

# CANDIDATE FORUMS ON THE ARTS:

a how-to guide to help citizens discover where candidates stand on public funding for the arts

## What is a candidate forum on the arts?

A candidate forum on the arts is essentially a conversation between political candidates and members of the arts community that is facilitated by a moderator. Forums typically include questions posted to candidates by panelists or members of the audience or sometimes by both.

## Why conduct a forum?

To **educate** political candidates about the arts in New Mexico and the importance and value of public funding for the arts and for arts education.

To **determine** where political candidates stand on the issue of public funding for the arts and arts education (i.e. to ensure that all candidates' positions are "on the record.")

To **solidify** political candidates' level of support for the arts.

To **inform** the voting public about candidates' positions on the arts, arts education, and public funding.

To **generate** public and media interest in the arts, arts education, and public funding for the arts.

To **build** relationships with potential decision makers and potential lawmakers.

## What kinds of forums?

### The Local Candidate

- ◆ School Board
- ◆ Mayor
- ◆ City Council
- ◆ County Commission

Local officials, such as mayors, city council members, and county commissioners can be instrumental in establishing or improving arts programming in your community, including support projects and programs that increase cultural tourism to your local town or city.

School board members also serve as policy makers for local school districts and are therefore instrumental in establishing or improving arts education in your town or city's public schools.

### The State Candidate

- ◆ State Representative
- ◆ State Senator
- ◆ Governor

Candidate forums on the arts are especially important in state elections. State representatives and senators vote on the Department of Cultural Affairs's budget appropriation every year. The Governor signs the budget appropriation into law every year. Citizens, especially patrons and supporters of the arts, need to know where state, elected officials stand on the issue of public funding for the arts. Many senators and representatives support the arts, but that doesn't mean they support public funding for the arts.

### The National Candidate

- ◆ US Representative
- ◆ US Senator

When it comes to national support of public funding for the arts, New Mexico's Congressional delegation has historically given mixed support. Some Congressmen have been very support of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts while others have not been supportive. NEA funding has a direct impact on New Mexico, since the State of New Mexico through New Mexico Arts receives federal dollars from the NEA. Individual organizations within the state are also been recipients of direct funding from the NEA. New Mexico also benefits from a number of national initiatives that preserve the arts in American as well as numerous cultural traditions.

*While you probably cannot expect presidential candidates to come to your community, you can mail all of them the same questions about their opinions on public funding for the arts. You can then print all of their responses in your newsletter. If a candidate does not respond, be sure to mention that so that everyone knows s/he had the opportunity to respond.*

## How to get started

### Find Appropriate Host Support

Find appropriate host support. A good place to start is with a well established arts organization with an outstanding reputation for delivering high quality arts to local citizens. Local arts & humanities councils, museums, and performing arts organizations with solid patron and funding bases work best. Local arts and music festival organizers or a coalition of several community organizations are also excellent hosts. An organization that has a reputation for espousing a particular political viewpoint should not serve as the lead organization since a forum is not designed to express an organization's viewpoint but is designed to allow the public to find out the candidates' views.

If there is not an established arts organization available, a local arts enthusiast, philanthropist, or civic or community leader might be willing to coordinate the effort.

## Determine the Location for the Forum

Determine a location for the forum. The location of the forum should include a staging area, two podiums, and two 6 to 12 foot tables with chairs, one for the candidates and one for the panel. The location should also be accessible for wheelchairs.

## Decide on a Panel

Decide on a panel. The forum panel is comprised of three to five highly successful, widely recognized individuals representing local arts organizations and local media. These individuals will ask thoughtful questions on a variety of subjects ranging in interest from arts education to public funding for the arts to economic development and the arts.

## Choose a Moderator

Decide on a moderator. The moderator of the forum will keep and call time on candidates' responses, will introduce candidates and members of the panel, set the parameters of the forum, and ensure that the forum runs smoothly. The moderator will also manage the public Question & Answer session of the forum.

## Work with the Candidates

You can't have a successful forum without the participation of all or nearly all of the candidates. Ensure their participation at the onset of planning (before a date for the forum has been set) by doing the following:

### Call Them

Have the host organization or a related person of influence place a call to each of the candidates or the candidates' campaign managers and extend a personal invitation to attend the forum. Be sure to check for the candidate's availability on the forum date.

### The Candidate Cares to Know

Do not assume the candidate has developed a solid position on public funding for the arts or has any idea to its economic and educational advantage. Many issues vie for a candidate's attention, and sometimes a candidate will assume a party line on issues such as public funding for the arts. It takes time to create a unique platform and decide that an issue is non-partisan. Instead of becoming experts on some things, candidates typically try to know a little about a lot.

You can help candidates become knowledgeable about the arts in New Mexico by providing them with information about the arts in your community. A mini guide is included in this guide. Your guide should include a list of important definitions, sample news articles, and various pieces of information on public funding for the arts, arts education, cultural tourism, and arts & economic development. Personalize and re-

*Do not assume  
a candidate knows  
or knows to care.  
Do assume that  
a candidate  
cares to know.*

invent this information for your forum. Include a narrative of the “State of the Arts in Your Town,” which should cover the following points:

- ◆ New Mexico Arts grants at work in your community
- ◆ Local arts commission grants at work in your community
- ◆ Other city- or county-funded arts programs in your community
- ◆ Number of music teachers in the schools, all grades
- ◆ Number of visual art teachers in the schools, all grades
- ◆ Number of drama and dance teachers in the schools
- ◆ Examples of public art in your community, including both local and New Mexico Arts public art programs
- ◆ City ordinances regarding public art
- ◆ List of local arts organizations with contact information
- ◆ Economic impact of the arts on your community, if available
- ◆ Out-of-town attendance figures at local arts festivals

### Follow Up

Be sure to send formal letters of invitation, an agenda, invitation list, the items discussed above, and other useful background information to each candidate. Follow up the letters of invitation with phone calls as reminders and confirmations. Remember that dealing with someone close to a candidate’s campaign – like the campaign manager, spouse, or scheduler – can actually be more efficient than dealing with the candidate personally.

## Suggested Timeline

### Step One

- ◆ Designate forum coordinators and host organization(s) for the event
- ◆ Decide on a date for event
- ◆ Coordinate date with candidates via preliminary phone calls, letters, email, etc. (You may have to change your original date depending on candidates’ availability.)
- ◆ Reserve forum location
- ◆ Reserve a sound system for the forum

### Step Two

- ◆ Designate a moderator and suggested panelists
- ◆ Send letters of invitation to potential panelists
- ◆ Organize a mailing list of art “stakeholders”
- ◆ Confirm panelists
- ◆ Write the press release about the forum

- ✦ Rally stakeholder (audience) participation in forum with phone calls, personal contacts, announcements at arts organizations' meetings and events, etc.

### **Step Three**

- ✦ Create event invitation and other publicity materials (posters, etc.)
- ✦ Distribute forum agenda to all formal participants
- ✦ Distribute press release to arts organizations for newsletters and Web publications
- ✦ Set meeting for panelists
- ✦ Script event for moderator and panelists
- ✦ Request candidate, moderator, and panelist photos for publicity purposes

### **Step Four**

- ✦ Scan photos for e-distribution
- ✦ Distribute press release to electronic and print media
- ✦ Mail invitations, map, parking instructions, etc to formal participants
- ✦ Help panelists draft and finalize diverse questions for candidates
- ✦ Set a dry run with the moderator
- ✦ Create sample audience questions
- ✦ Pursue advanced electronic interviews about the forum
- ✦ Order catering for or confirm volunteers bringing coffee and light refreshments
- ✦ Create candidates' information packet
- ✦ Make staff assignments (greeters, distributors, refreshment tables, etc.)

### **Step Five**

- ✦ Create information sheet on the arts in your community for all forum attendees
- ✦ Create media packet for members of the media (include all information given to candidates as well as their photos etc.)
- ✦ Confirm sound system and location, refreshments, etc. (Be sure to do a sound check the morning of the forum, just to make sure ... )
- ✦ Distribute information packet to candidates, including possible questions and issues

### **Step Six**

- ✦ Distribute press advisory
- ✦ Re-release press release or release updated press release
- ✦ Make follow up phone calls to all participants
- ✦ Conduct pre-event publicity, electronic and print
- ✦ Check location
- ✦ Secure VIP parking for candidates
- ✦ Follow up phone calls to all candidates or their staff

# Samples

## Sample Letter to the Candidates

Date

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Candidates' Forum on the Arts, to be held at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ beginning at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm. The forum will feature candidates seeking the office of \_\_\_\_\_. We look forward to your participation in this important event.

Enclosed you will find an information packet, which will help you prepare for the forum. In addition, we will contact you regularly with new information about the forum. Please review these items and feel free to contact the forum coordinator, moderator, or me if you have any questions or comments. My number is (505) xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely yours,

Host Organization Official

Title

## Sample Forum Agenda

**Welcome** – Moderators

**Introduction of Candidates** – Moderator

**Introduction of Panelists** – Moderator

**Panelist #1 Question** – Each candidate has 1 - 2 minutes to respond

**Panelist #2 Question** – Each candidate has 1 – 2 minutes to respond

**Panelist #3 Question** – Each candidate has 1 – 2 minutes to respond

**Panelist #4 Question** – Each candidate has 1 – 2 minutes to respond

**Audience Question**

**Audience Question**

**Candidates' Closing Statements** – Each candidate has 3 – 5 minutes

## Sample Forum Invitation List

### Local

General public via press releases and publicity materials

All local and county elected and appointed officials

City manager, clerk, mayor, treasurer, school board, commissioners

Parent/teacher groups and associations

Art organizations

Art students

School principals & teachers

Local artists

Local media

Local Council of Government

### Regional

State media for coverage area

Statewide arts organizations

New Mexico Arts Commission

New Mexico Endowment for the Humanities

New Mexico Historical Society

New Mexico Association of Arts Educators

New Mexico Alliance for Arts Education

New Mexico Community Arts Network

New Mexico Municipal League

New Mexico Public Education Department

### National

National Endowment for the Arts

Western States Arts Federation

Americans for the Arts

National Association of State Arts Agencies

## Sample Forum Invitation

*You are cordially invited to attend*

### **The Candidates' Forum on the Arts**

Featuring Candidates for the Office of State Representative/State Senator/School Board/Mayor/Etc District/Town or City, New Mexico

**Candidate A**

**Candidate B**

**Candidate C**

Time, Month, Date, Year

Location, Address Phone

### Distinguished Panelists

Panelist A, TV Station    Panelist B, Newspaper

Panelist C, Arts Organization    Panelist D, Chamber of Commerce

### The Distinguished Moderator

Super Civic Leader, Affiliation

## Sample Press Release

Date

Point of Contact, Organization

Phone, Fax, E-mail

City/Town, NM -- -- Voters will have an opportunity to find out where candidates for the office of (insert office) stand on the issue of public funding for the arts, arts education, and arts as a component for economic growth at a special Candidates' Forum on the Arts. The forum is set for (time), (day), (date) at (location), (address).

The (name of organization), the leading arts agency in (city/town/region) will serve as host for the event. (Name), longtime civic leader and patron of the arts, will serve as moderator for the forum.

The forum will feature all of the candidates who have declared formal candidacy for the office of (title of office): (name 1), (name 2), and (name 3).

A panel of media and local arts organization representatives will pose questions to the candidates. The panel consists of (name 1, affiliation), (name 2, affiliation), (name 3, affiliation), and (name 4, affiliation). Candidates will respond to each question. Time permitting, questions will be taken from the audience. The highlight of the event will be closing statements from each candidate.

"There are many issues that compete for the attention of our elected officials, said (host organization official). "We want these candidates for public office to get to know us better, and we want to know them and where they stand on issues that are important to us and that we believe are important to our community."

The Candidates' Forum on the Arts is open to the general public. Seating is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please call (505) xxx-xxxx or e-mail (host organization e-mail address).

####

## Educating Candidates on the Issues (A Sample Guide for the Candidates)

- ◆ Sample Narrative
- ◆ Important Terms
- ◆ Fact Sheets
  - New Mexico Arts
  - Art Education
  - Art and Economic Development

## Sample Narrative (Re-create this "State of the Arts" for your community.)

State of the Arts in (Town/City)

List all local arts organizations, contacts, and phone numbers

NMA grants to our organizations: \_\_\_\_\_

NMA grants to our schools: \_\_\_\_\_

Full-time music teachers in public schools: K-8 \_\_\_\_\_; 9 – 12 \_\_\_\_\_

Full-time art teachers in public schools: K-8 \_\_\_\_\_; 9 – 12 \_\_\_\_\_

Number and type of art, music, dance, & drama classes offered in the public schools:

K – 8: \_\_\_\_\_; 9 – 12: \_\_\_\_\_

Examples of public art in your community: \_\_\_\_\_

City ordinances regarding public art: \_\_\_\_\_

City ordinances regarding public funding for the arts (lodgers' tax appropriations, etc.):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Attach newspaper clippings for added interest

## Important Terms

### Arts Education

Arts Education is ongoing (more than one class), hands-on instruction provided by qualified, experienced staff or by visiting artists that focuses on specific arts learning goals. It is also education that enables skill and knowledge development in a fine arts discipline such as visual arts, music, drama, or dance. Learners may include pre-K to senior citizens in public or private schools, institutions of higher education, and in settings as diverse as community centers, social service agencies, or medical settings.

In the public schools, arts education is mandatory, since the arts are now a core curriculum subject. In 2003, the New Mexico instituted the Elementary Fine Arts Education Act, which provides funding for arts education in elementary schools in the areas of dance, music, theater, and visual arts. Content Standards and Benchmarks for dance, music, theater, and visual arts have been in place for several years through the Public Education Department.

### Cultural Plan

A cultural plan is a recommended set of actions designed to increase the benefits of culture and the arts to individual growth, community identity, and the local economic strength of an area. It also encourages the celebration of cultural expression. The planning process includes input from all sectors of the community. Ideally, a cultural plan will become the Cultural Element of the municipal or county Comprehensive Plan.

## **Cultural Tourism**

Cultural tourism is based on the mosaic of places, traditions, art forms, celebrations, and experiences that portray this nation and its people, reflecting the diversity and character of the United States.

Perhaps Garrison Keillor said it best. While addressing the White House Conference on Travel & Tourism, he said, "We need to think about cultural tourism because really there is no other kind of tourism. It's what tourism is ... People don't come to America for our airports, people don't come to America for our hotels, or the recreation facilities. ... They come for our culture: high culture, low culture, middle culture, right, left, real or imagined – they come to see America."

## **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**

The National Endowment for the Arts, which provides national recognition and support to significant projects of artistic excellence and works to preserve and enhance our nation's diverse cultural heritage, distributes funding to state arts councils based on their state-awarded appropriation. In addition, the NEA awards competitive grants to cultural and educational organizations in New Mexico. The Endowment was created by Congress and established in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government.

## **New Mexico Arts Commission**

A 15-member, governor-appointed commission that makes all final funding decisions on competitive arts and arts education arts services contracts. The commission sets policies for the arts services contracts program and for the Art in Public Places program, the two main activities of the New Mexico Arts Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The division manages the day-to-day activities of the commission with 15 staff.

New Mexico Arts's mission is "to preserve, enhance, and develop the arts in New Mexico through partnerships, public awareness, and education, and to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations."

## **Public Funding for the Arts**

Public funding for the arts is generated by taxpayers' dollars and is then appropriated by the municipal, county, state, or federal legislative body. New Mexico Arts serves as a steward of these public funds on the state level. In FY04, \$1.1 million of these funds were returned to local communities, schools, and arts organizations through arts services contracts, where the local entity provides arts services to the community on behalf of the state.

## **Public Art Programs**

Public art is works of art (sculptures, paintings, murals, or landscapes, for example) placed in, on, or around public buildings or on public lands. Public art programs acquire artwork through purchase or by commissioning works by artists for such placements. The sponsoring governmental agency funds the purchase of public

art works through tax revenues, authorizing a small percentage, such as 1%, of the cost of new construction or renovation of existing structures to go to the acquisition of the art work. Occasionally the term is used to indicate programs that display, but do not purchase, art work in public buildings.

### **Art in Public Places Program of New Mexico Arts**

The Art in Public Places program was established through the New Mexico State Legislature in 1986 as a means to administer 1% of new construction or renovation costs exceeding \$100,000 for artwork. The Art in Public Places program (AIPP) has expanded over the years in order to provide a variety of services and new programs to the people of New Mexico, and serves to enhance New Mexico communities and public spaces by building an excellent and diverse collection of public art through community involvement. The AIPP promotes public art as a resource for education, advocacy, and economic opportunity while placing artwork in all 33 counties of New Mexico.

## **Credits**

Compiled by Ann Weisman, New Mexico Arts Grant Program Coordinator.

Adapted from *Candidates Forums on the Arts* with permission from the Oklahoma Arts Council, Jennifer James, editor.

New Mexico Arts

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[www.nmarts.org](http://www.nmarts.org)

## New Mexico Arts Fact Sheet

In 1965, the 27<sup>th</sup> legislature established the New Mexico Arts Commission to administer the funds and programs made available to New Mexico from the National Endowment for the Arts. During the major government reorganization of 1978, the commission office became part of the newly established Office of Cultural Affairs. Now New Mexico Arts is one of thirteen division of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

**New Mexico Arts' Mission** To preserve, enhance and develop the arts in New Mexico through partnerships, public awareness, and education and to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations.

**New Mexico Arts Commission** See Glossary.

### **New Mexico Arts Programs and Services**

- ◆ Fund nonprofit organizations for arts programs: Using combined state and National Endowment for the Arts funds, New Mexico Arts enters into arts services contracts with nonprofits and government entities across New Mexico. These contractors provide arts services for their communities on behalf of the state. In FY05, 154 organizations will receive contracts totaling about \$940,000.
- ◆ Administer the 1% for Public Art Program: New Mexico Arts works with agencies and communities around the state to apply the 1% set aside by the legislature for public buildings to select, commission, and install artworks by individual artists for these buildings. Also see Glossary.
- ◆ Provide Technical Assistance: We provide assistance to organizations and individual artists through a variety of means. Primary areas of technical assistance are
  - Grant application assistance
  - Organization retreats and board governance workshops
  - Folk arts
  - Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for artists and arts organizations
  - Responding to requests for information from arts organizations and artists
- ◆ Administer the annual Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts
- ◆ Producing the quarterly newsletter, *ARTSpeak*
- ◆ Maintaining the New Mexico Arts web site, [www.nmarts.org](http://www.nmarts.org)

For more information, you can request a copy of our "General Information Booklet" by contacting New Mexico Arts.

# Arts Education Fact Sheet

## Young people who perform in the arts

for at least three hours on three days each week through at least one full year are

- ✦ 4 times more likely to be recognized for **academic achievement**
- ✦ 3 times more likely to be elected to **class office** within their schools
- ✦ 4 times more likely to participate in a **math and science fair**
- ✦ 3 times more likely to win an award for **school attendance**
- ✦ 4 times more likely to win an **award for writing an essay or poem**

## Young artists, as compared with their peers, are likely to

- ✦ Attend **music, art, and dance classes** nearly three times as frequently
- ✦ Participate in **youth groups** nearly four times as frequently
- ✦ **Read for pleasure** nearly twice as often
- ✦ Perform **community service** more than four times as often

*(Living the Arts through language + learning: a report on community-based youth organizations, Shirley Brice Heath, Stanford University and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an Americans for the Arts monograph, 11/98; see [www.shirleybriceheath.com](http://www.shirleybriceheath.com).*

## The facts are that arts education

- ✦ Makes a tremendous impact on the developmental growth of every child and has proven to help level the learning field across socio-economic boundaries.

*(Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School, James S. Catterall, the UCLA Imagination Project, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA, Americans for the Arts Monograph, 1/98)*

- ✦ Has a measurable impact on youth at risk in deterring delinquent behavior and truancy problems while also increasing overall academic performance among those youth engaged in after school and summer arts programs targeted toward delinquency prevention.

*(YouthARTS Development Project, 1996, US Department of Justice, National Endowment for the Arts, and Americans for the Arts)*

- ✦ Enables students of the arts (for four or more years) to outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT).

*(The College Entrance Examination Board)*

## Business understands that arts education

- ✦ Builds a school climate of high expectation, discipline, and academic rigor that **attracts businesses** relocating to your community

- ✦ Strengthens student problem-solving and critical thinking skills, adding to **overall academic achievement and school success**
- ✦ Helps students develop a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance, and goal-setting skills needed to **succeed in the classroom and beyond**
- ✦ Can help **troubled youth**, providing an alternative to destructive behavior and another way for students to approach learning

(Business Circle for Arts Education in Oklahoma, "Arts at the Core of Learning 1999 Initiative," [www.artspower.com](http://www.artspower.com))

## Additional Arts Education Research Sites

### Arts Education Partnership Web Site, <http://aep-arts.org/>

This web site contains a wealth of information. Some of the items are listed here.

- ✦ Champions of Change: Leading educational researchers examine the impact of arts experiences on young people in this report from the Presidents Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the Arts Education Partnership.
- ✦ Gaining the Arts Advantage: This document makes the case for district-wide arts education by documenting lessons from school districts that value arts education, such as Las Cruces Public Schools. This report is from the Presidents Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the Arts Education Partnership.
- ✦ Learning Partnerships: A Guide to Arts Education Collaboration that aims to improve learning in schools by working with arts partners in the community.

### National Assessment of Educational Progress, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

An assessment of what our nation's eighth grade students know and can do in the arts released by the Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics.

### New Mexico Public Education Department, <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/>

Contact them for information on the New Mexico Elementary Fine Arts Education Act, which provides for instruction in dance, music, theater, and visual arts in elementary schools.

Many thanks to the New Mexico Advisory Council on Arts Education and the New Mexico Alliance for Arts Education for supplying much of this information.

## Arts and Economic Development Fact Sheet

As of June, 2004, the date of release of this handbook, the Department of Cultural Affairs is in the process of doing an impact assessment of the arts and culture on the State of New Mexico. When this study is released, a fact sheet will be prepared and available for download on the New Mexico Arts web site, [www.nmarts.org](http://www.nmarts.org). Until then, please refer to the following web sites for arts and economic development information.

### **Americans for the Arts**

- ◆ “Arts and Economic Prosperity,” [www.artsusa.org/EconomicImpact/](http://www.artsusa.org/EconomicImpact/)

### **National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)**

See the following links from the NASAA Home Page:

- ◆ Artworks section, Cultural Tourism News from Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce
- ◆ National Governors Association, “The Arts as a Public Policy Asset.” On that page, the third item down is “The Role of the Arts in Economic Development.”