The Folklore Advocacy Toolkit

A Mini Guide to Promoting and Sustaining Folklore Work in the United States
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Developed by members of the Public Programs Section, American Folklore Society

with

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Ideally, the work contained here will continue to be refreshed with new case studies and strategies and will be supplemented by the experiences and narratives of practicing folklorists. To contribute to this effort, please visit afsnet.org.
Introduction

Advocacy: We define advocacy as “a wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at various levels.” This definition intentionally includes not only traditional advocacy work like litigation, lobbying, and public education, but also capacity building, network formation, relationship building, communication, and leadership development.


Folklorists and their colleagues in ethnography, anthropology, ethnomusicology, and public history have long been effective advocates for the cultures, people, and traditions they seek to document, help preserve, and present in public forums. Advocating for themselves and for the field of folklore and folk culture has been a less obvious need, although several key structures and programs which support folklorists and their work came about directly through advocacy. Among these are the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress (established through The American Folklife Preservation Act through Congressional legislation in 1976), the National Endowment for Folk Arts program (established as a separate program in 1978), and the National Heritage Fellowships (established in 1982).

A number of state, regional, and local programs have also come about partly through advocacy—whether for funding (state folk arts and humanities programs along with university–based programs), creation of a specific skills related position (state/regional), or through collaborations between agencies, organizations, universities and colleges, and individuals (national, state and regional).

As folklore and folklife have joined more directly with other fields, terms such as cultural conservation and cultural sustainability have become the defining way we describe our work. Mary Hufford addresses this in terms of advocacy in her introductory essay to Conserving Culture:
“The term cultural conservation, then applies to advocacy in all three heritage areas (Hufford references the natural environment, the built environment, and the folklife/cultural environment), advocacy that is ethnographic rather than ethnocentric. Cultural conservation professionals include folklorists, anthropologists, archeologists, historic preservationists, environmental planners and scientists engaged in cultural conservation activities. The term conservationist unites professionals in the applied sciences and humanities as advocates who bring their views of culture and ecology to bear on threatened facets of the world.”

In the same volume, the late Archie Green, who was an activist and advocate as well as a folklorist noted: “We need a coalition, perhaps a clearinghouse/lobby/editorial chamber. We agree that efforts to preserve cultural material must include its presentation....Cultural conservationists cannot escape political action, whether testifying on local zoning laws or articulating outrage at the sight of oil drenched otters in the Prince William Sound or oil-drenched cormorants in the Persian Gulf)....We train to explicate artistry in all its settings to probe metaphor’s limits... In using plain speech to communicate with others inside and outside our professions, we undert gland analysis, advance action, and step into coalitions.”

A 2014 survey of folklorists produced this list of pressing contemporary challenges which could be met partially by advocacy efforts:

- Making our expertise as cultural documentarians, presenters and conservationists increasingly visible and more relevant to both the public and our academic peers, leading to greater public understanding of folklore and folk arts
- Consistent funding from government for folk arts and humanities - on local, state, and federal levels
- Maintaining folk arts as a distinct discipline
- Integrating traditional arts and culture (and artists’) issues into broader cultural/social policy discussions
- Creating new (and more) resources
- Additional support for rural artists/communities who are pressed economically and often lost in state-funding for art programs, because of "cultural centers" focus on cities
- Taking field-wide stands on domestic issues
- Valuation of traditional cultures/communities

This guide is divided into sections on Nonprofit Organizations, Higher Education, Independent Folklorists and Community Scholars, Know Your Audience, a Glossary of terms and a Toolbox of strategies. We invite you to explore these resources, and to expand and update them on the AFS website.

—Sue Eleuterio
Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee
Public Programs Section, American Folklife Society

2 *Conserving Culture*, p. 249
Remembering the Advocacy Work of
Joseph T. Wilson

Joseph Wilson was a force of nature. Over his career, most of it as executive director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA), he produced 42 large-scale music festivals in 11 states, organized 21 national tours by musicians and dancers, mounted nine international tours that visited 33 nations, was involved in the production of 131 LP and CD audio recordings and 12 films documenting various forms of folk music. With Lee Udall, he co-wrote the book Folk Festivals: A Handbook for Organization and Management. After retirement from the NCTA, Joe directed the Blue Ridge Music Center, curated the center’s permanent exhibition Roots of American Music, was instrumental in conceiving and developing the Crooked Road Music Heritage Trail in Southwest Virginia, and later wrote a Guide to the Crooked Road.

Joe was also a force of nurture, both for the field of folklore and for the individuals who worked professionally in it. When Bess Lomax Hawes became the director of Folk Arts at the National Endowment for the Arts in 1977, she found a powerful ally in Joe Wilson. Joe was involved in discussions with senior staff at the agency when a free-standing folk arts program was but a gleam in Bess’s eye. Joe worked with her to develop a network of folk arts expertise around the country and he mentored many of the individuals who worked in those positions, myself included. When the National Heritage Fellowship program was initiated in 1982, Joe and the NCTA took on the production of the ceremonies and celebratory concerts. Joe conceived of the idea of touring traditional artists and over the years, with NEA funding, exposed American artists around the country to the finest traditional musicians. When the case for the value of governmental support of folk arts and indeed for the importance of federal support of arts in general, needed to be made to the broader public or on Capitol Hill, Joe was the first to volunteer both his services and his opinions.
People who travel out and document traditional musicians are sometimes called “songcatchers.” Joe was that, but he also was a songfetcher. Through the festivals, tours, and recordings that he produced, he reached out to present artists, many living far from population centers and media markets, to audiences across this nation. I can remember that Bess told of one experience that she had with Joe. In the second year of the National Heritage Fellowship program, honorees included Ray and Stanley Hicks, who lived on Beech Mountain in North Carolina. Ray was a master storyteller and Stanley his cousin was an instrument maker, musician, and dancer. Three days before the Heritage ceremonies, Bess learned that the two didn’t want to make the trip to Washington, DC. Knowing that Joe had worked with them and grew up not far from their home, she enlisted him to convince them to make the trip. Bess and Joe flew to Bristol, Tennessee, rented a car, drove out to their homes, and carted them, accompanied by non-stop stories and song, to the ceremony and then back home. At different times, I heard both Bess and Joe say individually that this was the best road trip of their long and productive careers.

In a 2005 StoryCorps interview, Joe spoke about the power of traditional cultural expression and how it both reflects cultural diversity and promotes cultural diplomacy: “I think that the thing that really matters is for people to hear each other and to meet each other, and with all the media that we have, the face to face situation—the seeing it from a few feet away—I think has an impact, a force, a power that’s never matched by anything else.... Some of the best that we can do in making the world a little easier to live in is to let people really see each other. It takes down barriers. That may sound simplistic, but I think in the long run, matters more than any other diplomacy.” Joe Wilson put us in touch with artistic excellence that helped us hear, see and meet unique and diverse sides of our collective selves.

—Barry Bergey
Former Director of Folk and Traditional Arts
The National Endowment for the Arts
Nonprofit folklore organizations, along with state based folk arts and humanities programs, have a long history of advocacy in the United States, and many of them owe their existence to this type of work. These tools and practices can also be used to promote the longevity of existing folklore organizations and programs. When used effectively, they help organizations not only grow, but actively participate in conversation around policies that affect them and their audience.

“The AFC was established through intensive lobbying over the course of 2-3 years. It’s a public field, the folklife field.”
—Robert Baron

Robert Baron, Folk Arts Program Director at the New York State Council on the Arts, recalls a time when advocacy efforts helped save a local folklore organization from being defunded: “The campaign in New York in the 80s, they didn’t take them seriously. They just ignored them as they were going through with the proposed change...but the outpouring from the constituency was so overwhelming that it threatened the very existence of the arts council. It’s to be expected that people not take it seriously and think folklore’s a field without strength behind it...but it’s a public field. The American Folklife Center was established through intensive lobbying over the course of 2-3 years. It’s a public field, the folklife field.”

Although the benefits of regular advocacy work can be clearly seen, in practice it may be very difficult. Many folklore programs and organizations, especially nonprofits, work hard to ensure that their funding and resources support the cultural life of their community—whatever size that community may be. Organizations may overlook advocacy in favor of projects that will more directly and immediately impact their audience. Even so, it may be worthwhile to allocate resources (be they time, funding, expertise, etc.) towards a general advocacy plan and/or to advocacy around specific issues. In doing so, the organization will be able to more skillfully and effectively campaign for funding or legislative policies that will have lasting impact on both the organization and the community it serves.
Funding Resources

Included below are some of the grant and fellowship opportunities available to public folklorists and their organizations. The American Folklife Center also sponsors several awards which can be found here.

Individuals

**American Folklife Society US Public Folklore List** Students and community scholars in search of funding for public folklore projects can find a list of state folklore agencies here.

Organizations

**NEH Museums, Libraries, and Cultural Organizations: Planning Grants** Planning grants are used to refine the content, format, and interpretive approach of a humanities project; develop the project’s preliminary design; test project components; and conduct audience evaluation.

**NEH Museums, Libraries, and Cultural Organizations: Implementation Grants** Implementation grants are for projects in the final stages of preparation to “go live” before the public. Grants support final scholarly research and consultation, design development, production, and installation of a project for presentation to the public.

**Digital Projects for the Public** Digital Projects for the Public grants support projects that significantly contribute to the public’s engagement with the humanities using digital platforms.

**National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Advocacy Checklist for Arts Organizations and Advocates** Useful checklist for assessing your organization’s activity.
Higher Education

Potential Challenges

Folklife and folklore programs based at universities often must compete for funding, staff, and support with other academic programs. University development offices can be restrictive in terms of which funders a program may apply to because of perceived competition. It is important for those advocating within higher education to begin at home, that is, by conducting outreach and informational sessions for development staff, university/college administrators, related academic departments, and with students and alumni.

For colleges and universities which receive state funding, many of the suggestions in the “Know Your Audience: Local and State Advocacy” section of this tool kit will be helpful in crafting an advocacy plan. Many private institutions receive federal funding, and some receive grants from state arts and humanities councils as well. Consider developing an advocacy plan for your program by using the tools in this kit and engaging your students and alumni in helping you carry it out.

Funding Resources

Included below are some of the grant and fellowship opportunities available to folklorists in higher education. The American Folklife Center also sponsors several awards which can be found here.

Individuals

AFS Public Folklore List Students and community scholars in search of funding for public folklore projects can find a list of state folklore agencies here.

Alan Lomax Fellowship in Folklife Studies The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress offers a post-doctoral fellowship for advanced research based on the Alan Lomax Collection.

Organizations

NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Funding The NEA offers several grant opportunities for individuals and organizations.

NEH Museums, Libraries, and Cultural Organizations: Planning Grants Planning grants are used to refine the content, format, and interpretive approach of a humanities project; develop the project’s preliminary design; test project components; and conduct audience evaluation.

NEH Museums, Libraries, and Cultural Organizations: Implementation Grants Implementation grants are for projects in the final stages of preparation to “go live” before the public. Grants support final scholarly research and consultation, design development, production, and installation of a project for presentation to the public.
Amber Ridington is an independent folklorist/heritage consultant based in Vancouver, BC.

I’ve worked on and off for years for a First Nation in British Columbia. When I finished my Masters, they invited me to come and do grant writing. They were interested in doing virtual exhibits and community-based documentation.

I’ve also worked as a consultant for the cultural heritage part of environmental impact assessments. These assessments are meant to evaluate the impact upon aboriginal rights and cultural practices. The government’s term is “heritage values.” They need a report on which heritage values the First Nations need them to consider in the face of a proposed development. I’ll testify, giving the results of my survey and traditional use studies. I describe the heritage values, and how the proposed development would adversely affect the culture in certain ways. Quite often, they’ll ask me for ways to mitigate the effects. They want to know what effects will occur if the plan goes ahead. Then the government and First Nations negotiate to decide how they can reconcile that. Sometimes they’ll say, “you can’t build it; change the development so it’s not around these heritage sites of ours.” or, “you can build it, but should compensate us for the loss in money or land,” such as a hunting location in a different area. They’re always relying on the report to see what values will be lost.

As part of that work, what I’ve started doing is advocating for the development of sustainable archives. Community archives. Every time you do a traditional study like the ones I do, you often start from scratch. The First Nations don’t have great record-keeping—their funding is quite tight, and they don’t have a budget for that. So, I’ve started building that into the budgets for compliance studies. That way, when we find all these oral history interviews and things, instead of giving them back as just DVDs, we’re giving them back in the form of web-based archival database systems. We work with the community so they can manage them. They’re starting to integrate with the lands departments—each First Nation has a lands department linking the oral history materials and other archival materials to the land through a database.

So often, any databases exist in a university or museum. There’s been a lot of movement over the last 10-20 years to virtually repatriate that material and give access back to the communities, but I think that’s quite different from them actually managing the materials themselves. It’s still owned by the museum. Staff from the museum are getting paid to manage it; the communities aren’t. We want to work towards moving the infrastructure to the community itself, and ideally getting the developers to pay for that. We want to find sources of funding for indigenous-centered heritage management.

Let’s say I get one of those projects—the archive will just become part of the project. We’ll start a database and keep populating it throughout the project. At the end they get their report, but also this database that they can keep adding to. Then the community has access to this multimedia archive of their heritage materials. It can include PDFs of ethnographer’s reports from the 1800s (which are hard to find and often go missing from libraries.) It can include oral history audio files and videos and transcripts. There are lots of photographs, usually. Those are the main types of documents in there.

We created a community archive for Cloud Lake as part of a study from 2012-2013. Lawyers have begun using that database. It was for a separate project—looking at the impacts of a proposed dam in traditional territories. For related but different use cases, lawyers have been contacting us for the use of that database. The information has so many different uses. So far, we’ve kept the records open only to the community and their trusted researchers. We wanted it to be more indigenous-centered than the current model—virtually repatriating material, but keeping the funding and ownership
with a museum or university. Generally speaking, the communities will make the material available to people who request it.

The Dane Wajich Virtual Museum Project, that project had a lot of sponsors. It had the Virtual Museum of Canada, the Volkswagen Foundation (endangered language support), the school district for doing teaching resources and curriculum development, and the First Nations. Plus, we brought in a number of specialists to work on the project. A professor from San Francisco State did video production mentorship and taught the youth to do video and audio documentation. We had a linguist from UBC. So it was professionals from multiple institutions contributing. We also had multiple funding sources, so it was a big partnership grant-wise. But it was also a community-directed project. The community was really involved in choosing the exact materials that went onto the website. It was a long-term project, so the idea of the website changed, and different materials ended up being featured than were at the beginning. Community review and building in community goals of self-representation in their culture—that was important. Also skill development and engaging youth with elders. Cross-generational teaching opportunities.

I try to rely on participatory action-based methodologies for project development. You work with a community to address some type of issue, usually some type of social injustice, and help them achieve their goals. With this virtual museum project, they really wanted to present their own culture from their own perspective—not just have websites or books written about them. We talked about the text and language that’s used. They chose to use a first-person voice on the site, so it’s very clear that it’s their project. On the homepage, it says, “Our Doig River First Nations...worked to create...” This is all from their own perspective.

For the elders, oral tradition is still their primary means of communication. They much prefer it over written form. So the site was built around oral histories. The stories and songs included in the exhibit are taken from oral histories collected specifically for this project. The videos of them talking about their culture—the elders felt this was the core of the project.

The key to all this has been building it into compliance projects. The developers have to do the project, they have to do oral history-based research. So we build in a digital archive of the material we collect, plus the background research materials, and that’s been the best way to fund that. Afterwards, the First Nation has control over the documents. If you went through a university, the university would want to control the material and use it in their teaching. But this way, the First Nation gets to control the data and use it as they see fit.

The developers don’t always pick the most experienced oral historians, though, and sometimes the history suffers. I’ve started advocating for changing methodologies and making sure that there’s methodological standards. The Cloud Lake group asked me to make a methodological guide that anyone they are working with has to comply with. Part of it says that you have to hand over any of the interviews you do and upload them into the database. You can’t just do the research and keep the raw materials inaccessible. Oral histories can be used for many, many purposes outside of that project. They’re valuable to the community, and so should be collected with later uses in mind. For language, for genealogical research, for the history of colonization and settlement in that area. There’s valuable information in almost all of those interviews.

This is not just true for the First Nations, however. It can be useful for any community. I like the idea of the community having control over the materials. They should be able to choose what public programs—radio shows, websites, exhibits, etc.—can be done with them. It can be really important. It’s a matter of community-building, building people’s pride in their heritage, and an overall sense of belonging.
Potential Challenges

Independent folklorists and community scholars play an important role in the field. They are often able to work on a variety of projects during the course of their career, building strong connections between organizations and sharing their skills widely. Often folklorists in these roles will wear a number of hats for each project, such as coordinating exhibits or doing research. All of these things can make advocacy seem like an extra layer of work. Making phone calls, creating handouts, tracking data, and other tasks must compete with the main project in the folklorist’s busy schedule. If she or he does not have ties to supporting organizations, the task of finding funding and external support for the project may be substantially increased. When working alone, they might not be aware of all the resources available. Because of this, independent folklorists and community scholars may especially benefit from case studies of successful projects, and how advocacy work has been incorporated into them. Contribute your own success story at [http://www.afsnet.org/](http://www.afsnet.org/).

Funding Resources

Included below are some of the grant and fellowship opportunities available to independent folklorists and community scholars. To contact folklorists working at the state level for information about potential contract work and for projects which may involve community scholars, see the [Public Programs](#) section of the American Folklife Society. The American Folklife Center also sponsors several awards which can be found [here](#).

**Individuals**

**NEA National Heritage Fellowship** The NEA National Heritage Fellowships recognize the recipients’ artistic excellence and support their continuing contributions to our nation’s traditional arts heritage.

**NEH Summer Stipend** Summer Stipends support individuals pursuing advanced research that is of value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both. The stipend covers two months of continuous, full-time work and often results in the publication of articles, books, or other scholarly resources.

**NEH Public Scholar Program** The Public Scholar program aims to encourage scholarship that will be of broad interest and have lasting impact.

**NCIS Grant Announcements** The National Coalition of Independent Scholars provides a number of resources applicable to independent folklorists, including this list of up-to-date funding opportunities.

**Henry Reed Fund** The Henry Reed Fund was established to provide support for activities directly involving folk artists, especially when the activities reflect, draw upon, or strengthen the collections of the American Folklife Center.
Know Your Audience

Local & State Advocacy

Communicating with legislators and other political representatives holds many similarities to that of federal representatives with two important differences. First, you will typically have many more opportunities to communicate in person. Secondly, you can make use of things like writing a letter/email to the editor of a local paper, inviting a representative to an event, or making a phone call with more impact than you might have nationally. At the same time, you want to be strategic in how you use these methods. Saying "thank you" has tremendous power just as at the federal level and you should be creative in how you do this.

Several folklorists recommend blogs and social media such as a Facebook page as one way to advocate locally.

TIP
A number of states arts organizations hold arts advocacy days. Consider joining in as a partner. (See below for a definition of the difference between lobbying and advocacy)

The legislative process at the state level

Every state has its own unique process of legislation. It is important to know how and when budgets are set, learn about legislation which may impact your work, and as in the case with Congress, who has the power to introduce (or change) a bill or funding. Knowing statistics about funding is key to working with state (and local) representatives. Americans for the Arts has a State Arts Action Network which provides statistics on appropriations, contact information for 42 states, and additional information on state level funding and activities.
Collaborations and Media

Building coalitions and collaborations

Folklorists have long worked in coalitions and in collaboration on projects. Guides for advocacy recommend being actively networked with organizations and individuals who share your goals. Take a look at the resources and organizations listed in this guide. Are you currently networked with these organizations? How could you more effectively combine your efforts? What issues could you take the lead on?

Creating effective communications in a partnership means knowing how to get your story out and knowing who will be the contact person for both advocacy and press.

Download the NCRP’s “Smashing Silos” PDF for additional tips:

How to get your story out

Press releases serve the purpose of establishing the basics—who, what, when, where, and why—but they need follow up in order to become a story.

Links to social media are increasingly necessary to turn a press release into a story. Nonprofit Tech for Good is a great site for examples of how non-profits are using technology to get their story out.

How to work with the media

Many of the tips given above on working with legislators apply to working with the media. In this case, you and your organization’s work serve as a resource for stories. Media workers need new stories every day so if you are advocating for a particular issue, you have a story. Just as with legislators, it’s helpful to establish a relationship with reporters and writers ahead of time.

How to best contact local media

Reporters increasingly use social media so you can use Twitter, You Tube, Instagram, Facebook and other social media sites to reach out when you are advocating. Just as in all relationships, don’t be a pest. If you overwhelm a reporter with information, they are less likely to reach out to you. If a reporter calls, texts, tweets or emails you, try to respond as quickly as possible. As the old proverb goes, “the early bird gets the worm.”

How to write a press release

Make sure to include a contact person, dates, a clear headline, and limited content. Here are three great sites with more tips:


http://nonprofit.about.com/od/mediarelations/a/samplepressrelease.htm

Letters to the Editor

Writing to your local newspaper can be an effective way to draw attention to a local issue. Letters to the editor are shown to be among the most-read sections of a newspaper, and are often read by government officials to get a “pulse” on public sentiment in an area.

When writing to a newspaper, keep in mind the average length of letters published in that outlet. Many prefer short letters (around 100 words) which respond to recently-published news articles or other editorials.

Although relatively small, these letters can make a big impact—especially when paired with good storytelling. Including your personal experiences, interests, and ideas can help personalize the letter. Identify any clear solutions or actions to be taken in response to the issue at hand.

Keep in mind that, as with any publication, some newspapers receive many more submissions than they are able to publish. If your letter isn’t accepted, feel free to adapt it for another publication or platform. Letters to the editor can make great inspiration for personal or community blog posts.

Source

NCOA “Leveraging Media”

Show Your Impact

At the local level, community-building can be a tremendous asset to your organization. In the Toolbox section of this booklet are several activities that can build enthusiasm and participation around your organization or project.

Even simple data-tracking around such activities (How many people attended each event? How many per congressional district? Which age ranges were represented) can increase your organization’s ability to demonstrate its relevance and impact in the community.
Navigating Rules and Regulations

Many folklorists worry about whether they are permitted to conduct advocacy work, especially if they work for a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization. All non-profits and their staff have the right to advocate.

The broad definition of advocacy at the beginning of this guide includes lobbying. “This is defined as stating a position on specific legislation to legislators or other government employees who participate in the formulation of legislation (known as direct lobbying); or urging your members or the general public to contact their legislators with a position on specific legislation (a "call to action") (known as grassroots lobbying).” See more at: http://www.independentsector.org/lobbying_guidelines_public_charities#sthash.IXI0ohtc.OzT4jLP7.dpuf

There are specific rules and regulations concerning lobbying which were amended in 2011 (and which may be amended again).

You can find guidance for the US Senate here: http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/g_three_sections_with_teasers/lobbyingdisc.htm#lobbyingdisc=lda

and for the US House of Representatives here: http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/

The Independent Sector has excellent materials on advocacy and lobbying which can be found here: http://www.independentsector.org/advocacy#sthash.NqYbTHj8.dp1b

Online Resources

Americans for the Arts State Arts Action Network

Leadership in Art Education Taking Action in Schools and Communities
This short overview is a great model for developing a plan of action for creating support for programs in schools: http://www.arteducators.org/advocacy/Leadership_in_Art_Ed_Freedman.pdf

General Impact of the Non-Profit Sector in States
http://www.independentsector.org/advocacy_resources#State_Profiles

Idaho Commission on the Arts Advocacy Tool Kit
Great model of developing a plan for action on a state level: http://www.arts.idaho.gov/advocacy/atool.aspx?pg=1#def
Know Your Audience

Federal Advocacy

In communicating with Congress, the most important word to use is “constituent.” As a constituent (and as the representative of other constituents in your community) you have the right (and some would say the responsibility) to communicate with your elected representatives.

All members of Congress hold town hall meetings in their districts. These are good opportunities to let your legislator know about an upcoming or ongoing program and to say, “thank you” for legislation which funds your programs and/or work. Keep in mind that much of what legislators hear from constituents is negative, so a “thank you” goes a long way. Check out these nine tips for town hall meetings from NCOA: http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/advocacy-toolkit/9-tips-for-town-hall-meetings.html

Staff for Congress will tell you they count numbers of phone calls, letters or emails when there is an organized campaign, so if you are part of a coalition which is advocating for a general issue (arts education funding, for instance) you can help make the case with this method.

Most experienced advocates recommend an in-person visit, so if you are going to be in DC, it’s worth arranging a visit ahead of time. You might wish to join your state’s delegation to an advocacy day in DC (see below). If the issue is time-sensitive, phone calls are recommended over emails because you will speak to a staffer (most of the time).

The legislative process and its impact on the field

Budgets for NEA, NEH, and other federal programs, which may be relevant to the field (such as NIH, Department of Education, etc.) are set by Congress. One of the most useful things you can do is to know the impact of these programs on your work. You can access data on funding levels state by state from some of the resources listed below.

A number of organizations have created advocacy days to bring attention to the impact of funded legislation for these agencies on the communities they serve. For instance, Americans for the Arts hosts an annual Arts Advocacy Day which includes professional development on how to make a case with Congressional representatives, networking opportunities, and research information on impact of Congressional funding. http://www.americansforthearts.org/events/arts-advocacy-day

The National Humanities Alliance also hosts an annual advocacy day with professional development opportunities and networking. http://www.nhalliance.org/events/
Writing to Congress

Writing to your legislator can be an effective way of drawing attention to an urgent issue. E-mail is now the most efficient and inexpensive way to do this, and it eliminates the delays of traditional mail. In some cases, an in-person letter-writing campaign may be preferred as a fun, social way to boost the enthusiasm of a group doing advocacy work.

Whether sending letters or e-mail, be sure to include your name and address at the top of your message. This helps staffs identify whether or not you are a constituent.

Members of Congress receive about 200 million letters and e-mails annually, so efficiency is key. Staffers read all incoming correspondence and tally up the responses. A short letter will be read more quickly—and more quickly moved into the correct pile. Some sources recommend no more than 7-10 sentences per message.
Writing to Congress

Key Points

- Know your issue, and provide data if you have it available. State how it affects your organization directly.
- Identify the issue at stake within the first paragraph of your message.
- When working from a form letter, add your own “voice” wherever possible, as personalized letters are given higher priority by many congressional offices.
- If you are writing in support or opposition to specific legislation, name the measure’s House or Senate bill number and/or title.
- If the legislation addresses your issue, but offers an incomplete solution, feel free to write with constructive alternatives or modifications (but be brief!)
- Keep your requests concise and reasonable.
- Cover only one issue per letter.

Not sure which congressmen and women represent your area? Websites like the Americans for the Arts Action Fund will let you enter your zip code and connect with your representatives without even leaving the screen.

Sources

CongressMerge, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Congressional Management Foundation

Meeting with Legislators

Face-to-face meetings with your Congressional representatives can be a powerful way to join the discussion around legislation that affects your organization and the field of folklore more generally.

Setting up the Meeting

The first thing you will want to do is make an appointment, either with the congressperson’s DC office, or at a local branch. Ask to speak with the person who makes appointments. You will need to provide information about yourself, your organization, the topic you’d like to discuss, and a range of dates or times when you would be available.

Some nonprofit groups work with a pro-bono lobbyist, who can arrange these meetings on their organization’s behalf.

What to Expect

First-time visitors to a legislator’s office will often meet with staff members, rather than the actual legislator. Staff members play a critical role in the office, and such meetings can be equally or even more productive. It is especially valuable to establish a good working relationship with staff if, for example, your organization plans to continue meeting with the office once or twice a year.

Regardless of who you meet with, it will be essential to keep the meeting brief. Congressional offices can be very busy, and your brevity will be appreciated.

Prepare talking points ahead of time, and consider providing a brief print-out (under a page long) for the legislator or staffer.
Meeting with Legislators

Key Points

- Keep it brief—meetings should not exceed 30 minutes. Aim for 10-15 minutes, leaving room for questions.

- Meet with staff. If the representative is not available, meeting with staff can be a terrific way to get your message through. Be gracious and appreciative of their time.

- Make specific, concrete points—they are easier to remember and share.

- Bring your unique perspective. Use real, personal anecdotes to explain how the legislator’s action (or failure to act) would impact the individuals and organizations in your community.

- Clearly identify the action you are requesting.

- If you ask the legislator’s position on the issue, and they are undecided, explain how you arrived at your position and ask them to inform you by mail or e-mail when they make a decision.

- Thank the legislator or staffer and leave them with your contact information.

Sources

NOCA “Top 10 Tips for a Successful Visit to a Member of Congress”

Thank-You Letters

Letter: After Meeting Directly with Member of Congress

The Honorable (Representative’s name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
or  
The Honorable (Senator’s name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Senator/Representative _________________.

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you when I was in Washington, DC. I know you are very busy, and I am grateful that you made time to talk with me about issues that are important to the arts and humanities.

You will recall that we touched on [list the key issues that you discussed].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on your organization’s issue briefs.]

[If you promised to follow up with any other information, include it here.]

I look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with both you and your dedicated staff. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Your name, title, and organization].
Thank-You Letters

Send to Legislator after Meeting with Staff Only

The Honorable (Representative’s name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

or
The Honorable (Senator’s name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Senator/Representative _____________.

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with [Insert staffer’s name] while I was in Washington, DC. I know your staff is very busy, and I was pleased that we were able to meet and discuss issues that are important to the arts and humanities.

[Staffer’s Name] and I had a productive conversation about [list the key issues that you discussed].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on your organization’s issue briefs.]

I look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with both you and your dedicated staff. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Your name, title, and organization]

Thank-You Letters

After Meeting with Staff Member (send using staff person’s direct e-mail address)

Dear ________________.

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you when I was in Washington, DC.

You will recall that we touched on [list the key issues that you discussed].

[You can include some talking points if you wish, drawing on your organization’s issue briefs.]

[If you promised to follow up with any other information, include it here.]

I look forward to continuing this relationship and to future meetings with you. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Your name, title, and organization]

Sources

NOCA, “Sample Thank You Letters to Lawmakers”
Additional Suggestions

The National Council on Aging’s Advocacy Toolkit provides these samples:

**Advocacy**

- Telling your member of Congress how a federal grant your organization received has helped your constituents.
- Educating a member of Congress about the effects of a policy on your constituency.
- Inviting a member of Congress to visit your organization so that he/she may see firsthand how federal funding or a policy affects day-to-day operations and the difference it makes.

**Lobbying**

- Asking your member of Congress to vote for or against, or amend, introduced legislation.
- Emailing a “call to action” to your members urging them to contact their member of Congress in support of action on introduced legislation or pending regulations.
- Preparing materials or organizing events in support of lobbying activities.

See more at: [http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/policy-news/are-nonprofits-allowed-to.html#sthash.WPuyXmOz.dpuf](http://www.ncoa.org/public-policy-action/policy-news/are-nonprofits-allowed-to.html#sthash.WPuyXmOz.dpuf)

Online Resources

**Congressional Arts Handbook**

**American for the Arts Action Center**
Includes contact information for legislators, media, tracking legislation, viewing voting records:

**Congressional Cultural Caucuses**

**Forty Strategies for Building Arts Support**
Case Study: Nevada Humanities Council

Christina Barr has served as executive director for the Nevada Humanities Council since 2009. She has advocated on behalf of folklore and the humanities at the local, state, and federal level.

When I first came here [to the Nevada Humanities Council], the first day on the job, all our funding was zeroed out on our budget by the governor. We went from $100,000 to $0 in funding.

That set the bar for us needing to build an advocacy program. We needed to reinstate that funding and make sure we had the support we needed at the state level. It was trial by fire—I had never done advocacy of that sort before. Some people took me under their wing, and we created a strong and effective advocacy group around our organization.

♦

One of the things I quickly learned is that it’s about relationship-building and information-sharing. You need to be able to talk effectively about what you do and why it matters—why public funds should support it. What we do as arts administrators is critical to our nation’s health and our community health. I spend a lot of time refining those arguments so we can present legislators with very clear talking points.

When they go to committee meetings, they have one sheet of paper they can take with our points clearly outlined. We have to provide them with the tools to make our case without us being in the room.

Our lobbyist is amazing, and she does a lot of relationship building. She can walk into the office of someone new and introduce me. She’ll tell them that I need to talk with them for about five minutes. Then she looks at me, and it’s up to me to make the case. That point of entry is pretty critical.

It’s about relationship-building and information-sharing. You need to be able to talk effectively about what you do and why it matters.

—Christina Barr
People who don’t have an advocate at their disposal can also do that work, though. You don’t need that, especially at a federal level. It’s the duty of our elected officials to welcome us into their office, and they know that.

Keep in mind that the staff are equally important, and you need to build relationships with the people in those offices. Even if it changes, it’s critical to get to know them while they’re there. They control access and take notes for the agenda. Be as gracious as you would be with the elected officials and they will appreciate that.

We are always writing and coordinating and communicating our message to organizations about how they can support state humanities councils, and us in Nevada.

We track data in our organization so we can share with elected officials. We can tell them how many people we’ve served, how many in that person’s district, and so on. Sometimes we’ll tailor our conversation with elected officials to specific parts of the state. If we need to talk about what happens at a district level instead of a state one, we can narrow it down.

When you get in the business of tracking and creating competitive evaluation structure, and you’re talking with people in a position to make decisions about public policy, it really helps to say how you’re serving their constituents.

We can go to them and say we can track the dollar-per-dollar ration of the investment of federal dollars in our community. For every dollar of funding, we’ve leveraged two dollars or six dollars of local money towards this program. The match that we’re able to bring in for federal funds, that ratio is very valuable. That’s when they raise their eyebrows. It’s not that we’re using federal money, but using local resources too. It shows that we’re able to garner local support and engage people in what we are doing.

You’re sitting in somebody’s office, and the question is “Why should I support you instead of school lunches for kids and public health?” I hope we’ve all come to understand that what we do contributes the same kind of urgent value to our communities as healthy school lunches. I think they’re on par. To provide educational opportunities for our kids and provide full lives.

A great resource would be the website of Amy Kitchner, who is the Executive Director of Alliance for California Traditional Arts. She has a briefing on traditional arts and community health. She’s really smart and that would be a great place to get ideas for how to talk about the value of traditional arts on many levels. It’s not frivolous, it’s something that’s vital to maintaining the critical and physical health of our nations and communities.

Just do it and do it often. Become familiar with the process. There’s a structure you need to know about, and if you actually want to have a conversation with elected officials in their office, you have to follow that structure to get there.

Familiarize yourself. Go with someone the first time and see how they do it. I remember the first time they told me “fifteen minutes, fifteen minutes max.” *I thought, how can I do that? But now I’ve got it down to a five minute meeting, which everyone is grateful for. It’s about respecting somebody’s time and getting the message across in a cheerful and passionate way.

*Sue Eleuterio notes, this is often called an "elevator speech." Imagine you are in an elevator with the person you are advocating with and you only have from the 1st floor to the 10th floor to talk to them. What can you say in that time to engage their interest in your program?
Glossary: Defining Terms

A familiarity with several key words and phrases will help you understand the landscape of public policy around your issue, and communicate effectively about the issue with legislators.

**Appropriations Bill** A bill passed by Congress that provides the legal authority for spending U.S. Treasury funds. There are 12 regular annual appropriations bills, each one covering hundreds of programs or spending lines. In the Senate as well as in the House there is one Appropriations subcommittee for each of the 12 bills. In addition, Congress often passes a supplemental appropriations bill midway through the fiscal year.

**Authorization Bill** A bill passed by Congress that provides authority for a program or agency to exist and sets guidelines for its policies and activities. The bill may recommend spending levels for programs, but they are not binding. Generally an authorization must be enacted before an appropriation is made for a program or agency, though there are exceptions. Most authorizations are multi-year, and subsequent versions are called reauthorizations.

**Budget Resolution** An annual Congressional document that provides a broad framework within which Congress fits the 12 annual appropriations bills that fund the government, and in some cases sets reconciliation instructions. The Budget is not a law, but its assumptions and statements are a basis for future decisions, and its spending ceilings impose restrictions on the actions of Congressional committees.

**Caseworker** The Caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests, typically focused on helping to resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies, e.g., Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran’s benefits, passports, etc. There are often several Caseworkers in a congressional office.

**Chief of Staff** The Chief of Staff reports directly to the member of Congress, and usually is responsible for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. He/she is also usually in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.

**Cloture** A process for ending debate in the Senate. Senate rules permit unlimited debate, so the Senate does not vote on a bill if someone wants to keep debating it. The exception to this rule is that the Senate can close off debate by cloture, which requires 60 votes (out of 100) to pass. With the current 51-49 split between the two parties, cloture is usually difficult to achieve. The House has no comparable provision for unlimited debate, and thus no cloture provision.

**Conference Committee** A group of officially appointed Representatives and Senators that works out the differences between the versions of a given bill passed by the two chambers. Its leaders are the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees that wrote the bill in each chamber. Once agreed on, the conference committee report goes back to each chamber for final passage. Some conference committees leave much of the work to staff (who may “pre-conference” a bill before the conferees are appointed).

**Continuing Resolution (CR)** A bill passed by Congress as a stop-gap when the new fiscal year begins. The CR sets continued spending levels for a specified period of time if any regular appropriations bill has not been signed into law. Often
the CR continues spending at the previous year’s levels, though it may be at levels marked up by appropriations subcommittees.

**Cosponsor** A Senator or Representative who formally lists his/her name as a supporter of another member’s bill. Generally – but not always – done before mark-up.

**Discretionary Spending** Government spending enacted by annual appropriations. A government agency cannot spend more than the total appropriated for a discretionary program in a given year. Discretionary spending is projected to make up about one-third of total FY12 federal spending of $3.8 trillion; about two-thirds of discretionary spending goes for security (military, homeland security and international) activities, while the remaining third is for all “domestic” programs. Domestic discretionary spending includes: education, community and economic development, transportation, housing, national parks, energy, etc.

**Fiscal Year** The official year for the government runs from October 1 through September 30.

**Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant/Aide, Legislative Correspondent** The Legislative Director is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. In most congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants whose responsibilities are assigned based on particular expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different Legislative Assistant for health issues, seniors issues, appropriations, etc. Legislative Correspondents are junior staffers, typically not directly responsible for specific issue areas, who support Legislative Assistants/Aides and have responsibility for constituent communications.

**Mandatory Spending** Sometimes called entitlement spending or nondiscretionary spending. These are government programs for which there is no annual spending ceiling. As events unfold and people qualify, the government spends the money needed. Although there are not many mandatory programs, they comprise over half of all federal spending. Major mandatory activities are Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and interest on the debt. Spending on mandatory programs is noted in appropriations bills, but is not limited by those bills. Legislation that revises a mandatory program (e.g. Medicare) is an authorization for which there is no corresponding appropriation.

**Mark-up** A business meeting of a subcommittee or full committee to debate, amend and vote on a bill. A bill passed in a committee mark-up session can be scheduled for a vote in the full chamber.

**Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO)** Budgeting rules that require that most new spending (including revenue reductions due to tax cuts) is offset by corresponding spending cuts or increased revenues. Congress can waive PAYGO rules, and the current statute defining the rules, the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, automatically exempts over 150 programs, funds and activities.

**Reconciliation** A complicated part of the Congressional budget process that directs changes to already-existing legislation in order to cut spending. Because reconciliation bills are not subject to a 60-vote cloture requirement in the Senate, and thus can move forward with only 51 votes, reconciliation is sometimes favored as a vehicle for moving controversial changes. A reconciliation bill is subject to a Presidential veto.

**Scheduler or Appointment/Personal Secretary** The Scheduler is usually responsible for allocating a member’s time among the many demands that arise from
congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. He/she may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, coordinating visits to the district, etc.

**Scoring** The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyzes every bill and determines the effective cost of the proposed legislation. The score that CBO gives a bill may shape its future, e.g. whether it will attract cosponsors and whether the relevant committee chairman will hold a mark-up session.

**Subcommittees and Committees** All members of Congress serve on committees. Every member of a subcommittee is also a member of the full committee to which the subcommittee reports. All committees and subcommittees are chaired by someone from the majority party in that chamber, and they all (with minor exceptions) have a majority of members from the majority party. The lead member from the minority party is designated the ranking member. Much important work (both mark-ups and hearings) is done in subcommittees, and everything done by a subcommittee goes next to the full committee for action.

**Source**

NCOA “Capitol Hill Terms & Definitions”
Using the Toolbox

The following are a sampling of methods, activities, and concepts for organizations looking to develop a focus on advocacy. They are intended to jumpstart discussion and in-house brainstorming—feel free to adapt them to your own organization’s needs!

A more extensive collection of resources and printable PDFs can be found on the AFS website. These have been collected from a wide range of humanities-focused nonprofits, and feature more extensive information on strategic storytelling, data-tracking, collaborating with other organizations, social media, and more.

Although most are covered by a creative commons license, users should refer to the original copyright information on those documents before distributing.
Creating an Advocacy Plan

Step 1 – Identifying need
Which of the issues listed resonates with the work you are doing or might do in the future?
What additional issues could be added to this list?

Step 2 – Developing measurable goals
Which of the issues listed resonates with the work you are doing or might do in the future?
What additional issues could be added to this list?

Step 3 – Developing information to make the case
Who is your target audience (who do you want to influence)?
What is the message? How will it be delivered?
What is your timeline?
What resources will you need?

Case Study
Here is an example of creating additional funding for underserved audiences by the Committee on Responsive Philanthropy. Their campaign, Philanthropy’s Promise, has persuaded over 100 funders to designate at least half of their grant dollars for underserved communities.
http://www.ncrp.org/philanthropys-promise

This effort developed from research done by CRP including a report by Holly Sidford, Fusing Arts, Culture, Social Change, which was done in collaboration with several folklorists, and highlighted the disparities in funding in the arts.

In this case study, the measurable goal was getting a specific number of funders to designate at least half of their grant dollars to specific communities.
Creating an Advocacy Plan

**Step 4 – Measuring success**

Using your previously established goals, you can measure what success looks like.

For instance, in the first case study, success can be measured by specific amounts of funding now available for underserved communities. In the study, success was measured by the retention of an important program to the field.

**Step 5 – Knowing your audience for folklife advocacy**

Knowing your target audience is key to effective advocacy. Any one issue may have multiple audiences, and there are times, in the case of the National Endowment programs for instance, when the main target may be federal, but the impact will be felt at every level for either success or failure. Communicating with legislators, whether federal, state, or local has some commonalities but knowing the specifics can make a difference. Social media may work well for a specific cause, but may also be off-putting to a legislator who feels under fire. If the first time your legislator sees you is as an opponent, they will be less likely to be willing to hear your message.

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**Case Study**

**Maintaining support in Congress for the National Heritage Fellowships**

In 2011, folklorists learned that there was a proposal to eliminate the NEA’s National Heritage Fellowships by folding them into a more generic program. The target audiences were arts administrators at the NEA and legislators in Congress on the US House of Representatives Interior Appropriations Committee where the change would be introduced. The message was the significance of the National Heritage Fellowships to the artists, communities, and states they represented. It was delivered by a combination of emails, a letter writing campaign, in person meetings with relevant administrators, and a follow up plan to deliver additional letters if needed. The timeline was dictated by the Appropriations Committee’s schedule for budget hearings. Resources needed included knowing who had personal connections to legislators, understanding the appropriation process in Congress, and being able to work behind the scenes.

As one respondent in our survey noted: “I learned it is important to think beyond political boundaries, and to cultivate support in both houses.”

Another pointed out: “[This] underscored importance of support by elected officials when an agency will not listen to and respond to the needs of the field.”
Checklist

I. Goals/Mission Statement
   - Project topic
   - Why do this project? What are the desired outcomes?
   - Resulting products and/or contracted deliverables
   - Audience

II. Preliminary Research
   - Research existing sources
   - Community members/local experts to be consulted for background
   - With whom should the project be cleared? Obtain any prerequisite permission or clearance.
   - Identify potential partners

III. Personnel
   - Who will be involved?
   - What tasks will they do?
   - Is any expertise lacking?

IV. Project Scope
   1. Define boundaries of project:
      - Geographic area
      - Community or culture(s)
      - Historical period of study
      - Specific topics
      - Specific genres
      - Duration of project

V. Documentation Methods
   1. Sound recording
      - Interviews
      - Processes/performances

  2. Video recording
     - Interviews
     - Processes/performances

  3. Photography (digital)
     - Measured drawings of large objects—buildings, boats, etc.
     - Collecting or borrowing artifacts
     - Copying historic or family photos
     - Survey or data forms
     - Release forms
     - Other

VI. Processing and Preserving Materials
   - Where will materials be stored?
   - How stored?
   - How processed?
   - By whom?
   - Back-up copies of all media files and text documents

VII. Equipment and Supplies
   1. List equipment/supplies you already have and those you must acquire:

      Equipment
      - Audio recorder
      - Microphone
      - Video recorder
      - Headphones
      - Camera(s)/lenses/flash
      - Tripod
      - Copystand/light
      - Computer/laptop/printer/software for photography,
Checklist

(continued from previous page)

audio. or film processing and editing
Transcription software
Other equipment

Supplies
Media cards for camera, audio recorder, of film recorder. Note: a separate card should be used for each function; it is not recommended to use media cards interchangeably among different types of equipment
Extra media card for each piece of equipment
Batteries/rechargeable batteries and charger, plus extra batteries; where equipment has its own rechargeable battery packs, be sure to carry an extra rechargeable battery
Cables, adapters, and AC cords
Survey or data forms and release forms, where applicable
Business cards for self and employer, if applicable
If working on contract for employer, brochures, letter of introduction, or other information about organization or business
Brief, concise project description (usually one page) for outreach
Clipboard
Archiving supplies:
discs, jump drives, or external drives for duplicates of all media and text materials
disc or drive storage
file folders
storage for business cards and other ephemera collected

Checklist

VIII. Timeline

1. Time varies, depending on:
   - Familiarity with area
   - Scope
   - Product and/or contracted deliverables
   - Personnel resources
   - Deadline imposed by outside entity as well as informants' and fieldworker's schedules and commitments

2. Tip: ≈ 6 hours transcribing per 1 hour interview

3. Tip: Everything takes longer than you think it will

IX. Budget

1. Consider all costs, e.g.:
   - Transportation, including to fieldsite, where applicable
   - Lodging and per diem, where applicable
   - Photocopying/fax
   - Postage
   - Telephone or internet access fees
   - Equipment/supplies
   - Salaries or honoraria, where applicable
   - Courtesy copies of media materials
   - Costs associated with product/deliverables

X. Funding

Identify funding sources
Apply for funding
Locate support, including matching, cash, in-kind, or donations.
Data-Tracking

One of the strongest ways for local advocates to support state or federal advocacy is through data tracking. Numbers can be a powerful and persuasive tool when effectively demonstrating the organization’s level of public support.

Organizations can benefit from recording not only the number of participants engaged, but also information about which congressional districts are being served by the organization’s activities.

Once information has been collected, it can be put into action. The National Humanities Alliance does a great job of this—using GIS technology, the Alliance created a map of which humanities institutions serve which congressional district. The idea was to demonstrate quickly and simply to legislators how humanities institutions serve their constituents. Users are even able to see how individual districts have benefited from federal funding in the past.

Smaller organizations without the time or resources to undertake a large-scale data-tracking program can take advantage of the NHA map and other collections of related data, such as the Cultural Data Project, the American Association of Colleges & Universities studies, the NEH database, and others.

Source

National Humanities Alliance “Data”
Legal/Accounting

One obstacle to advocacy work, especially for nonprofit folklore groups, is a concern that lobbying could jeopardize an organization’s tax-exempt status. While there are many activities that will not put nonprofits at risk, it may be beneficial to seek legal advice or participate in educational workshops on this topic.

The Alliance for Justice, located in Washington DC, offers regular “Worry-Free Advocacy Workshops” and access to legal and accounting advice through their Advocacy Lawyers and Accountants Network (ALAN.) Some organizations may be able to obtain pro-bono legal assistance more locally, and all will find a wealth of information online about the advocacy rights of nonprofit organizations at the federal and state levels.

Outside of DC, nonprofits can apply for pro bono legal counsel through Pro Bono Partnership: http://www.probonopartner.org/

Organizations may apply for assistance in a number of areas, including: corporate law, intellectual property, real estate acquisitions or leasing negotiations, getting appropriate insurance protection (such as Directors & Officers liability insurance), understanding client confidentiality, legal regulations for nonprofit fundraising, and more.

For examples of other nonprofits who have benefitted from collaborating with lobbyists, see: http://www.politico.com/story/2007/07/lobbyists-feel-good-by-doing-good-004968
and http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/04/us/politics/tired-of-tainted-image-lobbyists-try-makeover.html?_r=0

The creation of a Folklore Advocacy forum on the AFS website will allow folklorists to ask more specific questions in a secure environment. For more information, see: http://www.afsnet.org/

Source

Alliance for Justice “Better Public Policy”
**Legislative Theatre**

“Legislative Theatre” was created by Brazilian vereador (city councilman) Augusto Boal in the 1960s. The public was invited to participate in short plays about recent controversies, offering solutions by taking the part of different characters in the play. Performances were followed by an open brainstorming session or discussion of what policies or laws might solve the issue in question. Sometimes mock legislatures would be created to debate bills—simultaneously educating the public on the legislative process and empowering them to participate in it more openly.

Boal’s *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* is still in print and can be accessed through many libraries or purchased online. At a more broad level, folklore organizations may consider experimenting with more interactive approaches to advocacy, whether in-house or with the local community. This tactic may be most useful when strategizing around a specific piece of upcoming legislation, but could serve an educational purpose when applied more generally.

**Source**

*Beautiful Trouble “Legislative Theatre”*

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**Social Media**

Social media platforms offer a convenient and adaptable way for folklore organizations to connect with audiences, regardless of how large or small that audience may be. Many provide built-in analytics, which let organizations track the growth of their audience, identify the best time of day to connect with followers, and learn which category of posts (photographs, links, etc.) are most successful.

Though posting on social media may be relatively easy and fast, the organization’s “voice” should always be considered. A nonprofit is responsible for the content under its editorial control, and even indirect actions (“liking” the photo of an external organization or person, sharing or retweeting external content, responding to comments, etc.) factor in this. Messages that are polarizing in nature can harm the organization’s ability to facilitate dialogue, or possibly threaten the group’s nonprofit standing.

To effectively advocate through social media, it can help to establish ahead of time what the tone of the organization will be going forward, and to maintain that consistently.

**Source**

*Center for Media Justice “The Digital Culture Shift,” BolderAdvocacy “Legal Tips On Using Social Media For Advocacy”*
Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting operates at the local level of government, encouraging community members to participate in decision-making processes. In a series of public meetings, it empowers local tax payers to determine where and how allocated tax dollars will be spent.

The process is a deliberately lengthy one; participants have several months to discuss and arrive at a decision. Eventually, a public vote determines which of a series of proposals will be funded.

Participatory budgeting offers a chance not only for local folklore projects to find an audience and possibly funding, but it offers insight into local government for project applicants and community participants alike.

The practice has spread to over 1,500 cities in Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe since its 1989 inception. $98,000,000 in public money has been assigned since that time, and over 100,000 people have engaged with 84 elected officials.

To learn more, see: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/

Source

The New York City Council “Participatory Budgeting FAQ,” The Participatory Budgeting Project

Spokesperson Tips

The following are taken from Story Based Strategy, “a national movement-building organization dedicated to harnessing the power of narrative for social change” in Los Angeles, CA:

Take Control of the Story Prepare before being interviewed. Know the central message of the publication, and what assumptions the reporter may bring to the table. Be ready to clarify any actual misconceptions that arise in the conversation.

Frame the Story Don’t say what the organization is doing—say why. Structure your story in terms of the problem, solution, and action. Speak in terms of values.

Not a Conversation Make sure the key message gets across, regardless of the questions being asked.

Message Discipline Know your message and practice it. Commit it to memory, so you can share it easily and on the spot.

ABC Acknowledge the question, Bridge back to your Content (the message.) For example: “I think the real point is...” or “I think the important issue is...”, etc.

The Truth is on Your Side, So Be Accurate It’s okay to say “I don’t know that,” or “I’ll get back to you.”

Don’t Distract from Your Message Be relaxed, be polite, and use accessible language.

Source

The Center for Story-Based Strategy “Spokesperson Tips”
Storytelling techniques can enhance a group’s ability to rally support around a project or issue, and is particularly suited for projects that require the buy-in of community members and/or policymakers.

Being able to present your organization’s mission at different levels of specificity can be a powerful tool. The Center for Story-Based Strategy recommends adapting your message to at least three tiers:

1. A main slogan, or motto, that sums up the spirit and direction of your campaign. This slogan does not need to include your entire message—and probably shouldn’t! Still, your slogan should be informed by your organization’s key message.

2. Slogan accompanied by a brief, two or three line summary of what you are advocating for and/or against. This tier of messaging can include all parts of your key message, and is ideal for posters, fliers, and voices at a public assembly.

3. Slogan and a complete explanation of your position, your goals and grievances, individual and group stories, citations and contact information. This tier is an expanded version of your key message, most likely reflected in press releases, editorials, open letters to elected and corporate officials, distributed pamphlets, mailings, and web posts.

Above all, make sure that the organization’s (or project’s) central mission is represented clearly and consistently throughout.

Some key points to consider when crafting your story:

- Who is your intended audience? In other words, who are the specific individuals or groups of people you most need to reach and persuade to achieve your goal? It is helpful to think in terms of these target groups.
- Does the narrative you’re crafting resonate with the base you are trying to rally? Is the community or labor base you are rallying fairly represented in the storytelling and images (including photos) being developed?
- Are the folks most impacted by an issue able to speak for themselves, as experts on their own lives?
- Is there any part of your message that might compromise the mission of other allied communities? If so, revise!
- How does your message advocate for positive change? How will that be apparent in the language and images you use?

Source

The Center for Story-Based Strategy “Battle of the Story” and “Influence Map”
Street Stall

Street stalls are interactive displays held out of doors. They make it possible to interact with a larger number of people than is normally possible indoors.

A highly public location is selected and exhibition and interactive display material mounted for a selected period. Facilitators are on hand to encourage people to make comments and engage in debate. The event may be advertised in advance, but this is not essential.

Tips

- Arcades and colonnades are good venues as they provide shelter from the rain. Ideal if you can also have the use of a shop.
- Can benefit from, and be attractive for, radio and television coverage. Leaflets can also be handed out to passers-by and placed in shop windows.
- Be careful when using Post-it notes and leaflets if windy conditions are likely; they may blow away!
- Getting formal permission to set up a stall in a public area can take a long time. Plan well ahead of time.
- Likely to attract a broader range of people than an indoor event, but marginalised groups or reticent individuals may still need special inducement to participate. Have a 'postbox' so that people can make contributions anonymously.

Source

CommunityPlanning.net “Street Stall”
About the Project

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