Since late 2017, the National Endowment for the Arts has collaborated with Education Commission of the States on a bold initiative to make more and better information available on young people's access to arts education and their participation in it. The State Data Infrastructure Project for Arts Education (SDIP) supports arts education champions who want to tap into the data most states collect, but which often go unreported.

Fortunately, most state education data systems are capable of shedding light on the condition of arts education opportunities in every district and school across the state. Such systems can give parents, schools, and community leaders the information they need to ensure that every student has the opportunity to learn in and through the arts. Unfortunately, most states do not publish this information, making it difficult to diagnose and treat fundamental gaps and inequities.

To improve conditions for this vital work, SDIP has provided technical assistance to states and created tools that empower arts education stakeholders to mount arts education data initiatives in their states. A working group of leading experts in arts education and state data systems guided the initiative in 2018 and 2019.

The lessons and resources that have emerged from this project aim to clear the path for new state arts education data initiatives to equip policymakers, educators, communities and families with the information they need.

MAJOR LESSONS FROM THE STATES

A major component of SDIP was to assist arts education stakeholders in states across the country as they pursued their own data initiatives. SDIP selected eight states, each at a different level of readiness, and offered tailored technical assistance to help them improve data collection and reporting. What SDIP learned along the way helped to develop tools for states with limited data capacity, as well as for states with robust data systems. Important lessons emerged from this work:

Focus on big goals first. Sit down with other stakeholders to outline common goals for arts education in your state or community. Then explore what data you need to achieve those goals. Remember that data are only a means to an end.

Get to know your state's education data system. Most states' education data systems contain data on arts enrollments and teachers, but it pays to understand the specifics of your state's system. Consult SDIP's 50-State Comparison of Arts Education Data and Reporting, and speak with your state's data managers.

Know your capacity. It's easier than ever to pursue an arts education data initiative, thanks to better state data systems and inexpensive data visualization software. Still, you'll need data savvy, tech experience, project management skills and at least some resources to get the job done.

Bring on partners. Chances are, you can't do this alone. Find partners or consultants who can bring the expertise, capacity or resources you lack.

Be patient. A state arts education data initiative takes time. Staff at state agencies can turn over, states can shift their priorities, unexpected technical challenges can complicate your analysis and unforeseen policy barriers can complicate your timelines. Persistence pays off.

Put your results to use. Your initiative will succeed only if you share your results widely. Help people use the results to create better policies, distribute resources more wisely, identify and close gaps, expand programs or make choices that benefit their children.

FREE RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STATE ARTS EDUCATION DATA INITIATIVES

States' data systems are more robust than they have ever been, and inexpensive data visualization software has toppled barriers to analyzing and reporting on education data. Yet, before SDIP, there were few tools to help arts stakeholders take advantage of these conditions. SDIP provides powerful, free resources to help anyone who wants to review, analyze and report on arts education data their states already collect. These resources aim to demystify this work by offering concrete guidance on the condition of state data systems, what kinds of information most systems could produce and what it takes to pursue an arts education data initiative.

SDIP resources can help you:

Identify key arts education metrics you can track. The special report, Using State Data Systems to Report Information on Arts Education, describes information on arts education many states could share by analyzing and reporting on data they already collect.

Explore what arts education data your state collects and reports. The 50-State Comparison of Arts Education Data and Reporting assesses what data all 50 states and the District of Columbia collect through their statewide data systems, and whether they report on those data.

Learn how other states have used arts education data to expand access. Three case studies show what's possible when state and community leaders come together to ensure that families, educators and policymakers have much better information about students' opportunities in arts education.

- Getting to 100 Percent: How New Jersey Used Data-Driven Strategies to Achieve Universal Access to Arts Education
- Mapping the Arts: Texas Uses Data to Spotlight Disparities and Drive Equal Access to Arts Education Across the State
- From Data to Action: California Applies Collective Impact Approach to Track Arts Education and Drive Improvement

Get detailed guidance on how to pursue your own arts education data initiative. Our Arts Education Data Toolkit offers instructions, worksheets, sample documents and other tools to help you manage an arts education data initiative from start to finish.

- **Part 1:** Getting Started
- **Part 2:** Making Effective Data Requests
- **Part 3:** Processing the Data
- **Part 4:** Reporting on the Data
- **Part 5:** Using the Data to Promote Better Decision-Making

SUPPORTING **A NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

The National Endowment for the Arts and Education Commission of the States have engaged stakeholders across the arts, education and data communities in critical dialogue about the value of arts education data. SDIP's lessons and tools can inspire and equip those stakeholders to make information about arts education a public good, a foundation for broadening opportunity to every child across the country. Such information can empower leaders nationwide to realize the promise of universal access to education in the arts.