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States funds now exceed federal in aid to the arts

Study shows local agencies are providing a \$107.8 million share

By Ruth Dean

Washington Star Staff Writer

It looks like the tail wagging the dog except for the fact that the National Council on the Arts, which funds 20 percent of its annual congressional appropriation to state arts agencies, is glad to see the states taking a lead in funding the arts.

Council members heard yesterday that state arts agencies are now providing more funds for the arts than the National Endowment for the Arts — a total of \$107.8 million in program grants serving the arts in the current fiscal year.

This is exclusive of funds allocated by the Endowment for Treasury funds and challenge grants, announced by Stephen Sill, former head of the National Assembly of State Agencies, and now manager of the

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, who chaired the study.

In fact, said Sill, the state arts agencies had an increase from their state legislatures alone in the aggregate of 43 percent, "and this, in the year of Proposition 13. The recognition of the necessity of public support of the arts at the state level is very much on the rise and hasn't necessarily been affected by the Proposition-13 mentality."

Sill's comments highlighted a progress report on a long-range staff study of the impact of Endowment and state-aid support on the arts, with the idea farther down the road of establishing a closer federal-state partnership, policy ties and peer review.

Eventually, the Endowment expects to complete in-depth funding impact studies

of all the areas of the arts covered by the Endowment. The first report covering the largest funded area, music, was presented yesterday. It covers fiscal year 1977.

It revealed the same consistency of funding as the overall report — that more state funding went to support of music institutions than came from the National Endowment — a total of \$20.6 million. As 1977 represented a changeover of federal fiscal policy from July to October, no comparable exact figure covering the 12-month states figure could be obtained. But as Endowment congressional appropriations have steadily increased, a valid figure of comparison can still be posed by the \$14.6 million expended in grants by the Endowment's music program in fiscal '78.

Symphony orchestras were divided into

three categories. Major symphonies received \$4.5 million from state arts agencies, \$1.2 million from state legislatures, or a combined total of \$5.6 representing 4.9 percent of their total income.

Regional symphonies received a combined total of \$1.1 million, or 6.3 percent of their total income. Metropolitan orchestras got a total of \$837,013, representing 4.9 percent of their total income.

The grand total for orchestra support alone was \$9.3 million.

Orchestra statistics were compiled by the American Symphony Orchestra League, but other data in the report came from at least 30 service organizations, "to provide us with the kind of information we didn't have before," Sill stated.

Other music category totals included: opera, \$2.8 million; choral groups, \$355,858; chamber music, \$721,36; and individual artists, composers and librettists, \$103,431.

The study also showed some divergencies in funding. A few states award money for facility support, and in three states — California, Georgia and Texas, tax revenue from hotel, entertainment or meal tax is provided to art institutions. (However, passage of Proposition 13 in California last year may have curbed some of this revenue since the report was compiled, based as it was on 1977 figures). The study also revealed fellowships were prevalent; that is, performance fees for composers, residencies and training, even subsistence allowances in some states.

The report also indicates that in the area of employment, 25 state arts agencies either administer programs or assist other public agencies to provide employment to musicians in three categories — touring, and short and long-term residencies, either in arts-in-schools, or arts-in-community projects.

A significant problem uncovered by the study is that budget line-iteming "is less a trend than it is an issue." The general perception of music organizations being that line-iteming and special appropriations "can be a negative factor because they can tend to create imbalances in funding between the haves and have-nots," according to the report. Thus it becomes additionally difficult for state arts agencies to establish public funding programs that will logically meet the needs of all the arts.

N.B. The 43% increase was a misquote. Steve Sell noted an aggregate 23% increase over the past two years. Also, Bill Terry, not Sell, gave the Music in the States report.