Effective & Informed Arts Advocacy: Tips+ Techniques

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www.californiansforthearts.org
INFORMED ADVOCACY

Basic facts and definitions
Tips and Techniques to building relationships
Lobbying vs Advocacy

**Lobbying** refers specifically to efforts that attempt to influence legislation.

**Advocacy** is the active support of an idea or cause expressed through strategies and methods that influence the opinions and decisions of people, legislators, policy makers and organizations. It’s about communication, education, relationship building and storytelling and is best accomplished by having many people voice their concerns.
Lobbying vs Advocacy

➤ EDUCATE: Increase public understanding about the arts

➤ ADVOCATE: Express support for the arts as an important public policy issue

➤ LOBBY: Attempt to shape votes on pending legislation related to the arts
Lobbying vs Advocacy

Does federal law allow non-profits to lobby? Yes, but...

- Must be non-partisan in their approach
- Observe financial limits - Organizations with overall expenditures of $500,000 or less per year, for example, can spend as much as 20% of their budget on lobbying.
- Prohibited from engaging in political campaigns
- Cannot rate, rank or endorse candidates
- Must include equal coverage of all candidates

Note: Organizations using the 501(h) expenditure test can take advantage of clearer definitions of lobbying, including specific exceptions to what counts as lobbying.
Advocacy 101

It is perfectly ok as a non-profit organization to...

- Thank and Criticize—publicly thank legislators who vote in line with your advocacy agenda or criticize those who do not. Use social media, Twitter and tag them.
- Show up at offices, town halls and ask questions
- Set up your own town hall and invite your elected
- Stage a public demonstration
- Register voters
- Sponsor a debate if all candidates can attend
“Meanwhile, a colleague of mine texted to tell me that at her new-employees orientation, the new staff were told “We are a 501c3, so we cannot do any lobbying or advocacy.” (This is completely untrue). I have seen countless grant contracts and RFPs now that actively discourage lobbying and advocacy. I called up a program officer once asking why this language was in the contract. “Well, it’s not that we’re against advocacy—in fact, we support it—we just don’t want our money to be expressively used for that purpose.”

This is the problem. Our sector is afraid of advocacy, much less politics.”

Vu, Non Profit AF, April 13, 2020
WHO TO GET TO KNOW...

- Local Elected Representatives: Mayor, Council Members, Supervisors, School Board etc.
- Local Arts Leaders: Arts Commission, Arts Council, Local arts agency, regional advocacy orgs, philanthropists, funders
- State Legislators and Administration: Assemblymembers and State Senators
- Congressional Representatives: Your district House rep and State Senators
- Do not underestimate the value of developing a relationship to staff. They are often the people informing the elected about issues and are given portfolios to study. Become a conduit of information for the staffer!
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Attend public meetings & speak during public comments
- Attend fundraisers or rallies for elected officials
- Ask for a meeting in district
- Invite them to your events
- Recognize them for being an arts advocate
- Find out what committees legislators are on so that you can target the right official for your issue and know who can make or break a piece of legislation.
- Follow electeds on Twitter and social media and get to know their interests and voice
COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Be respectful
- Ask for advice
- Come prepared with your facts and compelling story
- Understand the landscape
- Find out all you can about their special interests and favorite causes. This information will help you tailor your presentation to legislators' personal interests.
- Be clear on what you are asking for and how you will help them to get the support they need.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
FINDING PARTNERS

• Collaborating across different sectors on the same issues builds solidarity in advocacy efforts

• Engage business and community leaders in using their positions to influence decision-makers and become spokespeople and advocates for learning through the arts

• Media Partners: Develop a relationship with your local media to become a source of information and expertise.
EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

Advocacy comes in many forms, from the disrupters to the negotiators, everyone has a story to tell and a role to play if passion is your guide and change is your goal.

Five steps to building an advocacy campaign
Effective Advocacy

1. Plan Your Campaign
2. Create Awareness
3. Generate Engagement
4. Encourage Action
5. Sustain the Momentum

Californians for the Arts
5 Steps to Effective Advocacy

1. PLAN YOUR CAMPAIGN
   • State your Goals, (what is the change you want to see?)
   • Identify Targets (for whom are you doing this)
   • Identify Resources (capacity, funding, time)
   • Identify Partners/Opponents
   • Know the Process, Be Informed, (who are the decision makers?)

2. CREATE AWARENESS
   • Design your Key Messages
   • Build your case with data and storytelling
   • Determine communications strategy (op-eds, letters to the editor, social media campaign etc)
5 Steps to Effective Advocacy

3. GENERATE ENGAGEMENT
   • Share your advocacy toolkit
   • Get others to share your message
   • Communicate with your advocates

4. ENCOURAGE ACTIONS
   • What is the ask – where and when should you make it?
   • Determine tactics (ex. rally or behind the scenes meetings or both)
   • Read the room: is it time to be aggressive or is time to build consensus

5. SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM
   • Organize, Show Up, Be Consistent
   • Be Flexible
   • Be Hopeful