



New England
Foundation
for the Arts

New England Foundation for the Arts

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2008-2013

Executive Summary



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Photo Credits

Front Cover: Akram Khan Dance Company, based in the U.K., received National Dance Project planning support in 2007 and is touring its new work *bahok* to six different locations across the U.S. in February and March 2010.

Back Cover (left to right): Toumani Diabate (Mali), Expeditions grant recipient; photo by Paul Slaughter; birch-bark canoe by David Moses Bridges, Passamaquoddy (Perry, Maine), Native Arts @ NEFA grant recipient; photo by David Moses Bridges; White Box Theatre (Philadelphia, PA), Expeditions grant recipient; photo by Jacques-Jean Tiziou.

EARLY IN 2008, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF ARTS ACTION RESEARCH AND WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE FIDELITY FOUNDATION, NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (NEFA) STAFF AND BOARD, INCLUDING STATE ARTS AGENCY PARTNERS, BEGAN PLANNING FOR THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 2008 THROUGH NOVEMBER 2013. THIS PROCESS ALLOWED US TO ASSESS, GATHER FEEDBACK, REFLECT, REFINE, AND RE-AFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO NEFA'S MISSION, VALUES, AND PROGRAM PRIORITIES. THE RESULTING PLAN CHARTS A COURSE FOR THE WORK AHEAD, AND WILL GUIDE THE ORGANIZATION AS WE MEET THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.



Andrea Rogers, Chair of the Board



Rebecca Blunk, Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

NEFA creatively supports the movement of people, ideas, and resources in the arts within New England and beyond, makes vital connections between artists and communities, and builds the strength, knowledge, and leadership of the region's creative sector.

VISION & VALUES ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

Embodying New England's "brand" of freedom, innovation, individuality, community, passionate discourse, and curiosity, NEFA champions the centrality of art and artists to a vibrant society and planet.

We believe that the arts and culture make us fully human and are the core of vital communities;

We believe that diversity – of race, class, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, and ideas – enriches creative expression and civil discourse;

We believe that artists are visionaries - inventors and innovators who, by continually questioning and pushing boundaries, lead in the development of ideas, materials, and technology;

We believe in the importance of continually learning together and from other sectors, fields, and systems;

We believe in the transformative power of the live, in-person arts experience and the value of bringing people together to interact and respond.

PROGRAMS & RESOURCES ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

Programs supporting New England artists and communities are at the center of NEFA's work -- the historic heart from which national programs at NEFA have radiated and international exchanges have germinated. Examples of these include the National Dance Project, which grew out of the New England Dance Project in 1995 in response to a critical need for a new dance funding system, and more recently, Native Arts @ NEFA and American Masterpieces: Dance, which presented strategic opportunities to partner with funders to expand our impact by adapting existing program models.

By definition, NEFA's national programs provide a direct benefit to New England, feeding important resources – funding, knowledge, and connectivity - back into the region. These resources make up a vital part of NEFA's resource equation, leveraging core federal and state funding for New England-focused programs to support a robust infrastructure that can provide programs of regional, national, and even international impact.

Current Programs & Geographic Impact			
	New England	National	International
New England Touring			
New England States Touring	X		
Meet the Composer/ New England	X	X	X
Expeditions	X	X	X
Presenter Travel Fund	X	X	X
MatchBook.org	X		
Public Art			
Fund for the Arts (Boston area)	X		
Public Art Northern New England	X		
Native Arts @ NEFA			
Native Arts New England	X		
National Native Artist Exchange	X	X	
National Dance Project			
Production and Touring Grants	X	X	X
International Partnerships		X	X
Regional Dance Development Initiative	X	X	
Contemporary Art Centers network	X	X	X
Center for Creative Research	X	X	
Research, Documentation, & Evaluation			
Program-related research	X	X	X
Commissioned creative economy research and reports	X	X	
CultureCount.org	X		

THE VIEW AHEAD: GOALS & STRATEGIES

In a world that is increasingly connected, the interconnectedness of NEFA's regional, national, and international programming is essential to its vision, and to aggregating the financial resources it takes to support the design and delivery of programs and services at its current \$5M-6M scale. Looking

ahead, we will work to strategically enhance our ability to sustain this scale through life cycles of programs and ever-changing landscapes for funding. Accordingly, the goals and strategies of this plan are supported with detailed objectives centered on the development of financial, human, and technological resources. With these as a guide, we will work to strengthen and advance NEFA's unique capacities in grantmaking, convening, knowledge-sharing, and partnership-building over the next five years.

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Goals

- 1** Provide programs and services that encourage New England artists and communities to work together in ways that foster artistic excellence, accessibility, civic engagement, and cultural understanding;
- 2** Continue to play a leadership role in supporting dance on a national and international level, and extend this capacity to other selected disciplines, for the benefit of both New England and the nation;
- 3** Increase public understanding of New England's creative economy - its artists, cultural organizations, and creative industries – as a sector of critical importance to the region's economic and civic vitality;
- 4** Enhance NEFA's ability to sustain an effective, innovative, and resilient organization with both focus and agility.

Strategies

- Continually assess the needs of artists, arts organizations, and communities in order to support artists' work through creating environments, conditions, and visibility that promote cultural vitality and engagement;
- Offer communications tools, online networks, and live forums for artists, arts organizations, and communities to meet, exchange knowledge and resources, and develop professional practices;
- Evolve grants programs that expand opportunities within and across all NEFA program areas, are responsive yet challenging, and provide access to those who are new to the grants experience as well as those who are established;
- Manage research and online data to quantify and legitimize the creative economy as a vital economic sector, and assist artists, arts organizations, and communities to make the case for stronger cultural policy and investment;
- Coordinate and distribute learning from all NEFA programs to create dialogue and promote engaged and sustained relationships between artists and communities;
- Strengthen and expand NEFA's ability to raise and provide resources;
- Enhance NEFA's ability to attract, engage, and retain a high caliber staff and board.

Public Partnerships

NEFA works closely with its state arts agency partners and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to identify opportunities to advance the arts regionally and influence them nationally. The New England state arts agencies (SAAs) serve as financial and advisory partners to NEFA, providing guidance and creating an important web of regional links that enables NEFA to promote effective cross-border arts activity in the New England region.

The interconnectedness of NEFA's regional, national, and international programming is essential to its vision.

Successes of the SAA/NEFA/NEA partnership to date include:

- Building upon state contributions with funding from national and private sector sources to support New England artists and cultural leaders;
- Increased knowledge of regional, national, and international trends and practices that can inform work in individual states and the region as a whole;
- Creative economy research—information and analysis;
- Shared high cost, labor-intensive technology projects;
- Sharing of knowledge and insights among colleagues.

Components of a successful SAA/NEA/NEFA partnership:

- Buy-in on the value of working regionally and in a synchronized manner;
- Understanding the kind of work that is uniquely regional;
- Regular communication;
- Mutual respect and understanding of challenges and pressures;
- Collective problem solving and collective responsibility;
- Participation fees structure in place.

NEFA began as a conduit for the SAAs and NEA, and all three partners continue to benefit from this relationship. While NEFA has had the opportunity over the years to expand programs beyond New England, the work with the SAAs remains at the core of NEFA's programming, and helps to define NEFA.

Form partnerships with organizations, including higher education institutions, which extend the resources for development of the field, can sponsor major events and symposia, and disseminate teaching resources.

3 Native Arts

Continue to build NEFA's organizational capacity to provide leadership in support of Native American artists and Native-led organizations through regional and national grants to develop and exchange artistic skills and develop projects that have lasting impact on Native and non-Native communities;

Expand NEFA's contacts with Native artists in New England and nationally through increased collaborations and partnerships with other organizations, working at the regional and national levels to increase support and opportunities for Native artists;

Work to raise the visibility of New England Native artists and Native organizations and connect them to national resources for increased recognition and marketability for their work, and national learning about their unique contributions;

Organize and facilitate gatherings and forums that strengthen connections among Native artists and organizations, including those who have received grants, where they can share artwork, learn from projects, exchange information, issues, and experiences, and participate in professional development activities;

Explore a variety of means of creating networks and communications among Native artists, Native-led organizations, and tribal entities that raise awareness of the grants and exchange opportunities open to them through all NEFA's programs.

4 National Dance Project (NDP)

Continue to support a broader field of dance artists and companies through the NDP core grants system for creation of contemporary dance and touring, including regionally-significant artists, and those incorporating inter-disciplinary elements and new technologies;

Identify dance leaders and funding partners in additional regions to formalize and deploy the Regional Dance Development Initiative (RDDI) model to increase choreographers' and dancers' capacities to present and contextualize their work;

Pursue new and continued international partnerships that provide opportunities for U.S. artists to exchange internationally, as well as opportunities for U.S. presenters and audiences to have access to international dance artists;

Explore new models for presenting dance including artist self-presentation and non-traditional presenters and venues, using the network of NDP Hub Sites and Advisors and providing infrastructure support toward successful tours;

Embrace new technologies for communicating, providing professional development, and knowledge-sharing in the field of dance, as well as the increasingly prevalent components of inter-disciplinary works.

5 Research, Documentation, and Evaluation

Promote NEFA's definition and methodology for measuring the cultural core of the creative economy as the national standard to be adopted and implemented in the entire U.S. resulting in a baseline of nationally comparable data in the this sector;

Continue to develop data, analysis, and tools to measure and report in accessible formats the economic impact of New England nonprofit and public sector cultural organizations to support casemaking and advocacy – potentially through an online impact calculator;

Establish CultureCount as a sustainable and widely used online clearinghouse of data for nonprofit and commercial cultural organizations and individual artists reflecting a comprehensive count of New England's creative economy;

Through online granting, with CultureCount as the platform, streamline data collection across NEFA's programs and report back to the field on statistics gathered from NEFA-funded programs and project evaluations;

Facilitate staff training and identify opportunities for field development across all programs for documentation, evaluation, and case studies that demonstrate the artistic and social impact of New England's creative economy.



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