HOW TO WRITE AN OP-ED, LETTER TO THE EDITOR, OR ADVOCACY LETTER

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Why Write Letters?

- Elected officials, the press, and the public need to hear from you
- Advocacy is key in maintaining the funding we’ve worked so hard to secure
- Reframing the conversation around art as skilled labor and sound investment
Anatomy of an Advocacy Letter

• Open by thanking them for past support of the arts
  • Be specific! (A bill, a budget, etc.)
• Describe your organization briefly:
  • Who it serves
  • What it accomplishes
• Include data
  • Supports why public funding for the arts is critical to community and economy
• State the impact of COVID-19 on your organization’s revenue
• Make a specific ask
• Thank and conclude
Anatomy of a Letter to the Editor or an Open Letter

- Thank the writer or editor for their work
- Tell an art success story
  - Paint a picture/first-hand account
- Back up the claim with data
- Drive home the connection between investment in creative sector and revitalizing California’s economy
- Ask: put media pressure on lawmakers to follow through on art investment and funding as a post COVID-19 strategy
Mechanics

- Tone: keep it sincere, positive, professional, and simple.
- Length: obey the 5 short paragraph rule.
- Metaphors are great for op-eds; elected officials want hard data and an action item.
Op-Ed: Art is Going to Get Us Through This, It Always Does

Imagine for a moment you are stuck at home for the next three months, but there is no unlimited access to Netflix and Spotify, no paintings on your walls, no books on the shelf. Life is pretty lame without art.

This moment in our shared history will call into question many of our institutions and expectations. We’ll be reviewing the entire social contract as this pandemic plays out. Right now, there are musicians and drama teachers, painters and dancers all over the world putting on shows in their living rooms. In doing this, they soothe the grieving, they cheer the lonely, and they entertain the bored. Art is a survival mechanism. This generous creative spirit is going to get us through the next difficult year.

The output of the creative economy in California last year was $650.3 billion. That is a direct and indirect result of public funding. State and local government must keep allocated public funding flowing to these groups now more than ever; we are about to need imaginative, large-scale revitalization like we never have before. That means a stronger intersection between government, small business, and the non-profit sector.

Right now, art non-profits in vulnerable communities are keeping their neighbors informed and safe, and they are experiencing crippling losses in revenue. So far, 11,000 organizations have reported a $4.5 billion drop. These groups act as an elevator, with doors that open to all socioeconomic strata and provide talent at the ground floor with access to opportunities at the top. We need to support the existing workforce of skilled labor and invest in the next one.

April is Arts, Culture & Creativity Month, and we can do our part now by urging lawmakers to approve the current budget for the State Arts Agency, the California Arts Council. Even in this unprecedented time, every dollar must be carefully prioritized. The first threat to our communities is the illness, but the second is the economic fallout. By supporting the arts and art organizations, we reinforce our shared culture and the economy at the same time.

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Anatomy of an Op-ed

- Tell a story that demonstrates the long-term value of art (intangibles and tangibles)
- Emphasize pragmatic, public investment in the arts as remedy for the post CV19 economy
- Action item as first step to new approach
Repurposing Your Content

- Tailor advocacy letter to the receiver
- Op-ed and Letter to the Editor can be a little longer
- Revise for platforms like Open Ltr, Medium, Wordpress
- Pull out high-impact statements and post on social media with hashtags
  1. #artsareessential
  2. #investinarts
  3. #cacreativeeconomy
- Share applicable content with fellow organizations
Other Actions Around Advocacy

- Keep a rhythm of content (letter and article writing, social media)
- Maintain communication with your network
- Connect with other groups outside the art community
JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN
#CAArtsChampion #ACCM2020

RAISE YOUR VOICE
• Share your story • Tag who inspires you

CALIFORNIANS FOR THE ARTS
#artsareessential #ACCM2020 #artsadvocacy

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