

Introduction

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Arts and Disability Center (NADC) and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), hosted a Careers in the Arts online dialogue between June 6 - June 19, 2016. Artists with disabilities and their allies engaged in a virtual conversation about increasing artists' visibility, participation and employment.

Breakthroughs and Accomplishments: (following the 1998 and 2010 NEA-sponsored National Forums)

- ✓ 28 Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities
- ✓ Access to Design Professions E-Mentoring
- ✓ Deaf Theater Artists Roundtable
- ✓ National Convening on The Future of Physically Integrated Dance
- ✓ Deaf West Theatre's *Spring Awakening* on Broadway

Method

Moderator Facilitated Discussions: were held on EpolicyWorks (ODEP) web based platform. Crowdsourcing tools engaged participants through online voting, idea submission and comments

Outreach: via targeted emails and social media (Twitter)

Online Dialogue: We posed the following question to the online participants:

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

Topic Driven Conversations:

1. Challenges and Opportunities for Careers in the Arts
2. Education and Job Training
3. Identify, Disclosure, and Representation
4. Disability Specific or Art Specific Issues
5. Success Stories and Positive Change

Data Analysis & Results

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the participants, ideas, and comments. A qualitative analysis was made of all content across the 5 topics.

Participants

The 401 registrants included artists and arts administrators with disabilities, arts organizations, arts service organizations, arts advocacy groups, arts employers, educators, advocates, and federal and state policymakers. They posted 112 unique ideas, 587 comments and cast 1,095 votes.



The Deaf West Theater production of *Spring Awakening*
Book and Lyrics by Steven Sater
Music by Duncan Sheik
Directed by Michael Arden and choreographed by Spencer Liff
Pictured (counter-clockwise from bottom left): Treshelle Edmond, Ali Stroker, Amelia Hensley, Lauren Luiz, Kathryn Gallagher, Krysta Rodriguez, and Alexandra Winter
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Most Pressing Challenges

Limited Arts Education and Training: few inclusive programs due to inaccessible spaces, stigma, attitudes and perceptions about ability

Isolation: due to geography, disability and/or art form

Limited Funding: for arts supplies, training and grants

Maintaining Public Benefits and Career Support: fear of losing benefits; need assistance navigating SSI incentives, PASS, and ABLE Accounts

Vocational Rehabilitation: VR agencies do not always support arts careers

Disability Not Part of the Diversity Agenda: lack of representation and misrepresentation of disability in arts and media

Recommendations

Our work highlights the need for the disability community to see the arts as a viable career path and the arts community to be more inclusive of people with disabilities.

1. Adapt courses and provide needed accommodations in education
2. Offer mentorship opportunities and networks
3. Include disability in the list of "diversities" in arts policy and practices
4. Outreach to previously untapped diverse audiences with disabilities
5. Use online forums, social media and websites for sharing ideas and resources, current opportunities, and present artists' work

“Disability still seems like an afterthought when it comes to diversity dialogues...Need to see more diverse images in our own community in terms of ethnicity, age, and people with disabilities played by actors with disabilities.”