



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2026

CONTACT: Sue Struve

202-347-7068

sue.struve@nasaa-arts.org

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) is pleased to announce the election of a new secretary and two new members to its board of directors.

Per NASAA's bylaws, the NASAA board elected Marcela "Xela" Garcia to serve as board secretary. She will serve a two-year term.



**Marcela "Xela" Garcia
Council Member
Wisconsin Arts Board**

Marcela "Xela" Garcia is a Xicana artist, innovator and cultural warrior who currently serves as the executive director at Walker's Point Center for the Arts in Milwaukee, and was elected to the Milwaukee Public Schools board of directors representing District 6. As a council member for the [Wisconsin Arts Board](#), she brings broad experience in arts and culture administration, education, philanthropy and organizational sustainability. Garcia earned her B.A. in English literature with an emphasis in creative writing and Chicana/Latinx studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and holds a certification in Nonprofit Leadership. She was awarded Board Sources' National Emerging Non-Profit Leader Award in 2012, was recognized as one of Wisconsin's Most Powerful Latinos in 2018, was selected to the 2020 class of the Milwaukee Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award and received the 2020 Arts + Culture Leaders of Color Fellowship with Americans for the Arts. She currently serves as a mayoral appointee to the City of Milwaukee Arts Board. (Board term 2024-2026)

"The 2026 NASAA board represents dynamic and dedicated leadership from our field and allied sectors," said NASAA Chair David Platts. "I am excited to work with Xela as we advance NASAA's mission to strengthen state arts agencies and continue to advocate for the value of arts and creativity across all communities."

—more—

In addition, state arts agencies elected two new directors:

Sharon S. Johnson

Chair

Utah Division of Arts and Museums Advisory Board

Sharon Johnson serves on the [Utah Division of Arts & Museums](#) Advisory Board. A skilled facilitator, she led the board through challenging transitions while serving as chair, providing steady direction that ensured effective change management during times of uncertainty. Johnson has a background in museum development, demonstrating leadership as her all-volunteer team revitalized the Cache Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum through increased professionalism, accessibility and balanced storytelling, later receiving the Bessie Jones Volunteer award from the Utah Museums Association. She provides mentorship and guidance to museum professionals and volunteers in her community, encouraging them to improve museum management practices through learning and community engagement.

As an advocate for both arts and museums, Johnson seeks opportunities for collaboration to create positive cultural and economic impact that lifts all. Johnson serves on the Utah Museums Association Board, is a certified Utah Change Leader and is a recipient of the Utah Historical Society's Outstanding Achievement Award for her contributions to state history. Johnson earned an MSS degree with an emphasis in public administration from Utah State University and has served the community and her church in many volunteer roles. She is a creative problem solver and an adventurous spirit whose gear closet includes ice climbing tools, a packraft, backpacking gear and a variety of downhill skis that are used when she clocks 50 mph at Sun Valley at least once per year. (Board term 2026-2027)



Michelle Laflamme-Childs

Executive Director

New Mexico Arts

Michelle Laflamme-Childs is the executive director of [New Mexico Arts](#) (NMA), New Mexico's federally authorized state arts agency and a division of the [New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs](#). NMA's mission is to ensure all New Mexicans have access to the arts in their communities through the state's percent for public art program, state and federally funded grants to nonprofit organizations, direct programs and services, technical assistance, and educational and professional development opportunities to organizations, artists and arts educators throughout New Mexico.

Laflamme-Childs serves on the boards of directors of [Creative West](#), the [Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area](#) and the [Santa Fe Human Rights Alliance](#) and is a member of the [International Women's Forum](#). Her personal creative practices include

writing poems and spinning fresh beats as a local commercial radio DJ. She holds a BA in English from the University of Massachusetts and an MA from St. John's College in Santa Fe, and hopes someday to complete her MFA in creative writing at the University of Texas, El Paso. (Board term winter 2026 – fall 2026)

"We are delighted to welcome Sharon and Michelle to the NASAA board," said NASAA President and CEO Pam Breaux. "These experienced leaders bring a breadth of talent and perspectives, formidable dedication to serving the public and deep passion for the arts. We are eager to get started with this new team and welcome their guidance and expertise."

For more information on NASAA's board members, visit [NASAA Board of Directors](#).

Founded in 1968, the [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#) (NASAA) is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization. In collaboration with the nation's 56 state and jurisdictional arts councils, we advance the arts as a powerful path to economic prosperity, rural resilience, good health, education success and strong communities in which everyone thrives. NASAA serves as a clearinghouse for data and research about public funding for the arts as well as the policies and programs of state arts agencies. For more information about NASAA and the work of state arts agencies, visit www.nasaa-arts.org.

#