

**Museum Trustee Association/Getty Leadership Institute Joint Meeting**  
**October 10-12, 2002**  
**San Diego, California**  
**Proceedings: *Policy Partners* Briefing**

Chris Dwyer, author of *Policy Partners: Making the Case for State Investment in Culture* ([www.culturalpolicy.org/state-cp/home.htm](http://www.culturalpolicy.org/state-cp/home.htm)) addressed the Museum Trustee Association ([www.mta-hq.org](http://www.mta-hq.org)) and the Getty Leadership Institute ([www.getty.edu/about/leader](http://www.getty.edu/about/leader)) at their joint meeting in San Diego. Dwyer began with the theme “sense of place” and provided a glimpse of her home community of Portsmouth, NH, which boasts strong maritime traditions, historic buildings from the 1700s, and a thriving arts scene. From this personable introduction, Dwyer illustrated two points. First, her description of Portsmouth did not make distinctions between arts, historic preservation, humanities, folklife, and heritage. This point is fundamental to the overall message of *Policy Partners*—the cultural sector should be thought of as a whole. Second, while culture has held a long-standing place of import in Portsmouth, it was only earlier this year that the first municipal cultural plan was adopted by the city council, which created a cultural agency for the city. Despite strong cultural interests of citizens, it can be very difficult to engage government support and place culture at the policy table with education, transportation, housing, and the environment. This recognition stimulated The Pew Charitable Trusts ([www.pewtrusts.com](http://www.pewtrusts.com)) to initiate the research in this publication in order to learn from state policy innovations and examine ways to both advance public policy and increase state resources for culture.

Dwyer outlined the feasibility study, which included input from a core group of leaders from the four national organizations of four fields of culture—the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies ([www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)), the National Trust for Historic Preservation ([www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)), the National Humanities Alliance ([www.nhalliance.org](http://www.nhalliance.org)), and the American Folklife Center ([www.loc.gov/folklife](http://www.loc.gov/folklife)). The project commissioned papers and consulted with a political strategist, as well as the National Council on State Legislators (NSL), the National Governor’s Association (NGA), and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Dwyer immediately addressed four common questions related to the study: 1) The project concentrated on policy—actions taken on behalf of the general public. 2) State level cultural policy, she explained, was the chosen focus because there have been a number of successes and innovations in policy at the state level. 3) The four Pew-defined areas of culture were seen as a starting point and are not meant to exclude organizations such as

libraries, tribal councils, or public media. 4) Concentration was extended beyond state agencies to statewide nonprofit groups.

Discussion centered on the infectious desire of people to work across fields. Cross-field collaborations, the study found, led to a cultural sector united across disciplines and to revenue increases. In light of recent budget cuts, state and national collaborators felt the time was right to lay groundwork for collaborations and new state sources. In Maine, Dwyer explained, it took ten years of groundwork to open up new state revenues for culture.

Collaborating across fields can also increase clout by engaging influential or new constituencies, Dwyer said. Maine legislators, interviewed after passing legislation supporting a new cultural program that they originally opposed, said, “It was the caliber of people that were writing us...People on library boards, historical societies, arts, heritage groups. And people like that vote.” Leaders across fields build clout, Dwyer said, by forming coalitions; vertical integration is key. The cultural sector must find ways to communicate the linkages in simple and compelling ways. A Minnesota state senator, Dwyer stated, confessed that he often didn’t understand the differences between cultural agencies and their funding requests, illustrating the need for a single message. Clout depends on the ability to communicate public value for arts and culture in a unified voice.

Several analogies were made between where the environmental movement was 40 years ago and where the cultural sector is today. For instance, the very term “environment,” as used in everyday discourse, carries a common message and unites separate interests focused on air, water, wildlife, open spaces, etc. Could we find a way to similarly unite, for example, history, preservation, and dance in the public consciousness? Additionally, the environmental movement is successful in linking policy issues to individual concerns to create a sense of urgency. Even children connect air and water pollution to their own health as individuals. Could we similarly make cultural issues personal for more public officials and voters?

The focus of the session turned to an articulation of a common message across cultural domains. “Sense of place” was a theme that resonated in discussion groups. Using the case studies stimulated conversations about how a unified message might articulate the public benefit of arts and culture and create policy shifts. One case study was the Oregon Cultural Trust ([www.culturaltrust.org](http://www.culturaltrust.org)), a statewide cultural fund whose creation was stimulated by polls conducted by the Oregon Progress Board finding that the majority of Oregonians no longer identified closely with their communities. In light of these findings,

the government challenged the cultural sector to revitalize community life. The Trust will be funded by legislative dollars, tax credits for corporations and individuals, state-owned assets sales, and proceeds from cultural license plates. Other state funding strategies include: targeting tax credits for historic preservation of commercial structures (Missouri), appropriating matching funds for land conservation and preservation (New Hampshire), restoring courthouses with transportation funds (Texas), using routine corporate fees for arts activities (Florida), and earmarking targeted projects for legislative lobbying (Florida).

In conclusion, Dwyer stressed three points to fuel the group's further discussion. First, when seeking to increase state resources for culture, there is a role for everyone—the national cultural organizations, the policy support groups (NCSL and NGA), funders, and cultural institutions. Second, political strategies talk about windows of opportunity to be seized. Current budget climates provide the right opportunity to discuss collaborations and prepare for an upswing. Finally, talk should center around those compelling messages that bring the cultural sector together—such as “sense of place,” a place not defined simply by geography, but defined also by our place in time, our place amongst world cultures, and the place of culture in the public discourse.