



# Careers in the Arts National Online Dialogue

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**June 6, 2016 – June 19, 2016**  
**Final Report**



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## **Introduction**

The following report outlines the results of the ePolicyWorks' online dialogue, "[Careers in the Arts](#)." Hosted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), this virtual event was held from Monday, June 6, 2016 through Sunday, June 19, 2016. The online dialogue invited key stakeholders to a virtual conversation on the progress that has occurred over the past 10 years to support employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the arts, including:

- Artists, arts managers, and other people with disabilities who are working or seeking work in the arts;
- People working for arts organizations, arts service organizations, and arts advocacy groups;
- Arts employers and arts educators;
- People working for disability service organizations and disability advocates; and
- Policymakers at the federal, state, and local level.

Ideas and insights were solicited from these communities on how artists and arts administrators with disabilities have been successful in gaining employment, and how arts and disability organizations can support people in their arts careers. Participants were encouraged to post new and innovative ideas and comment and vote on those posted by others.

To promote the sharing of ideas, the dialogue posed the following question to participants:

**What ideas do you have to increase the career preparation and employment of people with disabilities in the arts?**

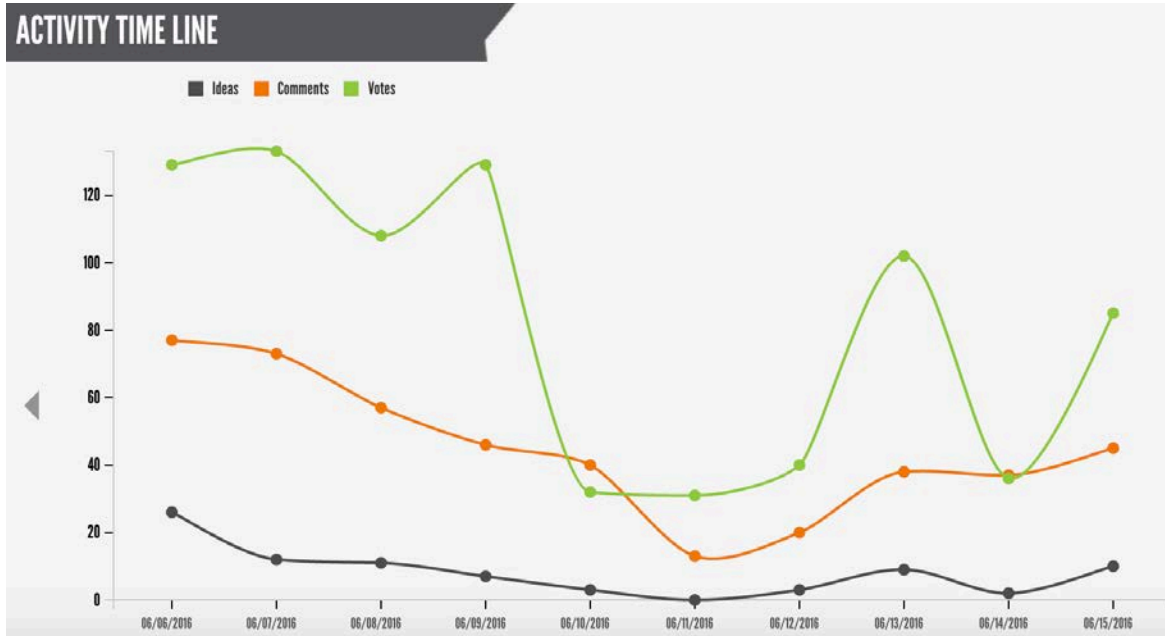
Ideas posted to the online dialogue were organized into the following five topics:

1. Challenges and opportunities for Careers in the Arts
2. Education and Job Training for Artists and Arts Administrators
3. Identity, Disclosure, and Representation in the Arts
4. Disability-Specific or Art-Specific Issues
5. Success Stories and Positive change



## Dialogue Participation Timeline

The following graph depicts the timeline of activity that occurred during the dialogue, including the posting of ideas, comments, and votes.



## Outreach Efforts

In order to engage a broad range of participants in an online dialogue, ePolicyWorks conducts strategic outreach by sending a series of targeted emails. At the start of the Careers in the Arts dialogue, an initial outreach email was sent to experts and key stakeholders relevant to the dialogue topic, as well as to general ePolicyWorks contacts, which includes previous online dialogue participants and ePolicyWorks eWorkGroup members. To focus the conversation for this dialogue, ePolicyWorks researched and reached out to additional targets, including disability advocacy organizations, disability and arts organizations, disability and arts advocates, disability bloggers, and state VSAs.

Throughout the dialogue, ePolicyWorks sent follow-up reminder emails to ensure that everyone who wanted to participate in the online dialogue had the chance to do so during the two weeks the dialogue was open. At the conclusion of the dialogue, a thank you email was sent to all participants with an invitation to stay tuned for future dialogues. The ePolicyWorks email outreach strategy is critical to informing and shaping the conversation in every online dialogue, ensuring that the right people are brought to the table to contribute.

In addition to targeted email blasts, the ePolicyWorks team conducted outreach using social media through Twitter. This outreach tactic proved especially effective, as the dialogue was directed toward artists with disabilities and their allies, among whom social media use is quite popular. In the week leading up to the chat, three general announcement Tweets about the dialogue were posted. Four days before the dialogue opened, ePolicyWorks sent direct tweets to the 26 prominent disability organizations and respected disability leaders listed below:

- @rootedinrights - Rooted in Rights
- @Youth\_Fellow – Youth Transitions Fellow
- @YOUTHPOWERNY – YOUTH POWER!
- @ncwdyouth\_iei - National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth
- @Yodisabledproud - YO! Disabled and Proud
- @WID\_org - World Institute on Disability
- @UCPnational - United Cerebral Palsy
- @ReeveFoundation - Reeve Foundation
- @Diversability - Diversability
- @yourcpf – Cerebral Palsy Foundation
- @autselfadvocacy - Autistic Self Advocacy Network
- @Lollardfish – David Pery, Journalist
- @kencen – Kennedy Center
- @Mediadisdat – Beth Haller, Professor
- @maysoonzayid – Maysoon Zayid, Comedian
- @BeckyMotivates – Becky Curran, SAG-AFTRA
- @LCarterLong – Lawrence Carter Long, National Council on Disability
- @EINSOFComm –Tari Hartman Squire, Disability Communications Expert
- @AAPD – American Association of People with Disabilities
- @DeafWest – Deaf West Theatre
- @Phamaly\_theatre – Phamaly Theatre
- @AXISDanceCO – Axis Dance Company
- @TBTBTheater – Theater Breaking Through Boundaries
- @HLatskyDance – Heidi Latsky Dance
- @InclusionArts – Inclusion in the Arts
- @DisVisibility - Disability Visibility Project

In addition to the above noted efforts, five original tweets were posted throughout the course of the two-week event and @ePolicyWorks re-tweeted seven announcements from other accounts about the dialogue. This strategic, targeted social media outreach contributed to a significant increase of dialogue promotion on social media and by directing interested people

and organizations to register for the dialogue. In total, **twenty-eight percent** of new visitors reached the dialogue through social media.

In support of the dialogue NADC conducted their own social media outreach including posting ten times on their Facebook page reaching 580 individuals. From those ten posts the information regarding the online dialogue was shared six times.

The NEA also promoted the dialogue through social media including three posts to NEA's Facebook page and 10 tweets via NEA's twitter handle. Both organizations encouraged their staff and colleagues to post and tweet via their personal accounts. Information regarding the dialogue was also posted on the NADC and Tarjan Center website news pages.

## **Dialogue Outreach Emails**

### **Initial Announcement Email 1 – 6/6/16**

This email announcing the start of the dialogue and personally inviting participants was sent to people who had pre-registered for the dialogue. Pre-registrants included moderators and others who heard about the dialogue from initial outreach conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts.

- Emails Delivered – 163
- Emails Opened – 104
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 83

### **Initial Announcement Email 2 – 6/6/16**

This email announcing the start of the dialogue and personally inviting participants was sent to disability and arts advocacy organizations and previous ePolicyWorks dialogue participants.

- Emails Delivered – 4,281
- Emails Opened – 832
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 103

### **Initial Announcement Email 3 – 6/6/16**

This email announcing the start of the dialogue was sent to registrants of the recent ePolicyWorks dialogue: [YouthACT Transition Truths](#).

- Emails Delivered – 438
- Emails Opened – 190
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 43



### **Dialogue Participation Reminder Email – 6/15/16**

This email was sent to all current dialogue registrants to encourage them to return to the dialogue to contribute more ideas, votes and comments.

- Emails Delivered – 366
- Emails Opened – 172
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 74

### **Dialogue Participation Last Chance Reminder Email – 6/18/16**

This email was sent to encourage dialogue participation the day before the dialogue closed.

- Emails Delivered – 390
- Emails Opened – 162
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 59

### **Last Day of Dialogue Reminder Email – 6/19/16**

This email was sent to dialogue registrants on the last day of the dialogue to encourage participation before the dialogue closed.

- Emails Delivered – 393
- Emails Opened – 148
- Total number of clicks on links in email (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 50

### **Total Dialogue Outreach Emails**

- Email Delivered – 6,031
- Emails Opened 1,608 – (26.66% open rate)
- Total number of clicks on links in emails (excluding multiple clicks of the same link) – 412

With a combined 1,608 dialogue-related emails opened, ePolicyWorks had a strong 26.66% open rate, directly impacting the success of the online dialogue. Links to the dialogue included in the emails were clicked a total of 412 times, contributing to the number of registrants and participation in the conversation.

In addition to ePolicyWorks email outreach efforts the NEA sent targeted emails to 62 state, territorial and regional arts agencies, as well as the Cultural Access Listserv, VSA affiliates, Art Beyond Sight, trecent participants in Deaf theater and physically-integrated dance conferences, and a number of arts service organizations.

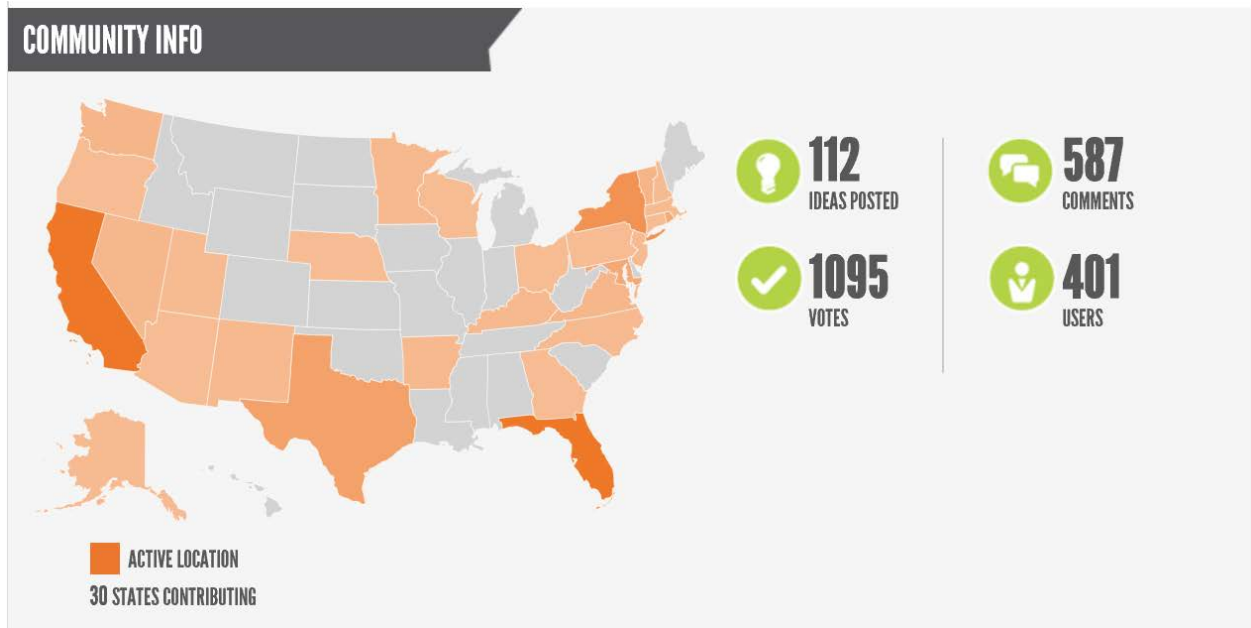
NADC also conducted email outreach over the course of the dialogue sending five emails blasts to over 350 artists with disabilities and arts organizations, as well as posting three emails to the NADC listserv of 350 members.

*Note: The following section outlines the key metrics from the online dialogue and provides a snapshot of the participation results.*

### **Dialogue Participation Summary**

- Dialogue opened on Monday, June 6, 2016 at 8:00 am ET
- Dialogue closed on Sunday, June 19, 2016 at 11:59 pm ET
- Total Ideas: 112
- Total Comments: 587
- Total Votes: 1,095
- Unique Visitors: 940
- Total Registrants: 401 (42.66% of unique visitors)
  - Completed Registration: 390 (97.3% of total registrants)
  - Active Registrants (submitted ideas, voted or commented): 134 (33.45% of total registrants)
- Breakdown of Registrants Emails (by domain):
  - .com addresses: 219 (55%)
  - .org addresses: 83 (21%)
  - .gov or .us addresses: 37 (9%)
  - .edu addresses: 30 (7%)
  - .net/other addresses: 32 (8%)

The following graphic illustrates the level of participation within each state based on the number of logins to the dialogue. The breakdown of the specific numbers for each individual state is listed in the table below.



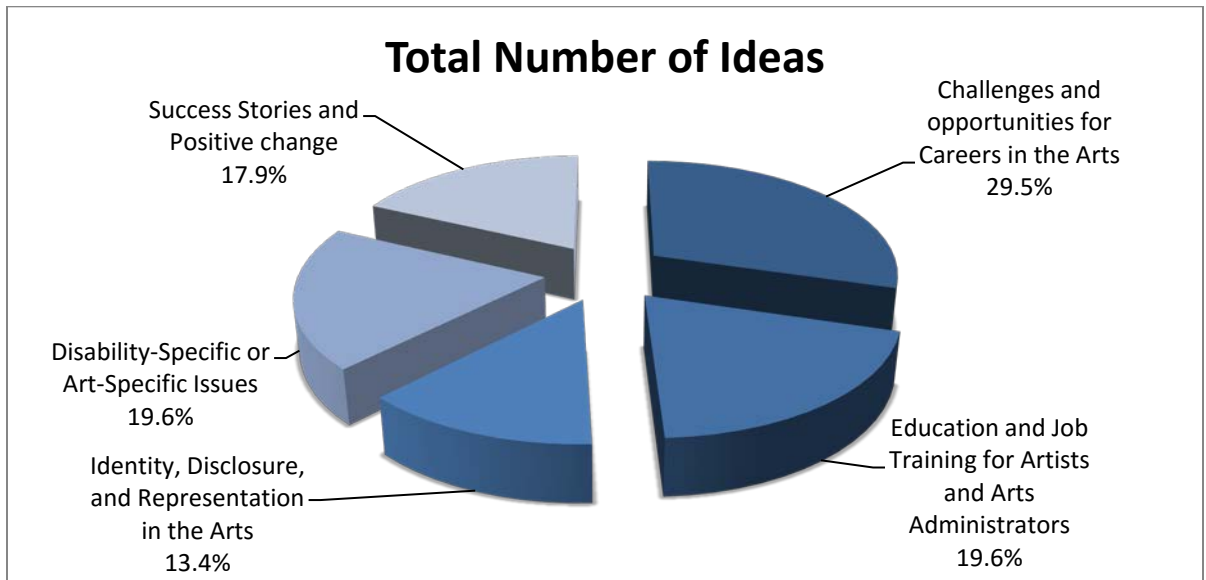
### Participation by State

State	Logins
Florida	140
California	139
New York	84
Texas	54
DC	49
Rhode Island	39
Maryland	38
Vermont	16
Washington	14
Virginia	11
Nevada	10
Michigan	9
New Mexico	8
Arkansas	8
Kentucky	8
Minnesota	7

State	Logins
North Carolina	5
New Hampshire	4
Utah	4
New Jersey	3
Maine	3
Alaska	3
Wisconsin	2
Ohio	2
Pennsylvania	2
Oregon	1
Arizona	1
Nebraska	1
Georgia	1
Connecticut	1

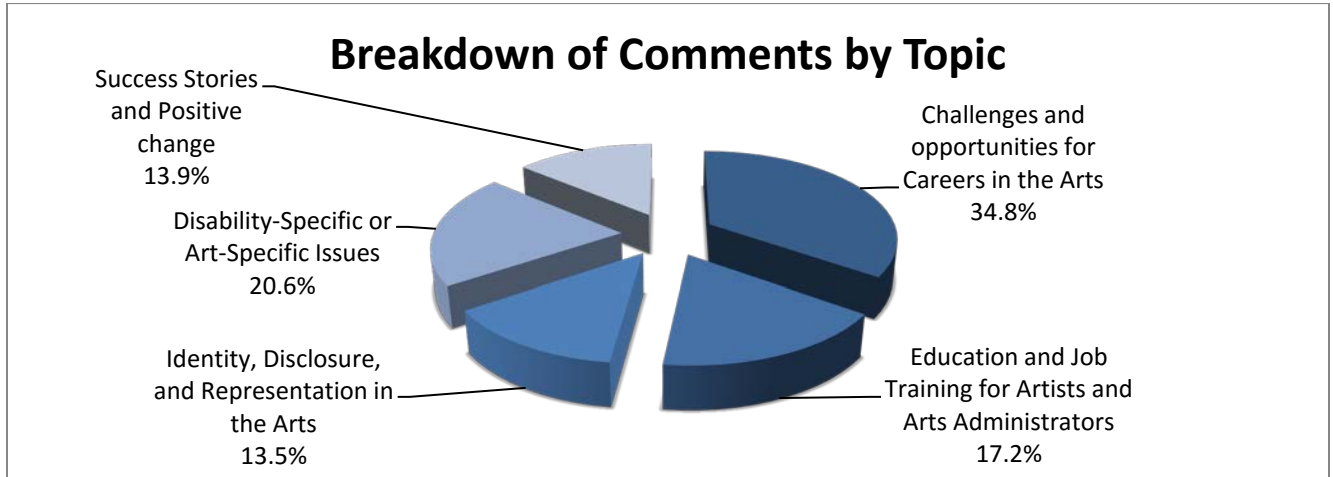
## Campaign Summary

- Total number of ideas: 112
  - Challenges and opportunities for Careers in the Arts: 33 (29.5%)
  - Education and Job Training for Artists and Arts Administrators: 22 (19.6%)
  - Identity, Disclosure, and Representation in the Arts: 15 (13.4%)
  - Disability-Specific or Art-Specific Issues: 22 (19.6%)
  - Success Stories and Positive change: 20 (17.9%)



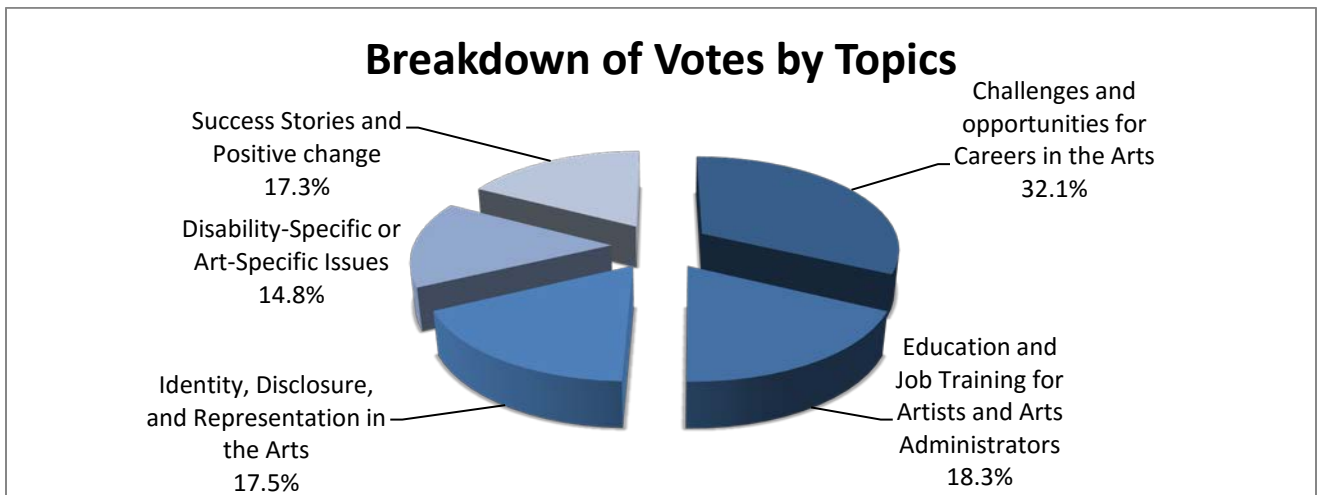
Total number of comments: 587

- Challenges and opportunities for Careers in the Arts: 204 (34.8%)
- Education and Job Training for Artists and Arts Administrators: 101 (17.2%)
- Identity, Disclosure, and Representation in the Arts: 79 (13.5%)
- Disability-Specific or Art-Specific Issues: 121 (20.6%)
- Success Stories and Positive change: 82 (13.9%)



Total number of votes: 1,095

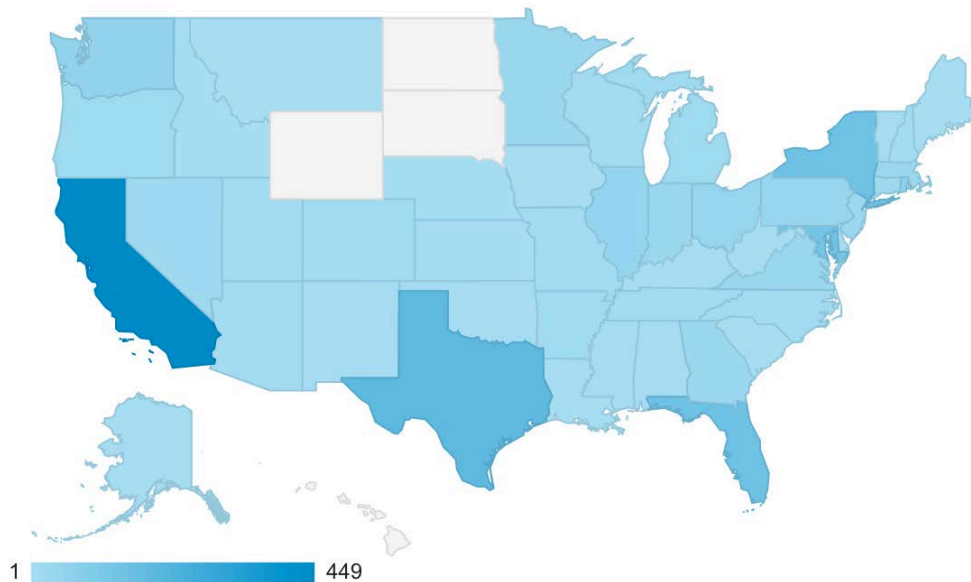
- Challenges and opportunities for Careers in the Arts: 352 (32.1%)
- Education and Job Training for Artists and Arts Administrators: 200 (18.3%)
- Identity, Disclosure, and Representation in the Arts: 192 (17.5%)
- Disability-Specific or Art-Specific Issues: 162 (14.8%)
- Success Stories and Positive change: 189 (17.3%)



## Visits during the Dialogue (6/6/16 – 6/19/16)

- Total visits: 2,024
- Unique visitors: 940
- Total page views: 15,844
- Average pages per visit: 7.83 (*significantly above average*)
- Average visit duration: 10:25 (*significantly above average*)
- Returning visitors: 59%
- Bounce rate (percentage of participants who leave after viewing the first page of the dialogue): 36.61%

## Map of Demographics of United States Visits



## Visits by State

State	Visits
California	449
Washington, D.C.	217
Texas	190
New York	148
Florida	147
Maryland	134
Rhode Island	61

State	Visits
Washington	54
Illinois	49
Pennsylvania	43
Ohio	42
Virginia	36
Minnesota	34
Georgia	33

State	Visits
Indiana	33
Massachusetts	30
New Jersey	30
Connecticut	21
Nevada	21
Michigan	20
Oregon	20

State	Visits
Arkansas	14
Colorado	14
Tennessee	13
Missouri	12
North Carolina	12
Wisconsin	12
Utah	11
Arizona	10
New Hampshire	9

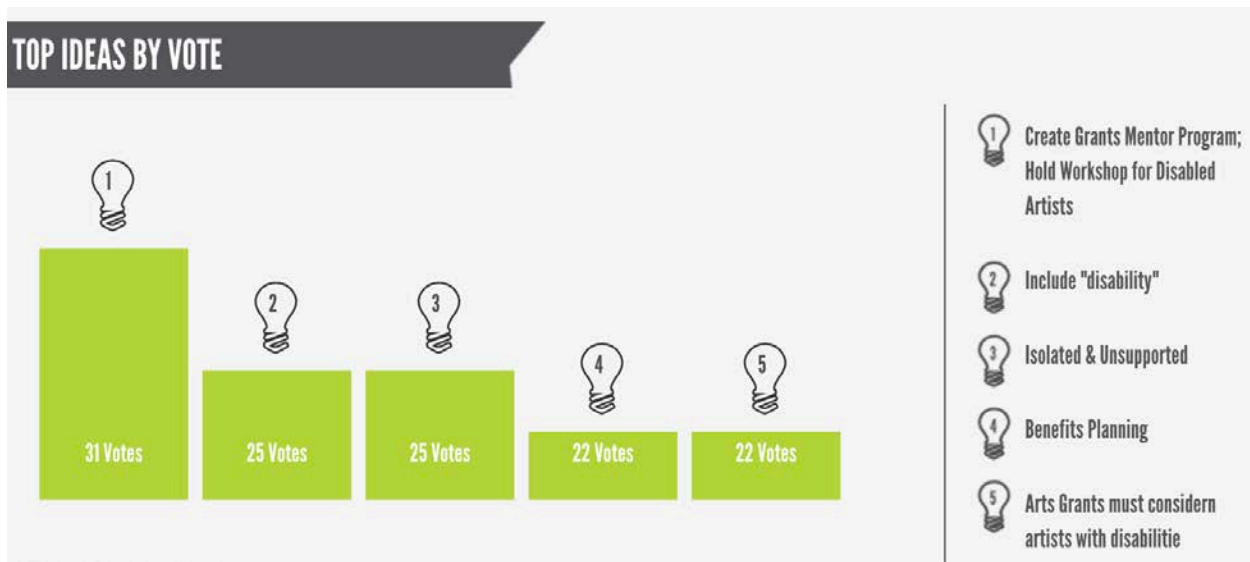
State	Visits
Alabama	5
New Mexico	5
Mississippi	4
Oklahoma	4
Vermont	4
Delaware	3
Idaho	3
Kansas	3
Nebraska	3

State	Visits
Alaska	2
Maine	2
Montana	2
South Carolina	2
Iowa	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	1
West Virginia	1

## **Infographics Depicting Popular Ideas Contributed by Dialogue Participants**

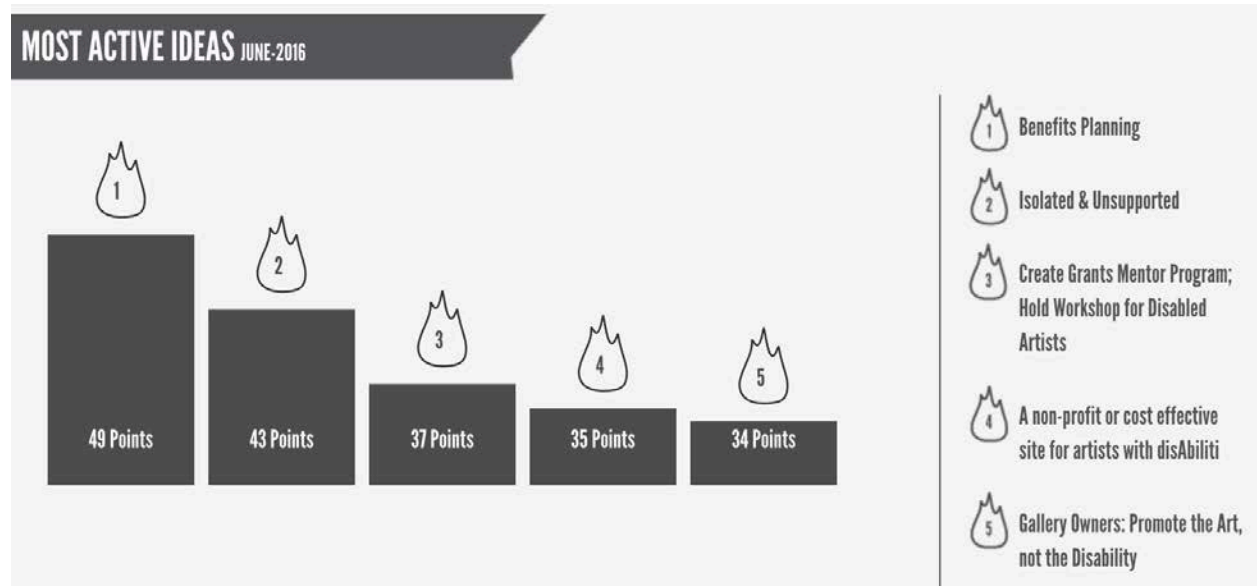
### **Top Ideas by Vote**

The following chart depicts top ideas submitted by participants based on the number of votes the ideas received from other participants.



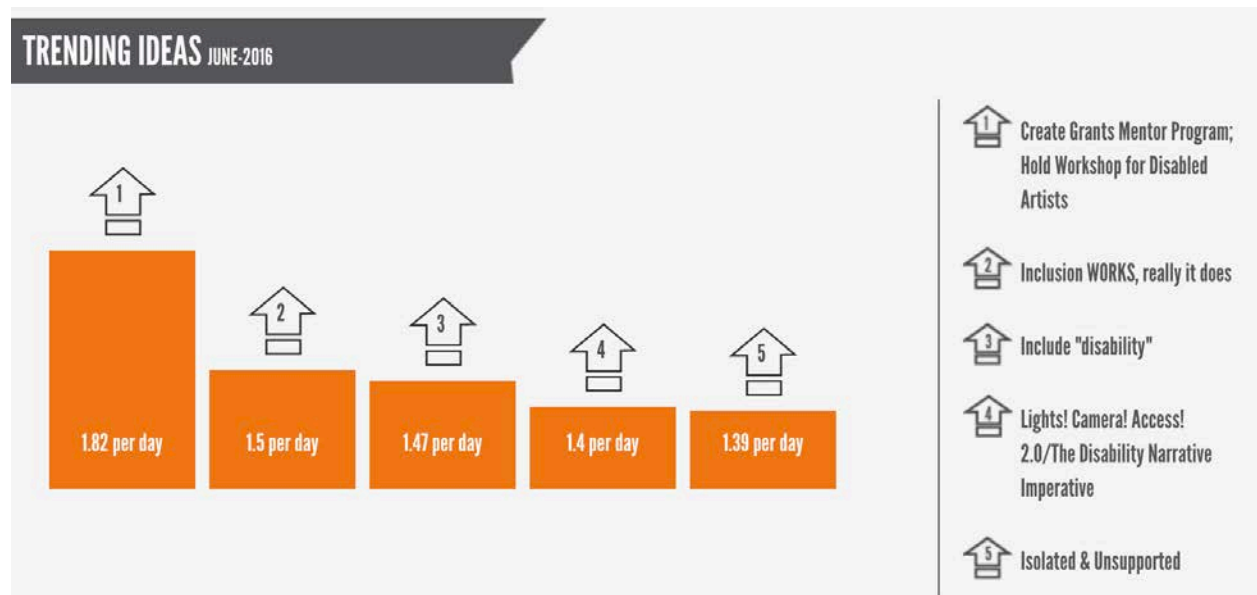
## Most Active Ideas

The following chart depicts the ideas submitted by participants that were the most commented on and voted on by other participants.



## Trending Ideas

The following chart depicts the ideas submitted by participants that were trending based on interactions from other participants.





*Note: The ideas listed in the following sections include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.*

## **Top 5 Overall Ideas**

### **Top Idea #1: Create Grants Mentor Program; Hold Workshop for Disabled Artists**

31 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 31 Net Votes

Consider creating a Grants Mentor Program to help interested disabled artists determine specific artistic goals, resource needs, planned or proposed projects (taking into consideration any needs or limitations due to the disability). Mentors can help identify programs and resources that might help meet those needs based on factors such as discipline and geography. Resources could include grant programs, but also may expand the reach to any ongoing program areas that might facilitate the needs. Hold an NADC workshop where applicants could participate online for maximum participation, and create a “needs assessment” and then work to create an individualized action plan for how to move forward. I find that I am often at a loss as to where to look for resources as a disabled artist, with specific needs, to help move my artistic vision forward. I would find such service of great benefit.

### **Top Idea #2: Include "disability"**

25 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 25 Net Votes

This is probably a very simple item but one that isn't done often enough. Include Disability. For arts organizations, arts service organizations, arts agencies, and arts funders, when doing outreach, creating programs, projects, or funding the same please: 1. SPECIFICALLY include disability in the list of "diversities" welcome to apply (beyond women, minorities, etc.). Use the word. 2. Do outreach to places and groups you may not have done outreach to before: minority serving institutions, schools, independent living centers, arts schools, community groups, etc. 3. Invite creative pros with disabilities to your festivals, to judge your competitions, to be interviewed/profiled for your newsletter etc. Ask them not just about their disability, ask them about their CRAFT. 4. Check your demographics. Just as many organizations ask folks to volunteer demographic information about themselves (age, gender, race etc.) why not add disability to the list? This gives you a better picture of who are your patrons, who are your grant submitters as well as recipients, and who are your participants. If it is voluntary, individuals can always opt out, but greater information will help you better plan.

### **Top Idea #3: Isolated & Unsupported**

25 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 25 Net Votes

Where I am geographically located there aren't programs that can provide any support for my specific disabilities. A lot of programs are specific to locations or specific to certain disabilities. I'd like to see more online support for artists with disabilities. I'd specifically love to see a forum or forums for artists, caregivers, and program staff to share resources and regional events, so this dialogue can go on year-round. Efforts are so fragmented and disconnected even from each other! I think even if I weren't disabled it would be overwhelming to search on my own as well as take care of myself. I think a lot of people with disabilities like mine can be physically limited from leaving our homes or being in the right areas. The internet is offering more opportunities for some of us, sometimes, in some ways to make and share art. Can we create and contribute to a community to continue talking about using the internet to reach and support the isolated and housebound disabled, among other useful conversations?

### **Top Idea #4: Arts Grants must consider artists with disabilities**

22 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 22 Net Votes

Grant proposals and diversity studies often do not include. I am looking at a recent (two months ago) 80 page study made by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission that is defines diversity as racial or cultural. Artists with disabilities never seriously (if at all) enter into the discussion made by the scholars putting together this lengthy study.

### **Top Idea #5: Artists with disabilities teaching art**

20 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 19 Net Votes

It is said that "those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." I disagree with this wholeheartedly! It is my opinion that one of the greatest ways to promote artists with disabilities is to have them teach art. I personally am not a fan of being labeled as an artist with a disability, because art is my primary therapy for overcoming said disability, and I know that isn't possible for all artists, but why make a special category just for artists with disabilities. From my point of view, that segregates us further. It is my current goal to become an art teacher, to talk to my students about art and how it helped me learn to cope with Combat PTSD, 5 Traumatic Brain Injuries and a muscle disorder no one can put a name to. I don't want to be labeled as an artist with a disability, I want to be known as an artist and art teacher who helped young people to understand the therapeutic and healing abilities of art! I feel like that should be our goal, not further segregating ourselves from the artist community, but joining it, bolstering it and teaching about it!

## **Top Ideas – Challenges and Opportunities for Careers in the Arts**

### **Top Idea #1: Create Grants Mentor Program; Hold Workshop for Disabled Artists**

31 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 31 Net Votes

Consider creating a Grants Mentor Program to help interested disabled artists determine specific artistic goals, resource needs, planned or proposed projects (taking into consideration any needs or limitations due to the disability). Mentors can help identify programs and resources that might help meet those needs based on factors such as discipline and geography. Resources could include grant programs, but also may expand the reach to any ongoing program areas that might facilitate the needs. Hold an NADC workshop where applicants could participate online for maximum participation, and create a “needs assessment” and then work to create an individualized action plan for how to move forward. I find that I am often at a loss as to where to look for resources as a disabled artist, with specific needs, to help move my artistic vision forward. I would find such service of great benefit.

### **Top Idea #2: Benefits Planning**

22 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 22 Net Votes

Benefits planning is also critical for artists with disabilities who might access SSI/SSDI. We need to be able to figure how much we can make and still keep our benefits, how much we need to make to be able to afford to get off our benefits. We need to have a tight handle on our healthcare and health options should we be able to afford to get off of SSI. We need to understand our safety net. Also, new pieces like the ABLE accounts are important to integrate into the planning, as well as PASS plans and how they might help.

### **Top Idea #3: Grants for People with Disabilities**

21 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 21 Net Votes

There are some fantastic grants out there now for parents who want to further their art. I think that it would be really helpful to have something similar for PWD - grants to help carve time to write, or to pay for art supplies/cameras/etc. It's an enormous struggle to get set in a profitable cycle - because to be able to afford the time to complete the work, and to afford the necessary supplies, you have to work. And having worked, you might be fresh out of spoons to engage in the art. Right now, the only money out there that I've seen for artists with disabilities are for people who are already well established, or have been working on well-funded projects.

#### **Top Idea #4: "So, you like art. Would you like to clean the museum?"**

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

Generations of supported employment and vocational rehab specialists have been taught to ignore the records, just meet with a person and get an impression of what they like, then using that impression, place them into a position -near- to what they like. But these positions tend to persist in being part of the 5 F's - filing, food, flowers, filth, and folding. The agencies get paid as long as the person is employed, no matter if that job will never actually build their career as an artist. Then when they 'graduate' in 4 years from their paid supported position, they are transitioned out to find work for which they remain unprepared and unconnected.... or back to the sheltered settings. I can tell you as a parent of an artist who has autism, no vocational counselor has EVER taken it seriously. Even when we show them the art, when we show them the vocational certificates in multimedia design from fully accredited programs, art is not considered a vocation that will lead to a job in the local economy. They look at it as an interest. They will build on that interest by putting him near other art... sweeping the floors and taking out the trash. The solution is to develop apprenticeships with artists, graphic designers, print shops, etc., and pay the salary of the apprentice plus all benefits and employer expenses, including liability insurance, plus a bonus for successful continued placement to the hosts. Provide direct support providers for the artists who need them -- preferably people who want to learn more about art themselves, or people considering a career in education, art, or therapy. Then, most important of all, link the apprenticeship success outcome to the outcomes measures required of VR for their continued funding, and make sure that art supplies, software, hardware, etc. are covered vocational materials and expenses.

#### **Top Idea #5: Executive Director of a non-profit art center for adults with ID**

16 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

I run a non-profit art center in Grass Valley CA, Neighborhood Center of the Arts (.org) We provide working studios as well as art supplies and instructors for 70 artists with special abilities. Each year we feature their art in 4 in-house exhibits and this year 17 shows within our community and other communities. When the artists sell their work we share the sale 50-50 our % goes back into the program for supplies and other needs. It cost me \$45,000.00 a month to run this program. We are reimbursed at a daily rate through our local Regional Center, Alta California Regional Center. We have been receiving the same rate of pay for over 20 years. No raise to our program. We are in the hole each month- makes us a true 'non-profit' Our program is a beautiful thing that provides Respite for family and caregivers during the week as well as providing an opportunity for artists with intellectual disabilities to express themselves through art, let alone make an income. Unfortunately we may be forced to close our doors as the

Federal Government believes that all our folks, regardless of disability should be fully inclusive within our community. They believe that we are segregating our friends (since they –the disabled- are the only ones receiving our services) they (the feds) believe our friends here should have jobs in the community. Some of us (art program directors) are working really hard to explain that this is a job. Being a working artist is a choice- we may not take a paycheck home every other week, but not all artists do- We find it heart breaking that we are not recognized as a place/field of employment. This program is working!!!! But it cannot run for free- therefore it will be a sad day when 70 of our community members are without work.

## **Top Ideas – Education and Job Training for Artists and Arts Administrators**

### **Top Idea #1: Include "disability"**

25 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 25 Net Votes

This is probably a very simple item but one that isn't done often enough. Include Disability. For arts organizations, arts service organizations, arts agencies, and arts funders, when doing outreach, creating programs, projects, or funding the same please: 1. SPECIFICALLY include disability in the list of "diversities" welcome to apply (beyond women, minorities, etc.). Use the word. 2. Do outreach to places and groups you may not have done outreach to before: minority serving institutions, schools, independent living centers, arts schools, community groups, etc. 3. Invite creative pros with disabilities to your festivals, to judge your competitions, to be interviewed/profiled for your newsletter etc. Ask them not just about their disability, ask them about their CRAFT. 4. Check your demographics. Just as many organizations ask folks to volunteer demographic information about themselves (age, gender, race etc.) why not add disability to the list? This gives you a better picture of who are your patrons, who are your grant submitters as well as recipients, and who are your participants. If it is voluntary, individuals can always opt out, but greater information will help you better plan.

### **Top Idea #2: A non-profit or cost effective site for artists with disAbilities**

16 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 16 Net Votes

It would be nice to have a website (open to all) that exhibits artists with disAbilities work. This site could be an educational tool and a place where aspiring young artists with disAbilities could connect with role models and receive mentoring.

### **Top Idea #3: How VOC Rehab can help with training**

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

My name is Kitty Lunn, Artistic Director of Infinity Dance Theater in New York City. I am a disabled dancer using a wheelchair. I have a hard time finding qualified dancers for my Company, because disabled people aren't given the same training opportunities as their non-disabled peers. I won't put someone on stage simply because they have a disability. It would be very helpful if State Vocational Rehab specialist would consider Arts as a career choice if they have a client who wishes to pursue an Arts training program. For example, Dance programs exist in College and University settings. Disabled people wanting to dance are discouraged from exploring these programs because it is felt to be an unstable career path. However, here are many paths a Dance major can consider. Currently Disabled Dance and Physically Integrated Dance are hot topics. Programs will become more accessible if more students with disabilities would apply. The UK is doing a great job at making Higher Ed Dance programs open to students with disabilities. They are refining the audition process to consider dancers with disabilities. Perhaps an Arts major with a more practical minor could be investigated. Unless we allow disabled students to explore Arts educations in Higher Education we will always be behind our European colleagues. Where will our disabled artists come from in the future if they aren't given the same opportunities to learn, train and practice their craft?

### **Top Idea #4: Change perception of labor market value of skills in Arts**

12 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 12 Net Votes

We need to change our perception of the labor market value of skills gained through study of Fine Arts and Humanities. With tuition costs so high, can we blame college students (or their parents) for choosing the more lucrative majors in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines? Can something be done concurrent with a Program for Disabled Artists to fix the problem with tuition debt and high cost? Problem-solving typically requires more than a fact-finding approach unless we have a very clear picture of a particular problem and a very good idea of what we want a solution to be. In those situations, analysis may be complete after asking the standard questions of "what," "when," "why," "where," "who," and "how," but what if the problem/solution is very vague or not well understood? This is where the creative process of moving from very abstract view of a problem through more concrete expressions comes into play. The two-fold approach is critical for formulating and analyzing new and unique solutions to complex problems, otherwise we tend to recreate the same solutions (and mistakes along the way). It's mental copy/paste and when meeting delivery schedules mean \$\$\$\$\$, the simpler, quicker approach is usually taken. Even our budding scientists can't compete under those conditions, not to mention our disabled and non-disabled

artists. One if not more Enterprise Architecture frameworks are based on this understanding - so it is not alien to its practitioners. Why are the Arts not more highly valued then? If we could address the high cost of tuition at universities and community colleges and make it more affordable for students and adults to pursue majors in the Arts and Humanities, it would help encourage pursuit of those occupations -- or at least an understanding and better appreciate of those skills. If the perception of the value of these skills was improved/enlightened, I think curriculum development and boards of regents would follow suit. I think STEM discipline majors would have more opportunity to take arts electives as part of their program of study (which would improve innovation once they enter the workforce full-time.) Could a Arts for the Disabled program discussed in this Open Dialog be developed to include financial incentives to public universities for offering Arts and Humanities courses, requiring more electives from these disciplines in more of their degree programs? Could adjunct teaching positions be subsidized allowing disabled professionals to teach survey or even studio courses to non-Arts and Humanities students?

### **Top Idea #5: Creative Workforce Development**

12 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 12 Net Votes

Art and Artisan training with community artists sharing skills to produce art products for sale in an effort towards earned income

## **Top Ideas – Identity, Disclosure, and Representation in the Arts**

### **Top Idea #1: Arts Grants must consider artists with disabilities**

22 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 22 Net Votes

Grant proposals and diversity studies often do not include. I am looking at a recent (two months ago) 80 page study made by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission that is defines diversity as racial or cultural. Artists with disabilities never seriously (if at all) enter into the discussion made by the scholars putting together this lengthy study.

### **Top Idea #2: Disabled Culture, Pride & the Affect it has on Art**

17 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 17 Net Votes

I used to be a full time career counselor and project manager for students with disabilities. I noticed that before students took disability studies classes, they were usually very difficult to work with - as in, not confident, low self-esteem ("but who would want to hire MEEEE?") and so forth. After they took a disability studies class, they had a different attitude. Pride was flowing in them. They saw disability as an asset, not a liability. As an artist, I've seen this in my own work. When I write, paint or take photos from

my own disabled experience, I have an edge that mainstream simply doesn't have. All of us with disabilities have this. The trick is to cultivate it, I think - to really flesh out exactly what it is that we see, hear, think, experience in our own ways. To NOT do the sad and tired "disability doesn't define me", but to embrace disability and the maverick perspectives that we naturally have. The arts can be really supportive of that - but it can also try and squeeze us into boxes. Tell us to paint, write, draw, dance this and this way. But we can't DO that to really tap into who we are as disabled individuals - we lose our power. Once we know the techniques (because that is also important), I think encouragement to tap into the disabled perspective would be huge. HUGE. Problem is? This is all really new. People still don't think that having a disability is a good thing. People still haven't embraced the concept that this is a way of being that represents a slice of humanity and gives us a completely different perspective. So. Development of disability pride. Recognition of disability being an asset. Understanding how to tune in to that. Applying that to one's art. That, to me would be something amazing.

### **Top Idea #3: Gallery Owners: Promote the Art, not the Disability**

15 Up Votes | 2 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

Forget any reference to a disability. Art shows should just mix-in the art from those with disabilities along-side the rest of the art. At the end of the day, what does it matter that the artist has a disability? It is the Art we are judging. It's the only way to put their work on a "fair" footing with the rest of the artwork. The disabled artists I know don't want their work purchased out of pity; they want it purchased because it is GOOD. Also, at least in the eyes of some, including myself, having exhibitions of "special categories" of artists unintentionally promotes a concept that the participants are "second class" artists at best. One who can't play with the "big boys". Such events are usually created out of good-heartedness, but make no mistake, the stigma is there. Don't hold "special" events for artists with disabilities.....just hold Art events, and make sure their work is hung alongside the work of others.

### **Top Idea #4: Telling Our Stories**

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

Whether people are 'out' about their disability identity and regardless if they have an apparent or non-apparent disability, there aren't enough stories about artists with disabilities by artists with disabilities. Especially ones that aren't told by reporters and framed as something 'inspirational' or 'special.' Storytelling is a way to carve out spaces within larger, multiple/intersecting communities. For younger people especially, they might never see someone like themselves in the arts and could benefit from that. As the founder of the Disability Visibility Project, I'd like to share our recent Call for Stories for artists w/ disabilities. We plan to have an event at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco this September highlighting short audio clips from oral histories by artists along w/ a panel discussion. I hope you'll consider recording a story for our project and become part of an archive of +100 stories by people with disabilities. Details on how to participate: <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2016/04/27/call-for-stories-artists-with-disabilities-in-sf-bay-area/> The DVP is a community partnership with StoryCorps and an online community dedicated to recording, amplifying, and sharing disability stories and culture. Thanks! You can find me on Twitter: @SFdiewolf



## **Top Idea #5: People with disabilities and arts administration employment**

12 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 12 Net Votes

I see a lot of conversation in this forum focused on artists with disabilities. I am wondering how we can encourage the arts administration field to be more inclusive of people with disabilities as well. I am a person with a disability (low vision) who is very lucky to have gainful and gratifying employment as a program director at a non-profit arts organization. I attend many national and international conferences and field convenings and am always struck by how under-represented people with disabilities are in these settings. I am encouraging my organization to engage candidates with disabilities when we have job openings. It is a matter of getting those in hiring positions to understand that accommodation is often not nearly as expensive or difficult as it is often perceived while pushing to include disabilities part of the equity/inclusion conversation frame. Question to the field - what can we do better to encourage arts administration employers to include more disabled voices in their staffing? What orgs are doing good work and setting an example to follow? Peace, Adam Perry Senior Program Director Arts Midwest [www.artsmidwest.org](http://www.artsmidwest.org).

## **Top Ideas – Disability-Specific or Art-Specific Issues**

### **Top Idea #1: Isolated & Unsupported**

25 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 25 Net Votes

Where I am geographically located there aren't programs that can provide any support for my specific disabilities. A lot of programs are specific to locations or specific to certain disabilities. I'd like to see more online support for artists with disabilities. I'd specifically love to see a forum or forums for artists, caregivers, and program staff to share resources and regional events, so this dialogue can go on year-round. Efforts are so fragmented and disconnected even from each other! I think even if I weren't disabled it would be overwhelming to search on my own as well as take care of myself. I think a lot of people with disabilities like mine can be physically limited from leaving our homes or being in the right areas. The internet is offering more opportunities for some of us, sometimes, in some ways to make and share art. Can we create and contribute to a community to continue talking about using the internet to reach and support the isolated and housebound disabled, among other useful conversations?

### **Top Idea #2: Art as a REAL Career?**

9 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 9 Net Votes

When we decided to be artists our parents said, "Really?... are you sure you don't want to be an accountant?" They were afraid we would never survive financially! The state VR agencies have "parent-like" power over career choices for people with disabilities. Because people need specialized supports to get jobs, be trained on jobs and keep jobs, the state VR is able to dictate what is appropriate career directions. Somewhere in history the state VR decided that blind

people can run cafes in Texas. The VR invested in partnership and training and Lo! now every state building has a cafe run by a blind person! Ingenious way to support the blind in small business development. Well, what about the arts? Some people with disabilities have a hard time finding the right job and keeping it! Making Art is natural for many and some with significant disabilities have Medicaid Waiver dollars for attendant care support. These attendants can and should be directed to support daily job functions. Why not make art for a living? Why not creatively leverage existing resources to set up self-employment for a person who may never have experienced a job? It makes sense.

### **Top Idea #3: Needed Support for Performing Artists with Disabilities**

9 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 9 Net Votes

Stage or film producers are not generally aware that they might include actors/singers with disabilities. Grants can insist that auditions include these artists. Often, even if the performing artist with a disability gets auditioned, the producer hesitates -- will a deaf artist need a costly interpreter? Will a wheelchair artist require special accommodations? These challenges can be overcome by private and governmental grants becoming advocates for artists with disabilities just as they are now becoming advocates for racial/ethnic diversity. My idea is that every grant submission be required to briefly demonstrate awareness of disabled artists in its field and that grants offer additional subsidies, if needed, to include those artists as part of the mainstream performing arts community.

### **Top Idea #4: Cost of supplies**

8 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Net Votes

The most problems is what I have in regards to art and making it. Is good quality of supplies is costly. I do not use USA made items like brushes, oil, and even paper is lesser quality. Programs like Adobe cost a lot of money and the Cloud is costly. So most people on SSDI or SSI will not be able to afford to create their art. There are open sources for the programs and but oils and canvases still cost a lot of money. Not to mention education for the courses of doing and improving art. In some cases it used to entertain people but with low grade stuff.

### **Top Idea #5: Dictation for Authors**

8 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 8 Net Votes

I have little use of my hands and can only type with one finger. For many years, I've been using many versions of voice systems to dictate my work in writing novels and short stories. For anyone with any kind of typing disability, I would highly recommend one of the voice systems like Dragon NaturallySpeaking. It takes a while to get used to this form of communicating, so a

person needs to be patient, persistent and maybe some tutoring our guidance so they don't give up before they start accomplishing. One area that is still difficult is operating the computer and mouse for those that do not have hand dexterity to operate touchscreens and other aids that do not work for some of us.

## **Top Ideas – Success Stories and Positive Change**

### **Top Idea #1: Artists with disabilities teaching art**

20 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 19 Net Votes

It is said that "those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." I disagree with this wholeheartedly! It is my opinion that one of the greatest ways to promote artists with disabilities is to have them teach art. I personally am not a fan of being labeled as an artist with a disability, because art is my primary therapy for overcoming said disability, and I know that isn't possible for all artists, but why make a special category just for artists with disabilities. From my point of view, that segregates us further. It is my current goal to become an art teacher, to talk to my students about art and how it helped me learn to cope with Combat PTSD, 5 Traumatic Brain Injuries and a muscle disorder no one can put a name to. I don't want to be labeled as an artist with a disability, I want to be known as an artist and art teacher who helped young people to understand the therapeutic and healing abilities of art! I feel like that should be our goal, not further segregating ourselves from the artist community, but joining it, bolstering it and teaching about it!

### **Top Idea #2: Revealing Culture Exhibition at the Smithsonian International**

15 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 15 Net Votes

In 2010 VSA International put together a wonderful and empowering exhibition of artists with disabilities at the Smithsonian International in Washington D.C. The exhibition design was done by famous designer with a disability, Michael Graves. My artwork was selected for this show along with many others. Being part of that exhibition did more for my art and morale. It gave artists with disabilities a voice and in an important place. There was a performance that went along with the opening of the exhibition at the Kennedy Center and there were performers with disabilities from all over the world. I still get notes from visitors to the exhibition saying that they saw my work there at the Smithsonian. How cool is that? If there were more exhibitions that highlight the work of artists with disabilities, it would make it easier for many to get a jump start in their art careers like I did. I was proud to be a part of this and it would be great if there was an exhibition in a place like MOMA or a wing just for artists with disabilities at the Venice Biennale! That would really be something.

### **Top Idea #3: Capturing the rich history of artists with disabilities**

15 Up Votes | 1 Down Votes | 14 Net Votes

Seeing is believing. Even today, there is not easy access to art made by people with disabilities (film, television, literature, art, dance, even comic books!). It isn't in textbooks, it isn't on television. There is no "collection" or history to show that we do exist and do create and that it IS a viable option for a career. Not a solution, just a problem/question - Is there a way to highlight the "greatest" and make it visible to youth with disabilities who may be interested in this as a career option?

### **Top Idea #4: Modern-day "Federal Art Project" funded by Act of Congress?**

13 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 13 Net Votes

Lobby for a new "Federal Art Project" like the Great Depression-era Works Progress Administration. The New Deal program was funded under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. Jackson Pollock got his start under that program. "One particular success was the Milwaukee Handicraft Project, which started in 1935 as an experiment that employed 900 people who were classified as unemployable due to their age or disability.[1]:164 The project came to employ approximately 5,000 unskilled workers, many of them women and the long-term unemployed." (Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal\\_Art\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Art_Project). Source cited in that article: Kennedy, Roger G.; Larkin, David (2009). When Art Worked: The New Deal, Art, and Democracy. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. ISBN 978-0-8478-3089-3.)

### **Top Idea #5: encourage the formation of regional art consortia in rural areas**

12 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 12 Net Votes

The Museum Accessibility Consortia (MAC) in New York should be replicated in rural locations. MAC is a great resource for inclusive programing.

## **Conclusion**

Through the [Careers in the Arts National Online Dialogue](#), ODEP and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage artists with disabilities and their allies in a virtual conversation about ideas on how to increase visibility, participation and employment success for people with disabilities, and insights on what still needs to be improved to advance careers in the arts for people with disabilities.

In summary, the online event attracted 940 visitors, of which 401 participated posting 112 unique ideas, 587 comments and 1,095 votes. Participation in this dialogue was well above average with visitors from 46 states and the District of Columbia spending more time on the dialogue (visiting an average of 8 pages for a 10:25 minutes) and contributing more ideas per participant (a ratio of 30%).

The input and responses of the participants are now being analyzed in an effort to inform federal policymaking decisions. These results will help ODEP and the NEA to better coordinate and collaborate with other federal and state agencies to advance arts education, preparation, and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.