NEA Announces Changes for FY12 Grant Process
January 2011

The guidelines for preparing an FY12 grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) will look significantly different when released in the coming weeks. To be fully prepared for the application process, view the NEA's presentation outlining the FY12 Grant Process, register for the League’s free webinar on January 24 with Wayne Brown and Sarah Cunningham, and look for the League's updated Tips for Preparing an NEA Application shortly after the new guidelines are released. On October 29, the NEA provided highlights of some of the changes applicants can expect, including:

New Categories Support Art Works Theme

The largest NEA grant-making categories, Access to Artistic Excellence and Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth, will be replaced with a new funding category called Art Works, supporting four subcategories that echo the outcomes in the NEA’s new Strategic Plan:
- **Creation**: The creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence
- **Engagement**: Public engagement with diverse and excellent art
- **Learning**: Lifelong learning in the arts
- **Livability**: The strengthening of communities through the arts

The NEA points out that all types of projects supported in the past under Access to Artistic Excellence will continue to be eligible under the Art Works framework. Applicants will be asked to select the outcome that is most relevant to their proposed project, and new reporting standards will require grantees to provide evidence that the outcome was achieved.

Incentives for Innovation

In an effort to encourage a focus on innovation, any applicant applying for an official Consortium project in Art Works must apply for an “innovative” project. An official Consortium project is an exception to the one-application rule and represents a partnership of organizations that undertakes a shared project. In general, innovative projects are characterized as “those that may prove transformative with the potential for meaningful change; are distinctive by offering fresh insights and new value for the field and/or the public through unconventional solutions; and may be shared and/or emulated, or lead to other innovations.”

Eligibility Change for Challenge America Fast-Track
The Challenge America Fast-Track grant program, designed to reach underserved populations, will still be available, but a new policy now limits consecutive-year funding. If a grantee has received a Challenge America Fast-Track grant for the past three consecutive years, it is not eligible to apply to the Fast-Track category this year but may apply to other NEA funding opportunities including the new Art Works categories.

Once the new guidelines are posted in January, the League will update Tips for Preparing an NEA Grant Application specifically for orchestras. For deadlines and more information about project eligibility, visit our Application Deadlines page. After guidelines are posted, orchestras are encouraged to contact NEA music specialists Court Burns or Anya Nykyforiak, and other designated NEA staff, to discuss any questions related to the guidelines.