Best practices in management and governance

Scenario Planning & Monitoring Success

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation priorities are enabled by willing program partners and MAAF recognizes that program investment may shift. Continued flexibility will be required. The plan identifies the priority, relative level of resource requirement and potential response for scenarios that could include growth or reduction in public sector support and/or private sector funding.

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation has adopted a set of clear and measurable goals, objectives and strategies to guide it through the next three-to-five years. This is a period of anticipated continued volatility, and, while setting priorities, the plan is intentionally flexible in the allocation of resources according to future potential environments.

While the plan cites specific evaluation measures, it is a plan that is meant to be adjusted as well as monitored. MAAF will review progress against the plan on a regular basis, citing interim adjustments to goals, adoption of strategies and recognition of constraints. An annual report to the board will provide an update on progress as well as establish the working plan for the following year.