



About the Division of the Arts and the State Arts Council

The Delaware Division of the Arts, a branch of the Delaware Department of State, is dedicated to cultivating and supporting the arts to enhance the quality of life for all Delawareans. Together with its advisory body, the Delaware State Arts Council, the Division administers grants and programs that support arts programming, educate the public, increase awareness of the arts, and integrate the arts into all facets of Delaware life.

The Division of the Arts was created by the Delaware General Assembly in 1989. Its enabling legislation can be found in the Delaware Code, Title 29, Chapter 87, Section 26.

The Delaware State Arts Council is the advisory body to the Delaware Division of the Arts. The Council advises the Division of the Arts on matters of arts policy, funding for the arts, and other issues relevant to support for the arts in Delaware. The Council, according to its enabling legislation, "shall be composed of not more than 15 members" appointed by the Governor, who represent the state geographically and politically and are appointed on the basis of their interest and experience in the arts.

Council members serve as advocates for the arts, promoting and encouraging participation in and appreciation of the arts throughout the state. Council members are citizens of Delaware and serve a renewable three-year term. A Chairperson of the Council is designated in addition to the members of the Council by the Governor and serves in that capacity at the pleasure of the Governor.

The time commitment centers five primary activities:

1. **Quarterly council meetings**, typically mid-day with lunch provided. Meetings rotate between the three counties, with the June funding meeting traditionally held at Buena Vista State Conference Center. Meetings are usually three hours in length, with the June meeting scheduled for four hours.
2. **Annual panel meetings**. Panel meetings occur in early May, and Council members play an integral role in the review of grant applications. Typically, each Council member is assigned to one half-day or day-long panel.
3. **On-site evaluations** of arts programs and events. Council members are encouraged to attend arts events and write on-site evaluations for use in the grant application review process.
4. **Special Events**. Council members are encouraged to attend Division-sponsored events such as the biennial Arts Summit and annual events like Poetry Out Loud, National Arts Program Exhibition, and Artist Fellowship Reception.
5. **Ad hoc meetings or conference calls** may be scheduled for the purpose of arts advocacy, nominations of new Council members, business or counsel required in between scheduled Council meetings. These are typically quite limited in number and duration.

Selection of Council members is based upon maintaining a balance of skills and expertise on the Council; maintaining an advisory body representative of the demographics of the state; and representing interest, involvement, and/or participation in the arts.

Funding for Delaware Division of the Arts programs and services is provided by annual appropriations from the Delaware State Legislature, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

History of the Delaware State Arts Council

An Executive Order, issued on March 31, 1969, established a Delaware State Arts Council. The Executive Department felt that the general welfare of Delaware citizens would be promoted by giving further recognition to the arts as a vital part of our cultural heritage, and a valued means of improving our educational programs. It was felt that exposure to excellence in the arts improves the quality of life and inspires our children and our schools to reach for excellence in all fields of personal endeavor. The Council consists of at least fifteen members broadly representative of all fields of the performing and fine arts, appointed by the Governor for a term of three years, excepting the chairman who serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

The duties of the Council are to promote and encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of our state; to expand the state's cultural resources and to promote public education in all fields of artistic expression; to encourage, promote and provide technical and professional assistance to arts programs of individuals, organizations and institutions; to make recommendations to public and private artistic and cultural institutions concerning appropriate methods to encourage participation in and appreciation of the arts to meet the needs and aspirations of persons in all parts of the state and to assist such institutions in adopting a view of mutual promotion of the arts; and to study and make recommendations for legislation to the Governor regarding the permanence of the Council. The Council is authorized to accept private and public gifts, contributions and bequests to further the objectives of their programs. In addition, it may request and receive assistance in carrying out its functions from any State agency. Until 1989, the Council was the official state agency to administer all funds received from the National Endowment for the Arts.

In 1978, in order to incorporate the arts program more directly into the structure of government, a later more recent executive order transferred the administrative responsibilities of the Arts Council to the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. The Council advises the Division on programs and concerns of the arts and approves or disapproves all grants of public or private funds received by the Division relating to the arts. The Division's responsibilities include providing technical and professional assistance to arts programs of individuals, organizations, and institutions of the state; and receiving gifts, contributions, and bequests from the private or public sectors and appropriations and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts or other government agencies for the purpose of promoting and encouraging the arts. In addition, the Division took over the administrative and budgetary responsibilities of the Council. The arts program and the staff of the Arts Council became known as the Office of the Arts of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

The State Arts Council experienced major reorganization in 1989. In that year the Division of the Arts was created within the Department of State as an advisory, coordinating, and implementing agency for the promotion of the arts in Delaware. The 1989 legislation also requires the division director to establish a special fund to encourage governmental entities and private organizations in the development of the arts. The Division continues to exercise the same functions as the office of the arts had done, while the State Arts Council was given a more clearly defined advisory role. The council now provides guidance to the division director on matters of arts policy and considers matters referred to it by the Governor, Secretary of State and the division director.

For a listing of current Council members, visit: <https://artsfiles.delaware.gov/council-2020-members.pdf>

To be considered for a Council appointment, download, complete, and return the PDF [Boards & Commissions Application](#).