



PROTECTING PUBLIC ART COLLECTIONS

2022 Survey Report

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Funded by the National Endowment for the
Humanities Research and Development Grant Program

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I. Executive Summary

The Protecting Public Art Collections (PPAC) project was developed in 2022 to support emergency preparedness in public art collections through the development of tools for remote risk assessment, mapping, and emergency plans. In late 2022 the project team launched a survey, the goals of which were to gain a better understanding of how public art collections are currently engaging in emergency planning and to help determine the features of a successful collections emergency plan.

The survey titled, “Emergency Preparedness & Response for Public Art Collections,” included 15 questions, covering emergency preparedness training and activities, and collections management. It was distributed to organizations through online communities focused on public art and art conservation, and responses were collected from November 15, 2022 – January 31, 2023. The survey analysis pool consisted of 56 respondents who were representative of the target audience of the survey. Respondents represented 31 states¹ and Australia.

To summarize the results, 50% of the respondents did **not** have an emergency plan that addressed collections. While most respondents reported some training related to emergency management, trainings that were specific to collections (for example object handling, wet salvage, etc.) were less common than training on general health and safety or fire safety. The greatest emergency preparedness and response needs reported were risk assessment; incident response procedures and documentation; and administrative buy-in. Most respondents tracked their collections digitally, and 84% of collections were mapped.² Only 37% of respondents reported sole physical control over collections spaces.

Conclusions drawn from the survey responses indicate that emergency planning assistance and training will be valuable to public art collections, especially in the areas of risk assessment and response procedures. Responses confirm that many public art collections are mapped and tracked digitally³; these are two necessary criteria for the remote risk assessment tools that the PPAC project is developing. Responses also indicate that guidance on fundraising and advocacy for emergency planning is needed, although this falls outside the current scope of the PPAC project.

The survey was helpful in gaining information on the emergency preparedness activities currently being carried out in public art collections, but it did have limitations. Specifically, during survey analysis it became clear that the term “public art collection” was ambiguous and some responses were eliminated from data analysis when it became clear that the respondents represented museums and libraries open to the public, rather than the intended audience. Additionally, the Southwest region of the United States was not represented by respondents who chose to share their identity, and more detailed information about specific hazards was omitted from the survey design in favor of brevity.

The PPAC project team plans to follow-up on this survey by conducting a series of focus discussion groups that will seek to gather more information about the specific hazard and condition concerns faced by public art collections. The discussion groups will build on the findings of this survey: they will be more in-depth,

¹ Only those respondents who opted into providing some identifying information provided location data, so it is likely that the 24 respondents who wished to remain anonymous represent even more regions.

² This includes 19 respondents who indicated that maps needed major updates

³ 46 respondents (82%) fall into this category

will include discussion related to specific hazards, and will resolve the ambiguities revealed in these initial responses. These discussion groups will launch the second phase of the PPAC: Implementation, which is planned for the spring of 2024.

II. Introduction

a. Background and Objectives

In 2022, the Project Team for Protecting Public Art Collections (PPAC) conducted a survey of the emergency preparedness of the public art collections across the United States. PPAC is an NEH-funded Research and Development project to create tools that address the unique needs of public art collections in emergency planning. While emergency planning has the potential to positively impact public art collections and their audiences, **only 13% of programs surveyed by American for the Arts in 2017 had an emergency preparedness plan.** The PPAC survey was conducted to gather information about how public art collections are managed, how they are currently planning for emergencies, and to further identify specific needs in this area. This information will help to direct the development of tools for remote risk assessment, mapping, and emergency planning that will benefit a variety of public art collections.

b. Methodology

The survey was developed to obtain information primarily about emergency preparedness and response. Brief sections on collections and collections management were also included in addition to an optional section where responders could provide identifying information.

Questions were drafted by PPAC Project Team members: Project Manager, Nicole Grabow; Project Conservator, Maddie Cooper; and Site Coordinator, Janae Huber. A beta version of the survey was distributed to two public arts administrators for comment.⁴ Final survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

The survey was developed and distributed as a Google Form. Skip logic was used to create a unique path for respondents. For example, respondents who indicated that they had shared physical control over their collection were directed to a question that asked them to describe that control relationship, whereas respondents who indicated that they have sole control were sent to the next section. An effort was made to put questions most relevant to the project at the beginning of the survey to mitigate the risk of partial completion.

c. Distribution

The survey was live from November 15, 2022 – January 31, 2023. It was disseminated through the following channels:

- Public Art Network listserv
- Public Art Exchange online community
- Midwest Art Conservation Center membership
- American Institute for Conservation Alliance for Response online community
- American Institute for Conservation Connecting to Collections Care online community

⁴ Jimmy Castillo, the Director of Civic Art and Design for the Houston Arts Alliance, and Talia Moorman, the Public Arts Coordinator for the City of Minneapolis

d. Responses

The survey collected 69 responses, all of which completed the survey fully. Once survey analysis began, it became clear that some respondents did not represent the target audience: public art collections that are geographically spread out and/or are controlled by different parties. 13 respondents fell outside of that target audience, and were removed from the sample, leaving 56 respondents in the analysis database. A 2017 survey from the Americans for the Arts⁵ identified 728 public art programs, which would indicate that this survey represents about 8% of the public art programs in the United States.

Of the 32 respondents who provided optional location information, collections from 31 different states and one from Australia were identified (see Question 15, below).

e. Survey Evaluation

The goal of the PPAC project is to create tools for emergency planning that address issues of geographic diversity and shared control that are not covered by emergency planning tools for traditional museums, libraries, and archives. While the term, “public art collection,” is most often associated with art in public spaces,⁶ there was obvious confusion for some respondents who represented traditional museums and libraries that are open to the public. Future communications and surveys related to the PPAC project will take this lesson into account and include more specific clarifying language.

⁵ Americans for the Arts, “2017 Survey of Public Art Programs.”

⁶ Definition from Americans for the Arts. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/public-art>

III. Data Results and Interpretation

a. *Section I: Emergency Preparedness*

Question 1: Does your organization have an emergency plan that includes guidance on dealing with collections in emergency situations?

17 of 56 respondents (30%) reported having an updated emergency plan that addresses collections and 11 (20%) reported having a plan that had not been updated within the last five years (Fig.1).

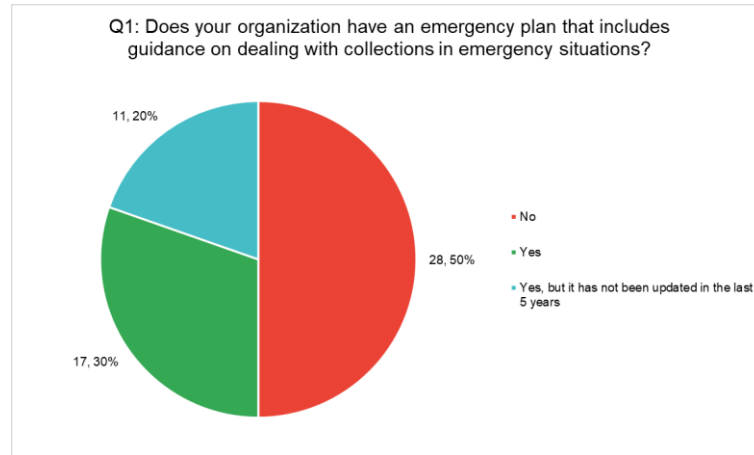


Figure 1: Responses to Q1

This number of collections reporting engaging in emergency planning is a large increase from the 13% of programs that reported having a plan in the 2017 Americans for the Arts survey. There are several possible reasons for this large increase in emergency planning. One is an increased awareness of the importance of emergency plans. It is also possible that the distribution of this survey was not as effective at reaching public art organizations that aren't as actively engaged in professional forums. Regardless, 50% of collections surveyed reported having no emergency plan in place that addresses collections and 30% reported having plans that were more than five years old.

Question 2: Do you or any members of your organization do regular emergency preparedness and/or response training related to the following topics?

82% of respondents reported regular training in an area related to emergencies. The most common training was *health and safety for emergencies* and the least common was *wet salvage*. 10 respondents reported doing no regular training (Table 1).

Table 1: Responses to Q2

Training	Count of Responses
Health and safety for emergencies	30
Fire safety	27
Object handling	18
None	10
Tabletop emergency response	8
Other	6

Wet salvage	5
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While the prevalence of regular training is encouraging, it is important to note that the two most common trainings: *health and safety for emergencies* and *fire safety* do not explicitly address collections.

Of the respondents who reported having no training, 8 also reported having no emergency plan and 2 reported having an emergency plan that had not been updated recently (Fig.2). Respondents who reported having recently updated emergency plans all also had some form of regular emergency training, showing an important correlation between planning and training.

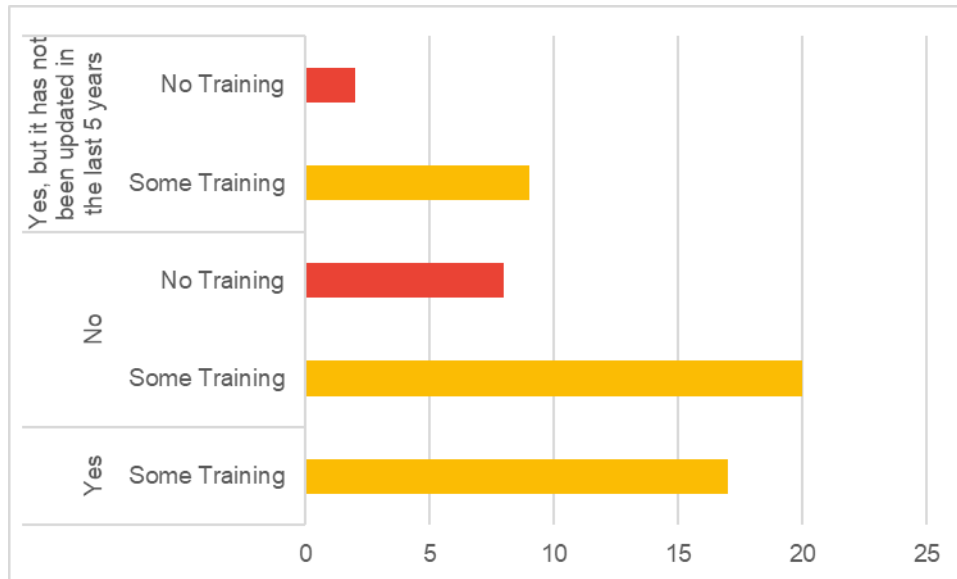


Figure 2: Correlation of having an emergency plan and having emergency-related training

Question 3: Do you or any members of your organization have training in the following areas?

51 of 56 respondents (91%) reported someone at their organization having some training in areas related to collections. The most common training was collections management and collections care. The least common training was heritage response. Other training reported by responders included museum registration, archival preservation, and emergency management/planning.

Table 2: Responses to Q3

Training	Count of Responses
Collections management	47
Collections care	47
Art conservation	21
Heritage response	15
None	5
Other	
Archival preservation	1
Emergency management/planning	1

The majority of respondents have some level of training in collections, which is required for a baseline understanding of collections risk assessment. The low number of responders who reported having heritage response training indicates an area of need.

Question 4: What do you consider your organization’s greatest needs when it comes to emergency preparedness and response?

When asked what their three greatest emergency preparedness and response needs were, the top three responses were risk assessment (48%), incident response procedures and documentation (46%), and administrative buy-in (39%). In addition to the provided options, respondents noted a need for funding and help with triage and prioritization among other needs.

Table 3: Responses to Q4

Needs	Count of Responses	Percent of Sites
Risk assessment	27	48%
Incident response procedures and documentation	26	46%
Administrative buy-in	22	39%
Emergency response supplies	21	38%
Help identifying priority collections to target for salvage in the event of an emergency	17	30%
Help establishing relationships with emergency recovery services like conservators and other vendors	16	29%
Help navigating federal and local response resources like FEMA and other emergency response agencies	13	23%
Help establishing relationships with local first responders	12	21%
Reliable emergency contact information	7	13%
Access to timely information about emergencies	6	11%
Other		
To allow permanent staff to shift from their overloaded day-to-day tasks to an emergency response focus.	1	2%
To hire contractors to help set protocols	1	2%
Help identifying local contract labor to assist in event of emergencies / semi-emergencies	1	2%
Funding--to support the purchase of adequate art storage equip.	1	2%
Help triaging emergency responses and prioritizing.	1	2%

Risk assessment is the main focus of the PPAC project, which aligns with the stated needs of survey participants. While the production of incident response procedures and documentation specific to public art collections is not currently a goal of the project, the evidence of a need for those resources will be considered when developing future project goals.

b. Section II: Collections Management

Question 5: Which best describes your organization?

When asked to describe the structure of their organization, 51% of the respondents reported that they were public agencies. No respondents reported that they were for-profit organizations (Fig. 3).

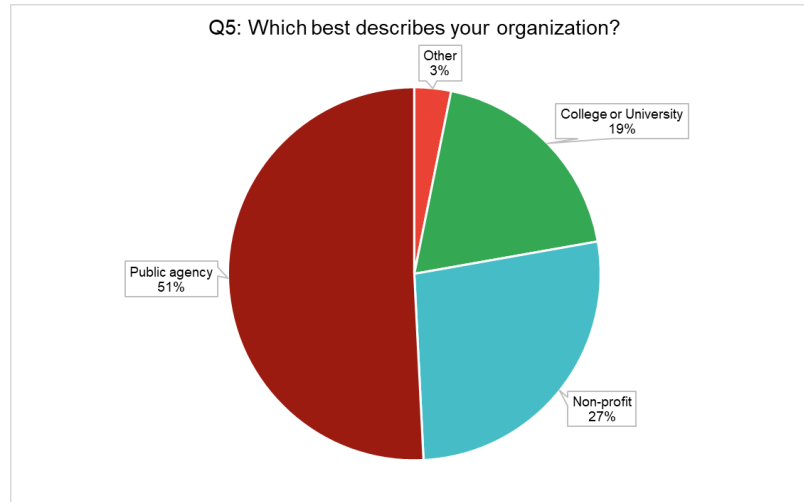


Figure 3: Responses to Q5

Organizational structure is important for emergency planning because it dictates what level of control public arts administrators may have over emergency planning decisions. For example, for a public art collection on a college campus, any emergency plan for the collection will have to fit into campus-wide emergency planning efforts.

Question 6: Which best describes the geographic scope of your collection?

The geographic spread of collections is diverse. 20 respondents reported a geographic scope different than state, municipal, county, or transit authority, which were the four lexicon-controlled options provided (Table 3).

Table 4: Responses to Q6

Response	Count	Percent
State	19	34%
Municipal	18	32%
County	7	13%
Transit Authority	2	4%
Other		
International	4	7%
National	2	4%
College Campus	1	2%
Neighborhood	1	2%
Regional	1	2%
North America	1	2%

The variety of responses gathered in the “other” category for this question indicates that there may have been confusion about the intent of the question. For example, respondents who reported that the geographic scope of their collections was “international” may have been referring to the collecting origins of objects in their collection rather than the current geographic locations of objects.

Question 7: What kind of tracking system does your organization use for collections?

All respondents indicated that their collections were tracked in some way. Only one respondent reported tracking collections with a paper catalogue or inventory only. All other respondents track collections digitally, i.e., spreadsheet, collections management software, customized database, or another means. Two respondents reported tracking collections using a Geographic Information System (GIS) integrated database (Table 5).

Table 5: Responses to Q7

Tracking System	Count	Percent
Collections management software (eg. PastPerfect)	37	66%
Spreadsheet (eg. Excel spreadsheet)	17	30%
Paper catalogue or inventory	16	29%
Customized database (eg. FileMaker)	10	18%
Other		
GIS based database	2	4%
We work with cultural institutions that control their own collections	1	2%
Digital files (SharePoint/ City Servers)	1	2%

The methodology for remote risk assessment being developed by the PPAC project requires that collections data be tracked digitally, which is true of almost all the respondents to this survey.

Question 8: Are your collections mapped?

86% of respondents indicated that their collections were mapped or were in the process of being mapped, though 19 of them indicated that their maps needed a major update (Fig. 4).

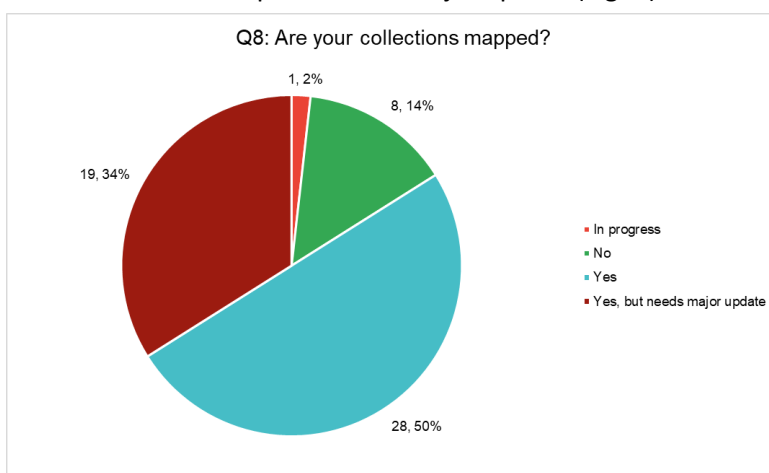


Figure 4: Responses to Q8

Location information for collection objects is necessary for the remote risk assessment methodology being produced by PPAC.

Question 9: Where are your collections located?

Most respondents (80%) reported having collections located both indoors and outdoors.

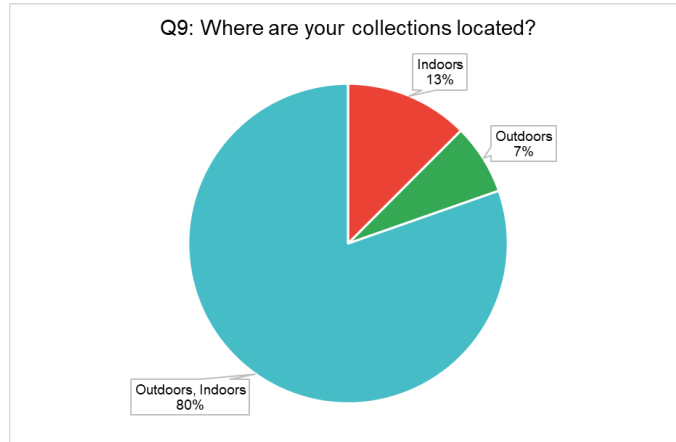


Figure 5: Responses to Q9

The risk of damage caused by natural hazards is vastly different for collections located indoors v. outdoors. The PPAC remote risk assessment model allows for remote risk assessment to both indoor and outdoor collections.

Question 10: What kind of physical control does your organization have over the spaces where your artworks are located?

62.5% of respondents indicated that they have shared or third-party control over collections spaces (Fig. 6).

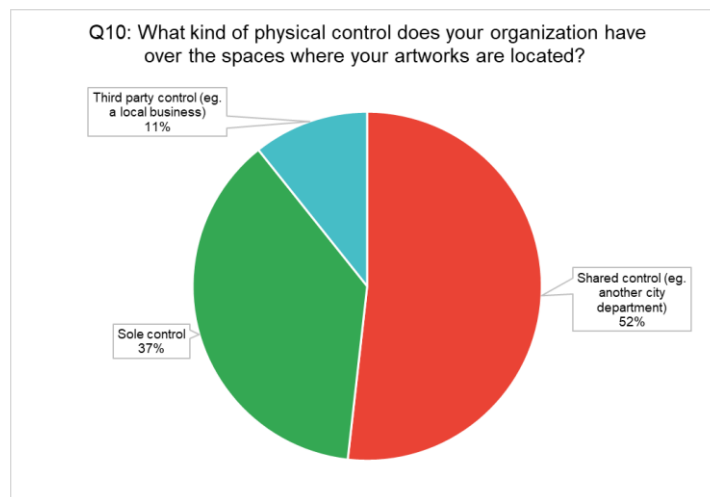


Figure 6: Responses to Q10

Collections with shared control were asked a follow-up question to describe their partners. Answers were not lexicon controlled and varied, but include private building owners; other city, state, and municipal departments; and college campuses among others.

c. Section III: Collections

Question 11: How many objects are in your organization’s collection?

The size of collections managed by respondents varied, but 45% managed collections of over 2,000 objects, which was the largest size offered in the survey (Fig.7).

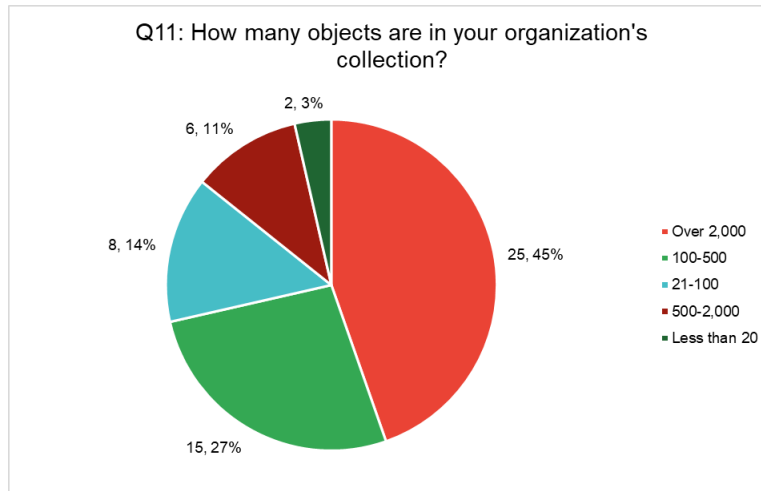


Figure 7: Responses to Q11

The prevalence of large collections was an unexpected finding, but it emphasizes the importance of tools for risk assessment that allow art collections to prioritize the most vulnerable collections.

Question 12: What types of objects are in your organization’s collection?

The collections are diverse in material, with the three most common collection types being outdoor sculptures/installations/murals (91%), works on paper (89%), and paintings (86%). The least common type of collection managed by respondents was born digital collections (30%). Other collection types reported included natural history collections and decorative arts among others.

Table 6: Responses to Q12

Response	Count	Percent
Outdoor sculptures/installations/murals	51	91%
Works on paper	50	89%
Paintings	48	86%
Photographs	45	80%
Textiles	41	73%
Indoor installations	38	68%
Moveable sculptures	36	64%
Books	26	46%
Born digital collections	17	30%
Other		

Natural history collections	2	4%
Decorative Arts	2	4%
Ethnographic collections	1	2%
Mixed media artworks	1	2%
Integrated artwork	1	2%
Native American cultural materials	1	2%
Animatronics	1	2%

d. Section IV: Optional identifying information

Respondents were given the option to provide some identifying information including name, title, and name of organization. Respondents were also given the option to receive updates about the progress of the project. Of the 56 respondents, 32 provided identifying information and 30 (53.5%) indicated that they would like to receive updates about the PPAC project. Respondents who provided identifying information represented organizations located in 31 US states and Australia (Fig. 8). Those states represented the regions of the American Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, and Pacific Northwest as well as Alaska and Hawaii. Notably missing was representation from the Southwest, although it is possible that that region was represented by respondents who opted out of providing identifying information.

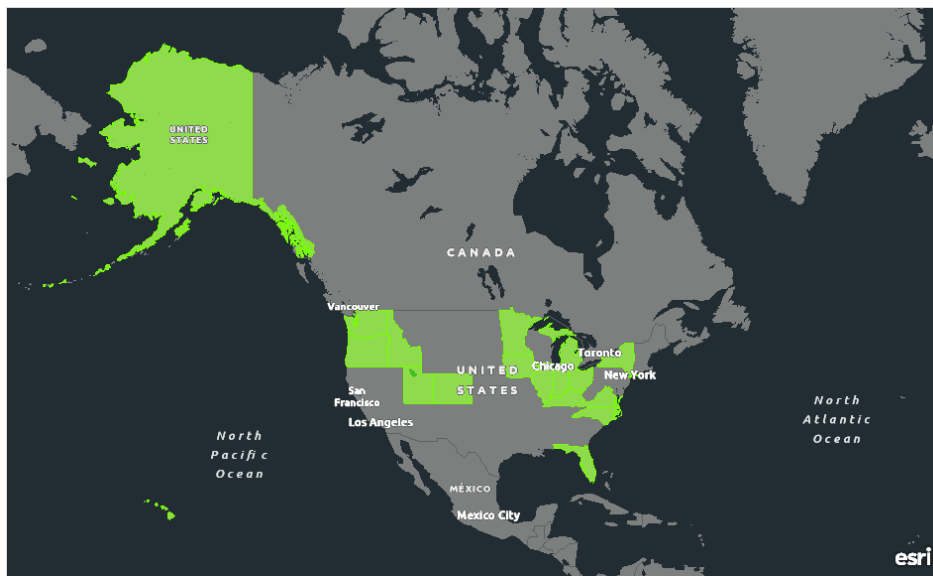


Figure 8: States represented by respondents who provided identifying information

e. Section V: Additional Information

When asked if they had any additional information about emergency preparedness and response needs in an open-ended question, 8 respondents provided relevant comments:

- “Thank you for the opportunity to address these important concerns.”
- “We have noticed an uptake in vandalism, and with an increase in temperatures there has also been a change in maintenance for public art fountains as well. Would be interested in anything related to climate change and extreme weather events.”

- “We work closely with art administrators in the city government, but we have two separate collections that are managed independently. I'd be interested to learn about cooperative emergency preparedness best practices and how priorities may be balanced.”
- “We have a very limited emergency plan for flooding in [redacted], but I'm very interested in emergency planning - including how public art programs can support community needs in times of crisis.”
- “[It’s] hard to have an emergency plan if we don't even have a routine maintenance plan or program. Administration needs to prioritize, fund and staff such initiatives. Thanks for this initiative.”
- “We'd love to be able to do this emergency preparedness up front as we help with the project, as we do with maintenance discussions, but it's difficult to get our partners, particularly those in low-resourced neighborhoods, to focus on preparing for something that is extremely unlikely to happen when they have so much going on that is more immediate. In a disaster situation they are far more likely to use their limited energy and time to focus on their own homes and businesses and deal with the art after they themselves are secure. We are realistic about this and so we have prioritized planning for repair rather than preparation.”
- “... building a protocol for emergency preparedness for agencies that care for widespread permanently sited outdoor public art works is something very much needed. And again, funding strategies for the development of response plans and the related organizational infrastructure is a critical issue...if not THE critical issue.”
- “We have few staff preoccupied w/ current projects, so little to no time is devoted to basic collection administration and maintenance, much less emergency preparedness for the collection.”

IV. Conclusions

In late 2022 and as part of the planning phase of the Protecting Public Art Project, the survey titled “Emergency Preparedness & Response for Public Art Collections,” was launched. It was disseminated through two different non-profit email lists and three different relevant online communities. 56 members of the target audience responded, representing approximately 8% of the public art programs in the United States. The responses showed that, while emergency planning has increased since the 2017 Americans for the Arts survey, there are still many public art collections without up-to-date emergency plans (70% of survey respondents) and needs exist for emergency planning assistance and training overall. The greatest need reported by respondents was assistance with *risk assessment*. Additionally, responses showed that most organizations track collections digitally and have those collections mapped, two requirements for the use of the remote risk assessment methodology currently in development by the PPAC team.

Responses also showed a need for *incident response procedures and documentation* and *help with fundraising and advocacy*. While fundraising and advocacy are outside the scope of the PPAC project, incident response procedures is a topic that may be incorporated into the implementation phase, based on these responses.

The survey was illuminating on topics like emergency planning prevalence and organization’s emergency needs but there were also limitations; in particular a number of survey respondents not from the target audience (these responses were omitted from the Report). Moving forward, the project team will work to use more specific clarifying language when describing the target audience of the project. Additionally, care will be taken to seek out the participation of public art collections in the Southwest United States, which was not represented by responders who chose to share identifying information.

The PPAC project team plans to build in the findings of this survey by conducting a series of focused discussion groups in the implementation phase of the project. Through these discussion groups, project team members will seek more detailed information about specific hazards faced by public art collections and the ways in which collection data is being tracked and maintained. These discussion sessions should help to resolve some of the ambiguities revealed in initial survey responses.

Overall, the responses of this survey were helpful in confirming that remote risk assessment tools will be valuable to a wide array of public art collections, and that many collections will meet the requirements (mapped and digitally tracked collections) of the tool that PPAC team is developing.

V. Appendix A

Emergency Preparedness & Response for Public Art Collections

Thank you for completing this short survey on emergency preparedness and response planning for public art collections. Data collected from the survey will inform an NEH funded project managed by the Midwest Art Conservation Center that seeks to develop emergency preparedness and response tools for public art collections. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

* Required

Emergency Preparedness

1. Does your organization have an emergency plan that includes guidance on dealing with collections in emergency situations? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but it has not been updated in the last 5 years

2. Do you or any members of your organization do regular emergency preparedness and/or response training related to the following topics? *

Check all that apply. If the answer is no, leave blank.

Check all that apply.

- Fire safety
- Wet salvage
- Tabletop emergency response
- Object handling
- Health and safety for emergencies
- Other: _____

3. Do you or any members of your organization have training in the following areas? *

Check all that apply. Include continuing education and professional development activities in your answer. If the answer is no, leave blank.

Check all that apply.

- Collections care
- Collections management
- Heritage response
- Art conservation
- Other: _____

4. What do you consider your organization's greatest needs when it comes to emergency preparedness and response?

Choose the **three** that would be most helpful to your organization.

Check all that apply.

- Risk assessment
- Administrative buy-in
- Reliable emergency contact information
- Help establishing relationships with local first responders
- Help establishing relationships with emergency recovery services like conservators and other vendors
- Incident response procedures and documentation
- Help navigating federal and local response resources like FEMA and other emergency response agencies
- Emergency response supplies
- Access to timely information about emergencies
- Help identifying priority collections to target for salvage in the event of an emergency
- Other: _____

Collections Management

5. Which best describes your organization? *

Select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- Public agency
- Non-profit
- For-profit
- College or University
- Other: _____

6. Which best describes the geographic scope of your collection? *

Mark only one oval.

- State
- Municipal
- County
- Transit Authority
- Other: _____

7. What kind of tracking system does your organization use for collections? *

Select all that apply

Check all that apply.

- Paper catalogue or inventory
- Spreadsheet (eg. Excel spreadsheet)
- Collections management software (eg. PastPerfect)
- Customized database (eg. FileMaker)
- None
- Other: _____

8. Are your collections mapped?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but needs major update

9. Where are your collections located?

Check all that apply

Check all that apply.

- Outdoors
- Indoors

10. What kind of physical control does your organization have over the spaces where your artworks are located?

Mark only one oval.

- Sole control *Skip to question 12*
- Shared control (eg. another city department)
- Third party control (eg. a local business)

Collections Management Continued...

11. Describe the partners with whom your organization shares physical control of spaces where artworks are located.

Collections

12. How many objects are in your organization's collection?

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 20
- 21-100
- 100-500
- 500-2,000
- Over 2,000

13. What types of objects are in your organization's collection?

Select all that apply

Check all that apply.

- Outdoor sculptures/installations/murals
- Indoor installations
- Moveable sculptures
- Paintings
- Textiles
- Photographs
- Works on paper
- Books
- Born digital collections
- Other: _____

Identifying Information

14. The default setting for this survey is anonymous response, but we encourage responders to opt-in to providing some identifying information to help us better understand the needs of the public arts community. *

Those who provide some identifying information may opt into receiving updates about the project to develop emergency preparedness and response tools for public art collections.

Mark only one oval.

- Remain anonymous *Skip to question 21*
- Opt-in to providing some identifying information

Identifying Information Continued...

15. Email Address *

16. Name
(First Last)

17. Title

18. Name of Organization

19. Are you willing to be contacted with further questions about the needs of public art organizations? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

20. Are you interested in receiving updates about the findings of the survey and the project to create emergency preparedness and response tools for public art collections? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Additional Information

21. Is there any additional information that you would like to add about the emergency preparedness and response needs of your organization's collection?

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