

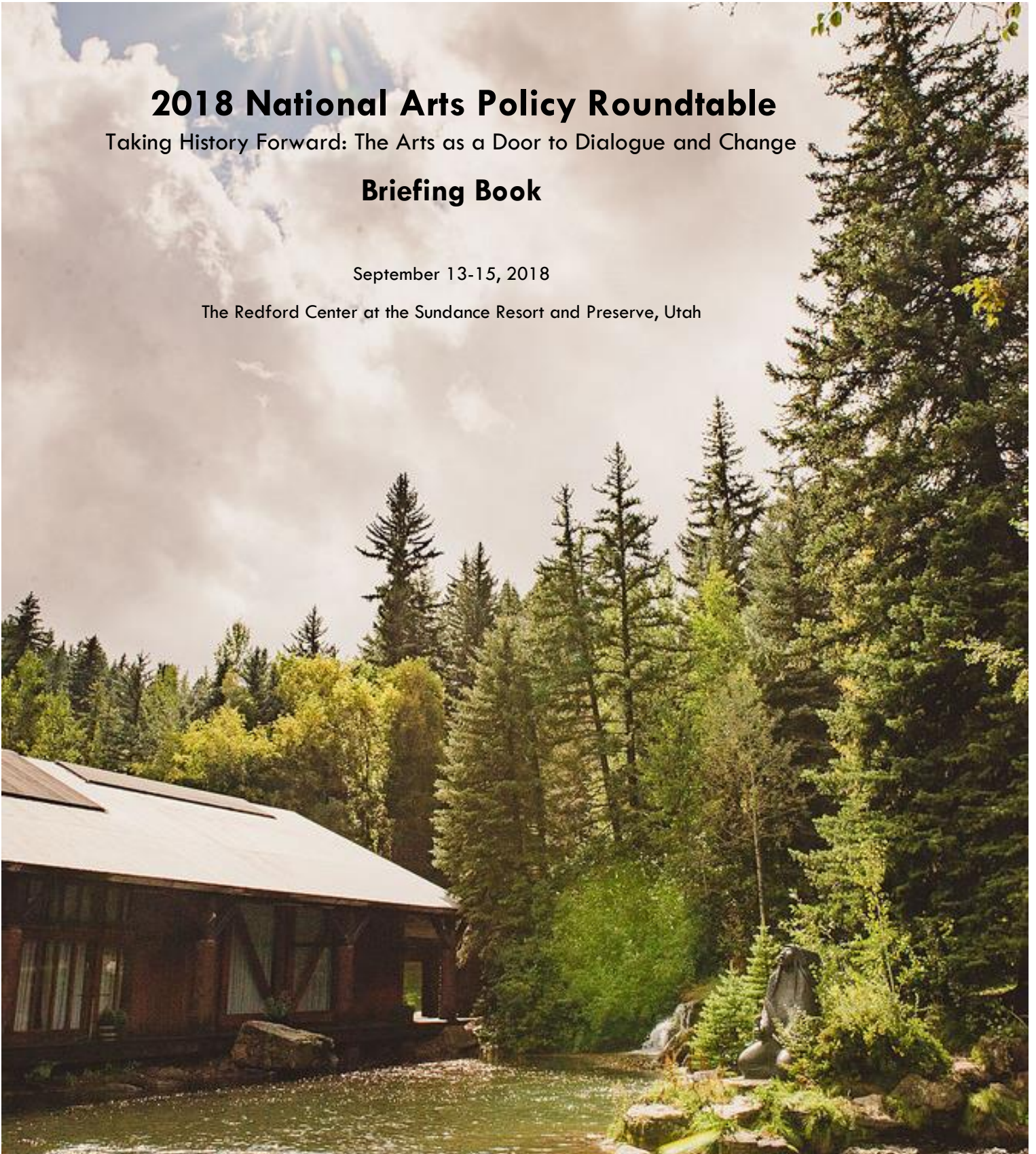
2018 National Arts Policy Roundtable

Taking History Forward: The Arts as a Door to Dialogue and Change

Briefing Book

September 13-15, 2018

The Redford Center at the Sundance Resort and Preserve, Utah



September 4, 2018

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 13th annual convening of the Americans for the Arts National Arts Policy Roundtable at Sundance. The roundtable was conceived of by Robert Redford, founder of the Sundance Institute, and me as a gathering of high-level decision makers and thought leaders that would catalyze new ideas, strategies and efforts for the arts in America. Since then, participants have recommended policies and strategies critical to the role of the arts in advancing our society.

I would like to thank Mariët Westermann, Executive Vice President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, who is serving as Chair of this year's convening. Americans for the Arts also gratefully acknowledges The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mary Luehrsen and The NAMM Foundation, and the Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts for their generous support of the 2018 National Arts Policy Roundtable. I am very much looking forward to our conversation and regret not being able to join you for the first evening as I need to be in DC for an event that could not be rescheduled.

This year's topic, ***Taking History Forward: The Arts as a Door to Dialogue and Change*** will focus on the unique capacities that the arts have to inspire, inform, promote, and contribute to civic, social, and community change. We will investigate this from two primary perspectives: that of the artist whose work is informed by a desire to inspire social change and for whom advocacy is an integral tool of their practice; as well as from the perspective of non-arts organizations and causes which utilize artists as a way to help strengthen and transmit their mission. Artists from performance, design and the visual arts are in attendance alongside policy makers and individual, foundation, civic and community foundation leaders. I look forward to deepening our understanding of how we as a field can advance meaningful policy, structural, and systems change, particularly in this challenging, current political climate.

Finally, the key for the success of this event is you, the participant. The stories and perspectives that you share during the course of our discussion will launch us into new ways of thinking and viewing the topic. For your willingness to exchange and share your insight, we are deeply grateful.



Robert L. Lynch
Co-Founder, National Arts Policy Roundtable
President and CEO, Americans for the Arts

Introduction

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have been characterized by change in our country – both productive and, at times, destructive. While on many levels, the world has become more interconnected through technology and media, we are also in a time of dramatic social and political polarization. Throughout this period, artists have played a unique role through their contribution of ideas and interconnectedness, as well as in their ability to provide meaning, create empathy, and build bridges in the face of division and uncertainty.

“Arts and culture are the entry point; the tip of the spear that activates change in all policy.”

Sol Guy, music producer and social entrepreneur
2017 National Arts Policy Roundtable

The 2018 National Arts Policy Roundtable, “Taking History Forward: The Arts as a Door to Dialogue and Change,” builds on the 2017 Roundtable’s discussions of the artist’s role as change agent to focus on the unique capacity of the arts to inspire, inform, promote, and contribute to civic, social, and community transformation. While artists acting as social provocateurs is not new (think Francisco Goya’s derision of Spanish society in *Los Caprichos* from 1797 as a powerful early example from Western Art, as well as the long history of music as an instrument of protest), this convening will focus on some current artistic approaches which integrate the vital elements of advocacy and social justice into the artist’s toolbox. It will also explore the increased recognition by non-arts organizations that harnessing the power of an artists’ vision can help to highlight their messages of social change and broaden the reach of their respective missions.

Americans for the Arts aims to empower both perspectives through its work in resource- and capacity-building for individuals and organizations, as well as more recent efforts focused on social impact. None of this work is possible without partnerships – public and private, individual and organizational – and Americans for the Arts is committed to continuing to build and sustain partnerships, not only with individual artists and arts organizations but across sectors, to demonstrate the breadth of the impact of arts and culture on our society more broadly. This involves not only telling the story of the intrinsic value of the arts, but also proactively cultivating exchanges of ideas with representatives from other diverse sectors and listening to their concerns, so we can help to find the best fit for the arts in tackling national and global challenges.

Last year’s convening was also informed by the urgency within communities to protect an artist’s ability to create work without fear of reprisal. Attacks against freedom of speech reached new levels of vitriol, as did threats to our nation’s cultural agencies. Discussions addressed the protection of First Amendment rights and the need to create a broad support system for artists both within and outside the traditional 501c3 model. This year we will continue our focus on this issue as threats to freedom of expression, for artists and others, persist.

The Value and Social Impact of the Arts

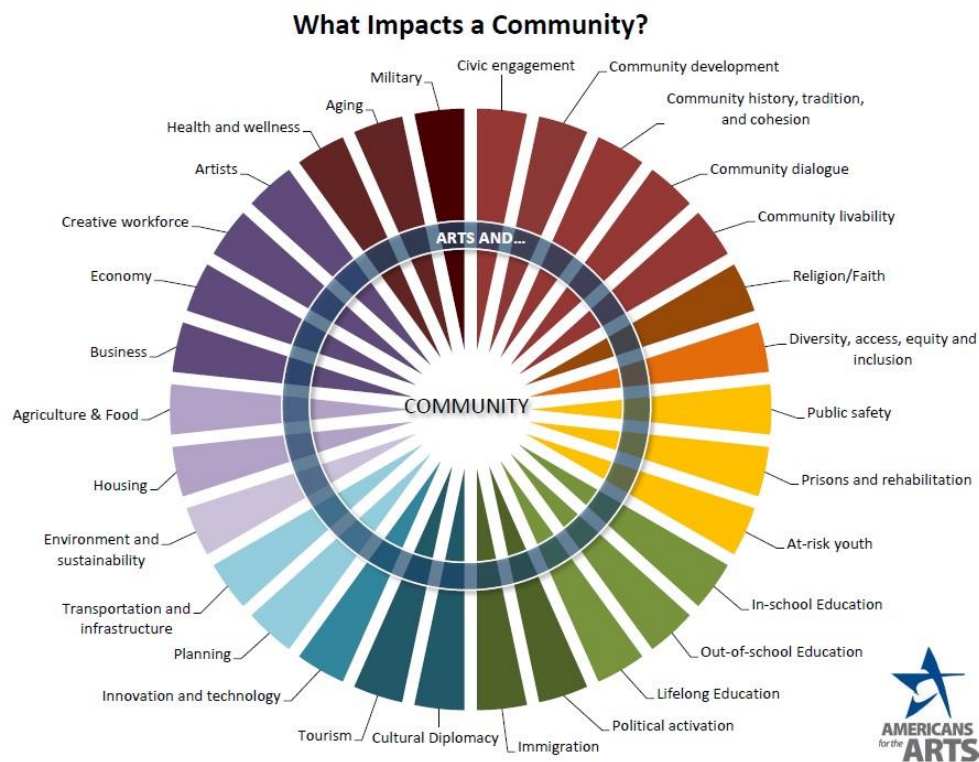
In 2017, according to the National League of Cities, the top ten issues of concern to mayors and their communities were:

- Economic Development
- Public Safety

- Infrastructure
- Budgets
- Housing
- Education
- Energy & Environment
- Health
- Demographics
- Data & Technology

As advocates, we know the arts overlap with each of these issues in some way. One of our goals is to help decision-makers in the sectors in question understand the very concrete impact of the arts and build creative, arts-based solutions to some of their most pressing civic challenges.

One way in which Americans for the Arts has undertaken this work is through our interactive “[Arts + Social Impact Explorer](#),”¹ which was launched earlier this summer, and compiles research and examples from across 26 sectors. Created with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the tool offers issue overviews, impact points, fact sheets, reading lists, and examples of the arts at work in addressing a given issue.



The section on “Prisons and Rehabilitation,” for example, argues that the arts may provide ways to reduce the staggering 2.4 million people currently incarcerated in the United States. It goes on to reference research that demonstrates “rates of parole violation for arts-in-corrections participants were 15 percent lower than non-participants. After two years, this difference climbed to 30

¹ Arts + Social Impact Explorer, Americans for the Arts www.AmericansfortheArts.org/socialimpact

percent.” Furthermore, it highlights local programs engaged in this work, such as Arts in Prison in Overland Park, Kansas, as well as national initiatives like the PEN America Prison Writing Program.

This tool, the research that has gone into it, and the partnerships built to highlight social impact work, is not only an incredibly important component of cross-sectoral advocacy, but it also provides context and examples for others looking to promote dialogue, collaboration, and change through the arts.

Non-Arts Causes Using the Arts

“I believe in controversy. We have to sponsor arts events that make people think, make people feel and advance social ideas.

-Dan Logan, President, Nevada Foundation
2017 National Arts Policy Roundtable

Over the years we have seen more instances of non-arts organizations engaging artists as a means to more widely and potently convey their mission and messages. The examples provided in the Arts + Social Impact Explorer offer ample evidence of this, and several other powerful projects in recent years also highlight the importance of integrating the arts into cross-sectoral social change work:

- The 2014 virtual reality (VR) experience, *Clouds Over Sidra* (created by Gabo Arora and Chris Milk and funded in part by the United Nations Sustainable Development Action Campaign and UNICEF Jordan) placed the viewer/participant alongside Sidra, an engaging and hopeful 12-year-old girl, as she tours her home at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan. Zaatari is home to 130,000 Syrians fleeing violence and war. Children make up half the camp's population. As you develop a connection to Sidra and her family, and bear witness to the moments of her daily life, you realize the scope of the humanitarian crisis she is a part of in a profoundly tangible way. Milk, who presented this work at the Sundance Film Festival in 2015, has described his work in VR as creating the "ultimate empathy machine" with the intention that his films "will be shared with the people who have the power to change the lives of the people inside the films."
- *CARNE y ARENA* (2017) is a new VR installation created by Academy Award-winning director Alejandro G. Iñárritu which focuses on "the human condition of immigrants and refugees" attempting to enter the U.S. across the Mexican border. It "blurs and binds together the superficial lines between subject and bystander, allowing individuals to...live a fragment of a refugee's personal journey" by having them quite literally walk in an immigrant's shoes.² The American leg of the project was funded, in large part, by The Emerson Collective, a non-profit organization focused on "education, immigration reform, the environment, health, and other social justice initiatives."³ Through the artwork, these migrants' harrowing experiences are made tangible and personal. *CARNE y ARENA* was recently installed, long-term, in Washington, DC, in close proximity to policy makers who can affect change.
- The Equal Justice Initiative's integration of the arts in an effort to achieve its mission to "[end] mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to [challenge] racial and economic injustice, and to [protect] basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society," has been very much in the news since the long-anticipated *National*

² *CARNE y ARENA*. <https://carneyarenadc.com/about>

³ The Emerson Collective. <http://www.emersoncollective.com/>

Memorial for Peace and Justice and the accompanying *Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration* opened in Montgomery, Alabama in April.⁴ Though conceived by social justice attorney Bryan Stevenson and his team of legal colleagues, artists' voices were integrated into every aspect of the planning and presentation of the memorial and museum. The profoundly impactful design of the memorial, conceived by Michael Murphy and MASS Design Group, is a visible example of "architecture as a transformative engine for change," which challenges the visitor to face the difficult history of lynching in our country over the course of an emotional journey through the site. Ultimately, it is a call to action for communities across the nation to examine their past; to reflect and engage with their role in this tragic period in American history, and the echoes of it we still see today; and to be held accountable to engage a local, community response to the issue.

Civic Engagement of the Arts and Artists

In addition to the special projects which incorporate artists' work to make the emotional and political appeal for social change, the arts make significant contributions to the building blocks of participatory democracy. Governments – both nationally and at state and local levels – draw on both economic and "art for arts' sake" arguments in a number of initiatives.

On Americans for the Arts' National Arts Advocacy Day in 2016, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) proposed new legislation to strengthen the creative economy. The Comprehensive Resources for Entrepreneurs in the Arts to Transform the Economy (CREATE) Act builds on much of Americans for the Arts' research in this area and "aims to more thoroughly serve the people, places, and programs that make our nation's creative economy prosper in all its cultural, social, and commercial forms."⁵ Reminiscent of FDR's New Deal, which integrated artists into civic infrastructure projects, provisions of the CREATE Act include:

- Expanding programs at the Small Business Administration to increase microloans, business loans and technical assistance for artists;
- Requiring the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration ensure that traditional economic development tools, such as incubators and grant programs, support the creative economy throughout the country;
- Creating an Artist Corps to increase national service through the arts, as called for in the Serve America Act.

City governments also recognize the importance of integrating the arts and culture into their work. Among them:

- The city of Boston which, for example, has an Artists-in-Residence program as "a way for the City to support our artists as agents of reflection, collaboration, and activism while learning new approaches to familiar challenges in city government. As social and civic practitioners, as well as community members, the ten artists are given time to research the

⁴ The National Memorial for Peace and Justice – the Equal Justice Initiative. <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/>

⁵ <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/arts-advocacy-day/CREATEactonepager.pdf>

needs of the community, deepen their creative practice, and develop a proposal while in residence... Attending workshops alongside a partnering cohort from...community centers and other City agencies, the artists and their City partners learn from each other and presenters in order to develop projects incorporating artistic social practice into government and community work.”

- At the 2017 Roundtable, Santa Fe, New Mexico’s former mayor, The Honorable Javier Gonzales, spoke about the development of the city’s Cultural Plan, aimed at addressing major social challenges, such as hunger and poverty, as well as working to ameliorate a community sense of disconnection, which seemed to drive economic inequality in the city. Rather than working top-down with established institutions, the cultural plan disrupted traditional approaches and asked communities what the arts and culture meant to them. In addition to being critical for a good quality of life and attracting tourism, the arts must also be recognized as keys to developing and creating harmony among communities. Helping policymakers recognize this is an important step towards improving the lives of citizens across the nation.

“Unfortunately, too many neighborhoods lack infrastructure and connectivity... we need to disrupt that and intentionally use the arts in the cultural transformation of a city.”

Javier Gonzales, Former Mayor of Santa Fe (2014-2018)
2017 National Arts Policy Roundtable

The impetus for incorporating the arts into civic dialogue comes not just from the top down but can be initiated in powerful ways at the community level as well:

- After the fatal shooting of Philando Castile outside Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 2016, his mother Valerie Castile began to receive art – paintings and drawings of her son, as well as handmade mementos. Finding that they gave her comfort, Valerie wanted to share this art with the rest of her community. She approached the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and this summer the exhibit “Art and Healing: In the Moment” opened at the museum. According to Valerie Castile:

“The work of these artists has made me feel like I’m not alone. There are times when I sit in my living room, grieving, but then I look around and see this art, and I know I’m not the only one affected by Philando’s death. That’s why I wanted this exhibition to happen – it’s about connecting, reaching out, having a conversation.”⁶

- At the current Front International Triennial in Cleveland, OH, the exhibition, *A Color Removed*, was conceived by artist Michael Rakowitz as a response to the shooting of Tamir Rice by local police. The exhibition quickly became a community project which invited all sectors of the city to engage in the work, and in turn, the issue itself. Samaria Rice, Tamir’s mother, became an artistic collaborator in the work as well.⁷

⁶ “MIA Presents Exhibition of Artwork Created in Response to the Fatal Shooting of Philando Castile.” <https://new.artsmia.org/press/mia-presents-exhibition-of-artwork-created-in-response-to-the-fatal-shooting-of-philando-castile/>

⁷ Front International Triennial, <https://frontart.org/>

“Foundations need to consider a new ecology of artists and not necessarily rely on the 501c3 structure. They shouldn’t rely just on other foundations as validators.”

- Elizabeth Mendez Berry, Director of Voice, Creativity and Culture, The Nathan Cummings Foundation
2017 National Arts Policy Roundtable

The Funding Perspective

Growing awareness around the importance of integrating the arts into social change work is reflected in the expansion – both in number and in breadth – of funders incorporating arts and social justice projects into their respective portfolios. While long-term partners at community foundations have engaged in socially-driven work at the local level for a number of years,

we are starting to see newer cross-disciplinary models at national organizations such as the Urban League and Independent Sector. Furthermore, as foundations recommit themselves to social justice work, they are stepping outside the boundaries of traditional programs focused solely on “Arts and Culture” or “Social Justice” to building projects that work at the intersection of both and allow room for innovation.

Conclusion

Arts that actively promote change and create empathy around emotionally charged issues allow us to explore sensitive and controversial topics in deeply felt ways that would not be possible through more didactic means. They provide a safe space for dialogue. When artists are intentionally engaged in civic work and social activism, they help make and magnify the case for the arts and amplify the vital role of the arts in transforming and informing communities. As President John F. Kennedy said at a memorial for the poet, Robert Frost in 1961, “If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. We must never forget that art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth.”

Past National Arts Policy Roundtable Topics:

Each roundtable focuses on a specific, timely topic and yields a series of recommendations on public policies and private sector practices- with the goal of moving the issue from thought to action.

- [2017- Re-Animating Democracy: The Arts as a Change Agent in Changing Times](#)
- [2016- Negotiating the New: Public and Private Sector Support in Changing Times](#)
- [2015- Transforming America's Communities: Philanthropy's Role- Why? How? What?](#)
- [2014- At the Edge of the Future: Arts and Technology in the 21st Century](#)
- [2013 – Arts and Healing: Mind, Body and Community](#)
- [2012 – Leveraging the Remake: The Role of the Arts in a Shifting Economy](#)
- [2011 – Innovating for Impact: Arts-Based Solutions for a Stronger America](#)
- [2010 – The Role of the Arts in Educating America for Great Leadership and Economic Strength](#)
- [2009 – The Role of the Arts in Strengthening and Inspiring the 21st Century Global Community](#)
- [2008 – The Arts and Civic Engagement: Strengthening the 21st Century Community](#)
- [2007 – The Role of the Arts in Building the 21st Century American Workforce](#)
- [2006 – The Future of Private Giving to the Arts in America](#)

About the National Arts Policy Roundtable

The National Arts Policy Roundtable assembles leaders from business, government, philanthropy, education, and the arts to Sundance every autumn to address issues critical to the advancement of American culture. It is a forum for national leaders to discuss timely issues, recommend public policies and private sector initiatives, and to identify research needs.

The National Arts Policy Roundtable was launched in October 2006 by Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and Robert Redford, founder of the Sundance Institute, on the premise that issues important to the arts are also important to society. Since its inception, the Roundtable has convened more than 350 top level decision makers and thought leaders from the fields of business, government, the social sector, education, and the arts in a unique cross sector forum designed to discuss issues—and propose solutions—critical to advancing American culture and vitality. Each Roundtable yields a series of recommendations on public policies and private sector practices that are necessary to move the issue addressed from thought to action, on such topics as the future of private sector funding for the arts, the role of the arts in building an internationally-competitive and creative 21st century workforce, fostering civic engagement, and strengthening global communities. Significant cultural policy achievements in both the private and public sectors have been the result. The findings and recommendations from past Roundtables have been distributed broadly via the Americans for the Arts website, publications and industry journals, op-eds, the media, and through Americans for the Arts' National Arts Policy Network which includes more than 5,000 local arts agencies across the country and over 200,000 citizen activists.

For more information, visit www.americansforthearts.org/napr.

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The 2018 National Arts Policy Roundtable is facilitated by David Grant.

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