

**National Endowment for the Arts
October 25, 2023 Tribal Consultation Session
Summary
December 22, 2023**

I. BACKGROUND ON THE TRIBAL CONSULTATION SESSION

On October 25, 2023, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) held its Tribal Consultation session at the International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This was the agency’s second consultation session since implementing its Tribal Consultation Policy in October 2021. The purpose of this session was to gather input from tribal leaders about the needs and concerns of tribal communities as related to NEA resources and grants, to provide an update on NEA’s engagement with Native cultural leaders and tribal-serving organizations, and to inform our work related to the [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). Additionally, the NEA solicited recommendations on how the agency may best support tribal communities across the U.S. Specifically, the agenda included three items:

- 1) NEA Resources
- 2) Tribal Engagement
- 3) Partnerships with Tribal Organizations

Tribal nations were provided sixty (60) days notice of the consultation session via email and subsequent public postings (online and in the Federal Register), and included in the notice were links to the [framing document and agenda](#) for the Consultation Session for tribal representatives to review in advance of the session. The consultation session had approximately 15 attendees for the in-person event, in addition to four NEA staff members—Wendy Clark, Director of Museums, Visual Arts, and Indemnity; Daniel Fishman, Assistant General Counsel; Rachel McKean, Grants Management Specialist; and Erin Waylor, Multidisciplinary Arts Coordinator. Additional NEA staff members remotely attended. The NEA also received written remarks from one federally recognized tribal official.

The consultation session opened with a reflection offered by Walter Echo Hawk of the Pawnee Nation and Board Chair of Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums. Following the reflection, Ascala Tsegaye Sisk offered virtual remarks from Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, Chair of the NEA. Wendy Clark, Director of Museums, Visual Arts & Indemnity, facilitated the Consultation Session in accordance with the NEA Tribal Consultation Policy developed through consultation with tribal leaders in 2021. Clark acknowledged the virtual and in-person attendance of NEA staff, outlined the roles of the onsite NEA staff during the consultation session, and provided an overview of the agenda. Working through the agenda, the following framing questions were provided to help guide the conversation and solicit input from tribal leaders in attendance:

NEA Resources:

a. The NEA, established by Congress in 1965, is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. This is accomplished primarily by providing resources to support the creative lives of all communities in the United States. Grants are awarded for specific projects to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, federally recognized tribes, or units of state or local government. Individual makers, artists, and culture bearers are recognized and supported through programs such as the National Heritage Fellowship, Jazz Masters, and Creative Writing Fellowships. Forty percent of the NEA's program budget is granted to State Arts Agencies and Regional Arts Organizations, which make subgrants to support additional arts activities across the nation.

- i. What is your awareness of our agency's work?
- ii. Have NEA resources impacted your community? If so, how?
- iii. To what extent do you see the arts and cultural activities of your tribal community reflected in the resources we offer?
- iv. The review criteria for our primary grant program, Grants for Arts Projects, includes artistic excellence, which is defined as "The quality of the artists and other key individuals, creative process, works of art, organizations, arts education providers, artistic partners, and/or services involved in the project and their relevance to the audience or communities the project aims to serve." How does this definition of artistic excellence resonate with the artistic and cultural activities of your tribal community?

Tribal Engagement:

- a. In recent years, the NEA has made grants to tribal governments and Tribal Colleges & Universities (TCUs). We also have recognized Indigenous artists with National Heritage Fellowships. These direct grants to tribes, tribal citizens, and TCUs are in addition to the grants we make to Native-serving nonprofits.
 - i. How can the NEA expand on this engagement with tribes and increase awareness of these opportunities?
 - ii. If the NEA has the resources to send staff representation to in-person events, where would our participation be most effective?
- b. The NEA annually updates the [Federal Resources for Native Arts & Cultural Activities](#), which is a consolidation of opportunities offered by federal agencies for organizations looking for funding and other resources to support Native arts and cultural activities.
 - i. Have you ever accessed this publication?
 - ii. Is this publication a useful resource to make available to tribal communities?
 - iii. How can we increase awareness of this resource guide?

Partnerships with tribal-serving organizations:

a. **Tribal Arts Councils:** At the last NEA Tribal Consultation session, the NEA discussed the possibility of supporting the work of Tribal Arts Councils, bodies organized to support arts and cultural activities at the regional level by providing programs and support services. These Tribal Arts Councils could be similar in form to State, Regional or Local Arts Agencies, and would support the identified need for greater regional tribal resources.

- i. How would you see a tribal arts council benefiting your community?
- ii. What regional needs would apply to tribal arts councils?
- iii. Would a government point of contact specific to arts grants be beneficial?
- iv. What support would Tribal Arts Councils require from NEA?
- v. Do you currently work with your State and/or Local Arts Agency?

Elected and appointed tribal officials and their proxies were invited to provide their input and additional comments in response to these prompts. In response to the invitations issued to the Consultation, the agency received one confirmation of a proxy to attend from the Cherokee Nation. During the in-person consultation, the agency did not receive verbal remarks about the above agenda items from tribal leaders or their proxies.

II. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND NEA RESPONSES

Following the Consultation, the agency received written comments from the Nez Perce Tribe, specifically from Shannon Wheeler, Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. Chairman Wheeler noted that the Nez Perce Tribe has a long history (15 years) of successfully applying for grants to the NEA. Those grants were administered by a dedicated arts staff member until 2010. Since that time staff shortages have prevented the Tribe from continuing its engagement with the agency. The primary need for further engagement is restoration of the staff position. The Nez Perce Tribe did, however, offer that they could help organize further consultations, citing specifically the possibility of holding a regional one that could coincide with the next meeting of the Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians.

III. NEXT STEPS

1. Review and consider comments received:
The agency has considered and will continue to consider the above-mentioned input while developing policies and grant programs that are within legal and regulatory limits. The NEA will take a collaborative approach to ensure that the agency continues to strengthen its relationship with tribal communities.
2. Inform applicants and tribal leaders the agency has developed FAQs specific to tribes and Native groups to support engagement with NEA grantmaking.
3. Work with tribal-serving institutions to deliver a NEA grants workshop webinar and additional outreach for tribes.

4. Reassess the best venue and format for future tribal consultations, as well as agency engagement to ensure continued meaningful participation by tribal leaders.

IV. CONCLUSION

The NEA will continue to solicit input from tribes as outlined in the consultation policy and looks forward to strengthening the nation-to-nation relationship through a continued and meaningful dialogue with Tribal nations.