



NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2019

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NEFA is a nonprofit organization that operates with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New England state arts agencies, and from corporations, foundations, individuals, and other government agencies.

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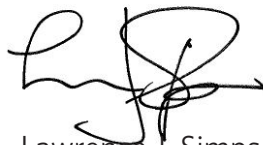
COVER PHOTOS OF NEFA-SUPPORTED ARTISTS
(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT):
MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH | PHOTO: ALEX CLARK
REGGIE WILSON FIST & HEEL | PHOTO: JULIETA CERVANTES
RIBAB FUSION | PHOTO COURTESY OF RIBAB FUSION
WHO'S HUNGRY BY DAN FROOT & DAN HURLIN | PHOTO: DAT VU

PREFACE

In July 2011, NEFA began work on a new five-year strategic plan (2014–2019). Guided by a strategic planning committee of the board of directors, NEFA staff and board, including state arts agency partners, engaged deeply in the process of gathering feedback from the field, reflecting and refining the organization’s mission, values, and program priorities. The new plan, adopted in July 2013, sets a course for the next five years, as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Our thanks go to all who participated, with special acknowledgement to Maren Brown, who conducted a constituent listening tour (interviews, meetings, focus groups, and online surveys), Maureen Robinson, who facilitated a focus on governance, and Rebecca Lawrence, who assisted with the drafting process.

Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Simpson
Chair, Board of Directors



Laura Paul
Interim Co-Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer



Jane Preston
Interim Co-Executive Director, Director of Programs

INTRODUCTION

As NEFA enters its 38th year, we embark on a renewed strategic plan for the future. Our environment has changed, technology has leapt ahead, and we know that we must position to adapt to new circumstances even as we remain true to our vision and values.

MISSION STATEMENT

NEFA's mission is to build connections among artists, arts organizations, and funders, powering the arts to energize communities in New England, the nation, and the world.

VISION & VALUES

We see NEFA as New England's beacon of creative and collaborative leadership that illuminates and defines the value of the arts to society as a whole and to the individual human spirit. We envision a world in which the arts play an active role in public life, bridge the divides of geography and culture, and may be freely pursued in the individual human quest for universal understanding.

We believe that:

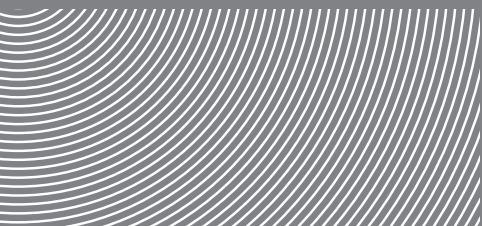
- » Arts and culture make us more fully human and are at the core of vital communities;
- » Artists belong among other visionaries, inventors and innovators who, by continually questioning and pushing boundaries, lead in the development of ideas, materials, and technology;
- » Equal access to the arts, inclusive of race, class, culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability, enriches creative expression, promotes civil discourse, and ameliorates social ills;
- » Cultural participation—of the live, in-person arts experience that brings people together to interact and respond—has transformative power that can be complemented by, but not replaced by, new technologies;
- » Collaborating with other sectors, such as for-profit creative enterprises, and fields, such as the sciences, leads to more robust and relevant arts making and distribution; Freedom of expression is essential to the arts and the arts can promote freedom throughout the world.

WHERE WE BEGAN & WHERE WE ARE GOING

PARTNERSHIPS & PROGRAMS

NEFA, from its founding, has been about making connections, building systems to move the arts from one place to another and designing structures to support artists and arts presenters. Established as an independent nonprofit partner for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the six New England state arts agencies (SAAs) nearly 40 years ago, it quickly became a nexus for the SAAs to act collectively, learn from each other, and benefit their shared constituencies. An early program model grew from the simple idea that touring artists from one New England state to perform for audiences in the other five states would increase artists' income and grow audiences for a more varied repertoire. This touring model persists in NEFA's portfolio as NEST (New England States Touring) but it also became the seed for future, more complex programs. For just as technology has changed the way artists and audiences interact and as politics and the economy have reconfigured public arts agencies, NEFA changed as well. It expanded its partnerships to include the private sector and its program portfolio to include national and international components. This expansion has enriched resources for the region, bringing artists of national and international acclaim to New England communities, and elevated the region's work, in areas such as the Creative Economy, to national significance.

NEFA has a well-documented reputation for excellence in designing and adapting programs to bring the best art to a variety of settings. Its program models encourage artists to create, presenters to expand their reach, and audiences to engage more deeply and personally with high quality works of art. This groundbreaking work is designed and field tested in ways that benefit artistic production, distribution and support--regionally, nationally, and internationally. One example of this process is the National Dance Project (NDP), which, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, grew out of the New England Dance Project in 1995 in response to a critical need for a new dance funding model. Another example of regionally based work with national relevance is NEFA's economic impact research. Dating back to the mid-1970s, NEFA's documentation of the economic impact of the non-profit arts sector in New England led to connecting that data with data on for-profit enterprises employing creative workers, which, in turn, continues to inform national recognition of the creative economy.



As NEFA goes forward, it recognizes that it must continually adapt to not just regional, but also global, change. Below are some of the external conditions, which were identified through a “listening tour,” including interviews and focus groups, and staff and board discussions. This environmental context will inform NEFA’s thinking over the next five years:

- » The impact of climate change on the earth’s resources will affect the way artists create and people experience the arts;
- » Technology has changed the way consumers, particularly young people, prefer to experience the arts, creating new models and challenges for audience engagement;
- » Geographic borders are increasingly permeable in a virtually connected world;
- » Changing demographics in the U.S. population have not yet led to a similar diversity in readily available arts offerings;
- » Financial pressures are taking a significant toll on NEFA’s core constituencies and strategic partners. Some member SAAs may be reconfigured to focus less exclusively on the arts and national and state public funds continue to be threatened with cuts;
- » Arts education is losing traction in public K-12 schools;
- » Partnerships and collaborations are on the rise, but arts administrators need more resources to take advantage of them.

In designing programs, NEFA acts as both entrepreneur and curator. It stewards those programs proven effective over time, yet fearlessly welcomes initiatives that emerge in response to changes in the society at large and in the arts world in particular. Over the years, some programs have proven resilient and relevant, while others have met a specific need to then be phased out, allowing new programs to take root. All have added to NEFA’s institutional knowledge and capacity. It is critical that NEFA remain open to new ideas and new program models while refining existing programs and recognizing when a particular program is no longer viable. To assess program viability, NEFA applies the following criteria:

- » Aligns with NEFA’s mission and values;
- » Organizational capacity, either existing or with a clear path to being developed;
- » Availability of sufficient human and financial resources;
- » Strengthens NEFA’s partnership with its public partners, the National Endowment for the Arts and the six New England state arts agencies;
- » Benefits shared constituencies in New England and beyond.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

GOALS, STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1

Design and deliver an adaptive, leading portfolio of programs to support the creation and presentation of high quality art which: honors traditions and breaks new ground; encourages the development of multiple generations of artists and participants with diverse origins and perspectives; and stimulates community engagement and cultural understanding.

STRATEGIES

- » Attract and award public and private funds through dynamic partnerships and innovative programs.
- » Continually assess the needs of constituents in order to effectively support artists, arts organizations, and communities.

OBJECTIVES

- » Design programs that increase opportunities for artists to make connections with each other and with an array of networks that will inform and support their work.
- » Include incentives for funded arts activities to reach under-served constituencies.
- » Increase the number and diversity of grant applicants and beneficiaries to reflect current and future demographics of the U.S. population.
- » Facilitate long term relationships between artists, organizations, and communities to promote deep engagement and place-making.
- » Identify shared constituencies among programs and promote cross program collaboration.
- » Identify strategic partners to enhance individual programs as well as program clusters.
- » Document and assess programming to capture accomplishments and inform program refinements.

GOAL 2

Strengthen New England's and, by extension, the nation's cultural industry.

STRATEGIES

- » Provide forums to contribute to the nation's ongoing dialogue on the value of the arts and support case-making for arts investment.
- » Offer opportunities for constituents to connect, exchange knowledge, and share best practices.
- » Collect, synthesize, and contextualize data on the creative economy.
- » Refine methods for collecting and sharing the outcomes of funded projects

OBJECTIVES

- » Support peer learning and problem solving through virtual and in-person platforms for arts professionals.
- » Recognize and document effective leadership in the creative economy arena.
- » Document, evaluate, and distribute learning about innovative practices of artists and organizations.

GOAL 3

Ensure that NEFA has ample human and financial resources to fully support its mission.

STRATEGIES

- » Develop and steward a diverse mix of public and private partnerships and resources.
- » Grow NEFA's capacity to attract, engage, and retain the best board and staff possible.

OBJECTIVES

- » Assess board policies and practices to support board members' full engagement.
- » Strengthen NEFA's ability to raise and provide resources.
- » Expand the number and type of donors who support NEFA's work.
- » Provide competitive compensation and benefit packages to recruit and keep a high caliber staff.
- » Maintain up-to-date technology tools to promote earth-friendly communications, services and products.
- » Update the partnership with the state arts agencies of the New England region.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

In 2014, NEFA manages six program areas in the performing, visual, or cultural arts and one to encompass data-driven research and professional networking. These program groupings operate on multiple levels within the regional, national and international arts ecology. The following table documents the geographic scope of each program.

CURRENT PROGRAMS & GEOGRAPHIC IMPACT			
	NEW ENGLAND	NATIONAL	INTERNATIONAL
NEW ENGLAND PRESENTING & TOURING			
New England States Touring	■		
Expeditions	■	■	■
Presenter Travel Fund	■	■	■
PUBLIC ART			
Fund for the Arts (Boston area)	■		
Public Art Discussion Series	■		
NATIONAL DANCE PROJECT			
Production & Touring	■	■	■
International Partnerships	■	■	■
Regional Dance Development Initiative	■	■	
Contemporary Art Centers Network	■	■	■
CENTER STAGE	■	■	■
NATIONAL THEATER PROJECT			
Creation & Touring	■	■	
Presentation	■	■	
Presenter Travel	■	■	
CREATIVE ECONOMY			
Program-related research	■	■	■
Commissioned research	■	■	
CreativeGround.org	■		



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