



Division

To: Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development
From: Andrea Noble, Executive Director, Alaska State Council on the Arts
Date: June 4, 2026
Item: 13H

Standing General Report

Introduction

Established in 1966, The Alaska State Council on the Arts is celebrating a 60th Anniversary! ASCA became a Public Corporation on June 30, 2017, and is housed in the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for administrative purposes. ASCA has six full-time staff, and an eleven-member governor appointed Board of Trustees.

Updates

FY2026 Grants, Convenings and Projects

In FY2026, as of April 30th, ASCA has funded 217 grants to organizations and individuals through 18 grant categories for a total of \$1,158,389 with state, federal and private funds distributed across the state. America 250 Grants include: The Kodiak History Society, The Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival, The SouthWest Alaska Arts Group (SWAAG), Museums Alaska, and The Sitka Music Festival.

On April 16-17, 2026, ASCA hosted the 2026 Statewide Biennial Arts and Culture Convergence: The Art of Adaptation. This year's convergence in Anchorage brought together over 160 artists, educators, administrators, and culture bearers from across Alaska to explore how the arts help us respond, evolve, and thrive in the face of change. While we are still collecting data and feedback from those in attendance, a few meaningful testaments to the impactful experience were:

“It was an incredible honor to be in community with people who make other's hearts feel full simply because they exist. I needed to be there with all of you far more than you needed me to be there, and I mean that, and you have no idea how much it is true. Thank you again, and please, keep doing the work you are doing. It is changing and saving lives.”

“I learned so much at this conference, things I can start using now and next week.”

“I am so grateful for ASCA's generosity in creating the opportunity to share leadership practices, experiences, and knowledge that helps us ALL and honors our Ancestors.”

An Arts, Health & Well-Being Framework Coordinator was hired in FY2026 to 1) explore how arts and cultural practices support health across Alaska and 2) to establish an advisory committee to shape

future grantmaking that is impactful and relevant to Alaska, based on learning from the Arts, Health and Well-Being pilot grant launched in FY2025.

In late January 2026, ASCA hosted a learning and discovery visit for members from the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Forces Team. The NEA team was particularly interested in how the last two typhoons in Western Alaska have impacted artists, veterans and the culture of the region. We visited the Alaska Native Heritage Center, Calista Education Foundation, the Alaska Native Medical Center, College Gate Elementary School Principal and staff with their Yup'ik Immersion Program, including ASD World Languages Directors, and a meeting with Senator Murkowski's Anchorage State Director. The team also met with representatives from SouthWest Arts Group, Native Movement and the Alaska Arts and Culture Foundation. With this insight, ASCA will continue to participate in network efforts to: 1) coordinate local, state and federal cultural resources; 2) cultivate partnerships that support opportunities for cultural and community engagement; 3) focus on arts, culture and healing; 4) identify and reach the veteran and service member population impacted; 5) plan for response to future impact of climate related disasters in Alaska.

The 2025 Governor's Arts and Humanities Awards were held live at the Anchorage Museum on October 28, 2025. The event was recorded and broadcast on You Tube and Alaska's Lt. Governor, Nancy Dahlstrom, attended and provided remarks as she has done for the past two years.

Digitization of the Alaska Contemporary Art Bank is over 30% complete with a functioning Past Perfect database for borrowers to select artwork for loan. There are approximately 800 pieces in the collection, and with the majority on loan, new entries will be added as they cycle in for return.

National and Regional Leadership

In January 2026, Community Arts Program Director, Charlie Sears, who is also ASCA's ADA Coordinator, was elected to the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Accessibility Steering Committee. In this capacity, he will collaborate with national peers to determine the strategic direction of the Peer Group. In addition to his committee appointment, he was nominated and selected to serve as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee. This leadership role involves guiding committee deliberations and fostering strategic partnerships with external accessibility organizations to advance accessibility nationally. He will serve a two-year term as Co-Chair, after which he will transition into the role of Chair. Charlie has been invited to present on his work to advance digital accessibility at the national Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) Conference this summer.

Building on the Tribal Governance and Protocols staff and board training with First Alaskans Institute in 2023, an Alaska Native Arts Advisory Committee was established in 2025 to inform and guide policy that impacts Alaska Native Artists. This committee is led by ASCA's Indigenous Arts and Culture Program Director, Patti Oksoktaruk Lillie and they meet quarterly. Together they are drafting a charter to define the committee's authority, role and voice as a recognized statewide committee with specific knowledge and expertise on Alaska Native Art and Culture. Patti has been invited to present a national seminar on ASCA's approach to working with tribes.

ASCA's Executive Director, Andrea Noble is serving her third year as a Trustee for Creative West, the regional arts organization that includes thirteen western states and four pacific jurisdictions.

Arts Education

A group of New Visions Network school districts met together in Anchorage to develop arts education action plans and learn from each other's work to increase access to arts education for Alaska's students in fall 2025. In the current year, as the Alaska Arts Education Consortium (AAEC) Rural Arts Initiative pilot and the Arts Education Data Project also build participation of stakeholders in cohorts focused on increased access to teaching and learning in and through the arts and cultures of Alaska in K-12 local education agencies, we are working with AAEC to align and bring these efforts together. The New Visions network continues to have the support of a Project Coordinator who supports member district representatives in implementing their arts education action plans.

The Alaska State Council on the Arts continues to participate as a key partner and funder of the Alaska Arts Education Data Project. The third phase of this project, implemented by a coalition of Alaska stakeholders with AAEC as managing partner, is guided by a logic model developed during the first phase of the project. In the current phase, the coalition is implementing the third annual voluntary survey of Alaska Public school districts about arts education in K-12 schools. The first and second survey reports are also now available online at <https://akartsed.org/alaska-arts-education-data-project/>. Based on the data, the coalition has also undertaken a series of "Community Conversations" aimed at increasing awareness of art education access in Alaska, and catalyzing discussions about how communities can advance teaching and learning in and through arts and cultures of Alaska, locally. This year, the project also launched a survey for community members at large, which has been included in events supported by the Alaska School Activities Association - another coalition stakeholder - and the Alaska Statewide Arts and Culture Convergence in April.

Before the 2026 Alaska Statewide Arts and Culture Convergence: Art of Adaptation in April, we convened a group of more than 30 educators, school leaders, community arts and culture organization representatives, teaching artists and culture bearers to consider the historic and current condition of arts education in Alaska. The group also began to consider a shared agenda for arts education research, policy and best practices. This discussion marks the closing of the 10-year Munartet Project: increasing teacher confidence and competence to teach in and through the arts and cultures of Kodiak. This pre-conference arts education gathering follows a smaller Sustainability Summit of representatives from Sitka, Juneau, Kodiak and Fairbanks/Bering Strait sites which are also closing long-term projects supported by the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP) Teacher Development Arts Education program. This Summit was intended to capture high level learning, sustainability strategies, best practices and vision for future collaboration in support of Alaska teachers.

These gatherings were intended to celebrate and reflect upon collaborative work, but also to inform new activity within the "Creativity in Teaching" initiative supported by MACP for three years, with a \$2 million award beginning in FY27. ASCA will convene with stakeholders to develop a plan and program for building local Creativity Cohorts that open pathways for pre-service, early career and non-traditional entry teachers; connect in-service and mentor teachers with community and resources; and support the

retention of teacher leaders as they grow in their confidence and competence to teach in and through arts and cultures of Alaska. Planning in year one of the project will be informed by existing networks of public-school districts, institutes of higher education, and community arts and culture partners, including the New Visions Network of school districts, and the Alaska Arts Education Consortium, the Munartet Project Partners and individuals involved with Alaska

Teacher Development Arts Education (TDAE) sites will be key to program development for years two and three. They will be invited to participate both as stakeholders in the planning process, and as immediate sources of practical experience in implementation. The projected outcomes of this initiative are:

Overall Outcome #1:

A strong network of organizations, educators, community leaders, artists, culture bearers and other creative community members is developed, activated and engaged in the work of supporting teacher cohorts. The network opens pathways for teachers to grow in their confidence and competence to teach and learn in and through the arts and cultures of Alaska.

Overall Outcome #2:

Diverse Alaskans are recruited, enter teaching practice, and progress in their service with the support of a community that reflects the cultures and artistry of place. Teachers are respected for their professional creativity and connections to the community.

Overall Outcome #3:

Using both existing and project-specific data about teaching and learning in and through arts and cultures of Alaska, public school districts, institutes of higher education, Tribes and community arts and culture partners develop policy and highlight practices that support positive school culture, positive working conditions for teachers, and personal connections between teachers, students and the communities where they live.