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**Houston Endowment Grants $1.66 million to Mid-America Arts Alliance for Engage Houston**

(Kansas City, MO) – Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) is pleased to partner with Houston Endowment in support of a third round of Engage Houston, a professional development program serving small and midsize arts and culture organizations.

Engage offers training in governance, finance, fundraising, and community engagement. M-AAA and Houston Endowment created the program together in 2011, after an assessment of the Houston region’s arts and culture community showed that leaders of small and midsize entities sought additional knowledge and skills to be more effective administrators.

The new three-year, $1,660,000 grant from Houston Endowment will allow additional organizations to participate in Engage and will enable M-AAA to introduce an adaptive leadership approach for program alumni. Engage helps organizations set aside a scarcity mentality and prioritize uncovering community need, building partnerships, and renewing their commitment to public service.

“Our funding is an investment in our community,” said Ann B. Stern, president and CEO of Houston Endowment. “We try to place all of our resources where they will have the greatest impact. That means investing in efforts like Engage that can help build the capacity of not just one but dozens of small and midsize arts organizations that contribute to the vibrancy of our region. We have worked closely with Mid-America Arts Alliance to develop this program, and we share the same goal: to nurture a strong arts ecosystem in Houston.”

As part of this grant partnership, M-AAA will open its first satellite office in Houston, thereby evolving Engage Houston from a program facilitated and administered remotely to a fully Houston-based one. The process will help build administrative, logistical, staffing, and evaluation resources in Houston and employ local residents while relying on the operational support infrastructure provided by M-AAA’s headquarters in Kansas City, MO.

“We are optimistic that a Houston office of M-AAA will not only increase the effectiveness of the Engage program but also give local arts organizations more access to M-AAA’s other resources,” said Stern.

“We are humbled to partner with Houston Endowment for a third round of Engage, allowing the program to deepen the impact of arts and cultural organizations that are wedded to public service, inspire participants to become active learners, and invigorate a renewed arts and cultural community that is instinctively cooperative,” said Todd Stein, president and CEO of Mid-America Arts Alliance. “An office in Houston is an extension of our long collaboration with the outstanding arts and culture organizations of the region and our commitment to their continuing support.”

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Prior rounds of Engage have already served more than sixty organizations from a variety of Houston arts and culture services.

“Engage provided a model and the tools that we needed to take ourselves to the next level,” said Eureka Gilkey, executive director of Project Row Houses, which began participating in 2015. “As a result of our participation, Project Row Houses has reached so many milestones—creating and distributing the organization’s first annual report, revamped governance documents and procedures, a daily working mission statement for our community-centered work—because of the cost-effective resources of Engage. Through our work with Engage, funders in Houston saw that Project Row Houses was a mature organization with the operational systems to match its culturally creative brainpower.”

About Mid-America Arts Alliance
Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) works collaboratively to provide more art for more people across its six states of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. M-AAA strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. We are especially committed to enriching the cultural life of historically underserved communities by providing high quality, meaningful, and accessible arts and culture programs and services. We believe in more art for more people. Additional information about M-AAA is available at www.maaa.org.

About Houston Endowment
Houston Endowment is a private philanthropic institution that works across the community for the benefit of the people of greater Houston. With assets of over $1.8 billion, the foundation makes grants to nonprofit organizations totaling approximately $80 million each year in order to enhance civic assets, strengthen systems that support residents, promote post-secondary success, and build a stronger region. Established by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones in 1937, Houston Endowment has a rich legacy of addressing some of greater Houston’s most compelling needs. Today the foundation continues efforts to create a vibrant community where all have the opportunity to thrive. Learn more at www.houstonendowment.org.

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