

Americans for the Arts defines a local arts agency (LAA) as a community organization or local government agency that supports cultural organizations, provides services to artists or arts organizations, and/or presents arts programming to the public. LAA's endeavor to make the arts part of the daily fabric of community living.

Each LAA is unique to the community that it serves and each change as fast as its community changes. However, all seek to serve the diverse art forms in their community and make them accessible to every community member.

Simply put, a LAA is a nonprofit or government entity that is created to meet the cultural needs of a community and to foster an environment in which artists and arts organizations can flourish. A LAA represents all of the arts disciplines and frequently acts as a central clearinghouse for the cultural scene of a community. A LAA may provide services, coordinate, present and run programs, fundraise, administer and distribute grants, educate, stimulate, and nurture the cultural life of the community.

LAA's can serve populations of all sizes, and are located in urban, rural and suburban areas. They can focus on one activity or dozens of activities, based on the needs and desires of the community. LAA's can represent a single jurisdiction, such as a city, town or county, or multiple jurisdictions, such as a metropolitan or tri-state area. Or, they may represent smaller areas, such as a neighborhood within a city or county.

Other combinations are also possible: several larger cities in the United States have two LAA's. In such instances, the agencies usually have a separate focus but work cooperatively with each other. LAA's also work with many other entities within a community, such as libraries, schools, businesses, tourism offices, and governmental divisions concerned with such functions as city planning, public art, parks and recreation. LAA's often assume the lead role in coordinating community-wide networks and activities and promote a strong sense of civic pride.

Because it represents the community as a whole, a LAA is nonpartisan. Its supporters reflect the diversity of the population it serves--people of all ages, ethnic and racial backgrounds and "special interest" groups, such as people with disabilities and older individuals. There are an estimated 3,000 LAA's in the United States, each of which is helping to enrich the lives of its constituency.

In a broad sense, LAA's serve as a unified voice for the arts community and as a vehicle for educating the general public about the value and significance of the arts. LAA's place special emphasis on the important role the arts play in the economic vitality of communities; a healthy cultural "scene" and a healthy economy frequently go hand-in-hand!

LAA activities commonly fall into three areas: programming, services and grantsmanship. Most LAA's combine and carry out activities in all three areas and also engage in some advocacy work. LAA's can provide tangible services such as printed arts calendars, central ticket offices, insurance and group purchasing/equipment loan plans, cultural libraries, employment referral services, directories and newsletters, administrative management services and training opportunities. They can produce and

operate programs such as festivals, exhibitions, “art in public places” projects, touring programs, and educational programming in the schools and elsewhere. Many LAA’s also do fundraising (grantsmanship), which can involve administering united arts fundraising campaigns, obtaining grants and offering fellowships to artists. Still other LAA’s operate cultural facilities and integrate involvement with community-wide planning, urban design and redevelopment into their programming or services.

For more information on Local Arts Agencies, please contact the Arizona Commission on the Arts at:

Arizona Commission on the Arts

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The **Arizona Commission on the Arts** is an agency of the State of Arizona which supports access to quality arts and arts education opportunities for all Arizonans; the development and retention of statewide jobs in the nonprofit arts, culture and education sectors; and increased economic impact in local communities through arts-based partnerships that develop tax and small business revenue.

We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts.

For more information, contact us at (602) 771-6501 or email info@azarts.gov or visit www.azarts.gov. To request this or any other publication in an alternate format, contact the Arts Commission offices. *An equal employment opportunity agency.*