Fundamentals of Arts Advocacy
Harnessing Your Power

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Americans for the Arts
Who is Americans for the Arts?

- Arts Advocacy, Research and Service Organization
- 50 years old in 2010. Staff of approximately 80.
- www.AmericansfortheArts.org
- National umbrella organization promoting all forms of art.
- Central organization for National Arts and Humanities Month.
- Original Research: National Arts Index, Arts & Economic Prosperity Studies, Creative Industries Report
- Very politically active.
- In 2004, formed the Arts Action Fund and its affiliated Political Action Committee (PAC).
- www.ArtsActionFund.org
- Endorses and contributes to the campaigns of federal candidates.
Politically Active
Politically Active
State Political Activity
Local Political Activity
Awards
Partnerships
Partnerships
Arts Advocacy Day
How and Why do we Advocate

Shrinking federal, state and local resources. With elections, more fiscally conservative legislators

The Arts must promote itself.

Artists must promote themselves. Educate others what is it about.

The arts, in general, will be locked out of government funding if it does not show economic and social benefits.
Structure: Arts Advocacy Levels

- Federal: Led by Americans for the Arts and other national arts organizations
  - Focused on funding for the National Endowment for the Arts
- State: Led by State Arts Advocacy Organizations (SAAN) who are affiliated with Americans for the Arts
  - Focused on funding for the state arts council
- Local: Led by Local Arts Organizations who are mostly members of Americans for the Arts
  - Focused on funding for city organization that provided arts funding
Arts Advocacy Background

Questions?
Education

Noun: the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge

Examples:
The arts add value to society
The arts create jobs and tax revenue
Arts education diminishes the drop out rate
Kids with an arts education score, on average, 100 points higher on their SATs
The non-profit arts generate $166.2 billion a year in economic activity
Advocacy  *ad·vo·ca·cy*

Noun: The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support

Examples:
Support the arts as they add value to society
Support the arts as they create jobs and tax revenue
Support arts education as it diminishes the drop out rate and kids with arts education score, on average, 100 points higher on their SATs
Support the non-profit arts as it generates $135.2 billion a year in economic activity
Oppose efforts to cut arts funding
Lobbying  *lob·by·ing*

Verb: To try to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause

Examples:
Increase the City of Austin’s Arts budget by $10M.
Support increasing funding for the NEA and NEH in the FY09 Appropriations Bill
Support increasing funding for arts education in the FY09 Appropriations Bill
Cosponsor S.548 or H.R. 1524, the artist fair-market value deduction bill
Key Principles of Cultural Advocacy

1. Advocacy must be part of your daily mission.
2. Being successful depends on a unified message, purpose and strategy.
3. Seek to establish coalitions
4. Politics is fluid; change is constant. Be ready for it!
5. Establish a strategy and a plan.
6. Get to know your elected officials.
Key Principles of Cultural Advocacy

7. Understand how your activities contribute to the greater good.
8. Treat your allies and opponents with friendly respect.
9. Work hard for your political friends.
10. Be honest.
11. Politicians respond to voters. Target voters for your advocacy.
12. Strive for clarity and brevity in all your communications.
Advocacy Pie

Many Pieces of the Advocacy Pie

- Grassroots Activities
- Grasstips Efforts
- Business Support
- Media Campaigns
- State and Local Arts Organizations
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Grassroots Activities

Grassroots \textit{grass-roots}

Adjective: of, pertaining to, or involving the common people, esp. as contrasted with or separable from an elite.

What should they be asked to do?
- In Person Visits with key decision makers
- Attend Local Events
- Make Phone Calls to key decision makers and their friends
- Send E-Mails to key decision makers and their friends
Who are Arts Activists?

- ANYONE with an interest in a particular issue
- ANYONE with a story to tell
- ANYONE who wants to change the law or status quo

- YOU are arts activists!
- YOU all have a common interest
- YOU all have been affected by the action of the Federal, State and Local Government with regard to its support for the arts.

Don’t limit yourself to a small circle of friends/supporters!

Arm Chair Activists
Advocacy Pie

Many Pieces of the Advocacy Pie

- Grassroots Activities
- **Grasstops Efforts**
- Business Support
- Media Campaigns
- State and Local Arts Organizations
Grasstips Activities

Grasstips *grass-tops*

Adjective: of, pertaining to, or involving community leaders, VIPs, etc., esp. as contrasted with or separable from the common group.

Who are your Grasstips:
- Personal Friends of Decision Makers
- Community Leaders
- Members of your Board of Directors
- Business Leaders
- Basically, anyone who when they pick up the phone to call the key decision maker, they talk to them personally as a friend.
Many Pieces of the Advocacy Pie

- Grassroots Activities
- Grasstps Efforts
- Business Support
- Media Campaigns
- State and Local Arts Organizations
Business Support

All about Jobs and the Economy

Need business support to be effective

Invite business leaders to serve on your boards

Research Studies:
- Creative Economy
- Arts And Economic Impact study

www.AmericansfortheArts.org/research
Many Pieces of the Advocacy Pie
- Grassroots Activities
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- State and Local Arts Organizations
Letters to the Editor

• Allows others to read about your issue in the manner you want to present it.
• Properly placed letters are seen by key decision makers. (Put their name in the letter)
• Use the Americans for the Arts Web site for sample letters/ideas and for contact information for: Newspapers, TV, Radio and Magazines
• Must be unique letters or they will not be printed
• For best results, tell your own personal story
Many Pieces of the Advocacy Pie

- Grassroots Activities
- Grasstops Efforts
- Business Support
- Media Campaigns
- State and Local Arts Organizations
A strong state and/or local arts organizations is critical to increased arts funding, stronger arts education and better arts related legislation

- Coordinated advocacy is essential
- One message, one team
- Elected officials will not differentiate between the types of arts.

- Americans for the Arts serves as the central clearinghouse to organize federal advocacy efforts
Advocacy Goals

• Build Professional Relationships
  • with key decision makers
  • If you wait until you need help, it is too late

• Knowledge is Power
  • Become a resource or expert on your issue
  • Offer your resources and assistance at any time

• For your supporters, volunteer on their election campaign
Advocacy Rules

Your success depends on how the key decision maker views you. Does he or she TRUST you, RESPECTS your opinions (not necessarily agrees with them), VALUES you as a person and SEEK YOUR ADVICE.

If you can do this, you will be successful.
Advocacy Rules

• Be HONEST, never lie or stretch the truth
• Must know your position
• Must know your opponent’s position
• Never insult the key decision maker or your opponent
• Never lose your cool
• It is ok to say “I don’t know the answer to that question, but I will get that answer and be back in contact with you.”
Advocacy Rules

• Understand the key decision maker’s political position and how your issue might be difficult to adopt or maintain

• Only advocate to YOUR local, state and federal elected officials: You must be their constituent
  • Local Exception: All politics are local, so sometimes OK to advocate to other local officials.

• Meeting with key decision maker’s senior staff is often just as good or better than meeting with the principle

• Always “Make the Ask”
  • Let them know what you want
  • Let them know what you want them to do
Top Reasons People Don’t Contact Their Elected Officials

1. Don’t know who their Elected Officials are.
2. Don’t know what issue to write on.
3. Don’t know what to say.
4. Think it will take too much time.
5. Don’t think it will matter.
Sample Advocacy Campaign

Plan! -
Think Things Through

• What are your goals?
  • Goals must be realistic, although stretch goals are important.
  • Don’t try to change the world, you will fail.

• Inventory your resources?
  • What do you have to work with?
  • Are your resources adequate?
  • If not, what can you do to get more money or people?
Plan! -
Think Things Through

• Who else is out there that:
  • Can help your cause?
  • Can and will hurt your cause?

• When appropriate, who can you partner with?
  • When is it appropriate to partner, when isn’t it?

• Who is “in charge?”
  • Every campaign needs a “leader”
Plan! - Think Things Through

- Devise your advocacy plan
  - Promoting yourself to supporters or would be supporters
  - Grassroots and Grasstops Support
  - Give supporters something to do other than sign up for your list. Email, attend meetings, etc.
  - Have new opportunities to take on a regular basis
  - Meet with key decision makers to get to know them
- Repeat, Repeat, Repeat
First Step: Setting Goals

• Gather key decision makers and determine what you want?
  • Make sure you have the right people in the room and more importantly, are not excluding someone who might sabotage you.
  • If someone refuses to participate, figure out how to work around them, or better yet, get them involved.
Sample Goals

1. Organize: Get a group of supporters into a strong coalition that is active, actively educating and recruiting new supporters.
   • Grassroots and Grasstops Supporters

2. Educate the community (not your supporters) on your issues. (i.e. LAA, Mayors office, Governors, Senators, major arts institution leadership, etc)

Then, and only then:
3. Make a legislative ask or promote/oppose existing legislation.
Step 2: Resources

• Overview what you have to work with?
  • Is it sufficient?
  • If not, what can you do to get more resources?

Resources can include:
• People, volunteers, supporters
• Money and in kind donations
• Infrastructure to communicate: computers, email, phone lines
• Engaged leadership
Step 3: Get the Lay of the Land

- What other types of arts advocacy is going on?
- Who are the key players?
- Where do your goals and their goals match?
- Where do your goals and their goals diverge?
- Who is in a position to help you?
- Who is in a position to sabotage you?
Step Four: Partners

Strength in Numbers
• Who else is out there doing the exact or very similar things you are doing? How can you best work together? Coalition? Merge? Takeover?

• Who else is out there doing arts advocacy in another discipline? Where do your missions overlap? Form a Coalition? What will you give them? What do you want to get?

• Who do you need to avoid? Who has a bad reputation, etc.?
Step Five: Structure

How are you going to organize?
- 501(c)3 – takes time (existing or new)
- Unincorporated – Harder to get funding
- Completely casual, no written structure

Who will run the effort?
- Board of Directors
- Key group of activists
- Tea Party- nobody “in charge”

Who will speak for the effort?
- Media, Testify Before legislative bodies, etc.
Finally: Design your Campaign

Develop your timeline:
• When are important meetings
• When do decisions get made
• When is the city budget developed and passed?

Identify your Targets:
• City Council
• Mayor
• Governor
• Legislators
• Other public opinion makers (religious, business, etc)
Finally: Design your Campaign

Develop a strategy to reach out and recruit:
• Grassroots
• Grasstops
• Business
• Media
• Other organizations (Chamber, PTAs, etc)

Communication Methods:
• Email
• Phone
• In Person Meetings
Just Do It!

• Roll out campaign and work your butts off!
• Understand that it will take time. Often multiple years.
• Know that you will have set backs
• Don’t be discouraged
• Be prepared to change your strategy or game plan as the situation changes
• Flexibility is key to success
Other Things To Do

• Get Involved in Elections
  • Write Checks
  • Volunteer for Campaigns

• Get involved in the community if you are not already
  • Be seen as a community leader
Breakout Discussion

What are you, or should you be doing in your local community/state to advance the interests of the arts/arts education/theatre in higher education?

From the Sample Advocacy Campaign, what can you do to begin/improve your efforts? (Coalitions? Grassroots? Grasstips? Media? Funding? Etc.)

What tools or ideas can you implement next week when you get home? Next year? Five years?
Why Get Involved

YOU CAN, AND WILL, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

• Marathon, Not a Sprint

• Have the opportunity to change and/or influence our federal, state or local laws and policy

• If you don’t get involved, your opponents will
Questions?

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Bonus Material!

501(c)(3)s & Electioneering
Basic Rules

Section 501(c)(3) organizations may engage in educational activities related to the electoral process as long as they do not:

- participate or intervene in any political campaign
- in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office

501(c)(3)s are absolutely prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office.
Permissible Educational Activities

- Voter guides/candidate questionnaires
- Candidate forums
- Officeholder scorecards
- Voter registration
- Issue education
Voter Guides/Candidate Questionnaires

- All candidates asked to participate
- All responses published, unedited
- No indication of preference
  - Editorial opinion
  - Comparison to organization’s positions
- Variety of issues
Officeholder Scorecards

- Voting records of politicians
- No indication of preference
- Variety of issues
- Method and timing of distribution relevant
Candidate Forums

- All candidates invited
- Range of issues addressed
- Equal opportunity to respond
- No indication of preference
  - Editorial comments
Voter Registration/Get-Out-The-Vote

- Must be nonpartisan
- Not directed at voters likely to support a particular candidate
Issue Education

- A 501(c)(3) does not lose its ability to engage in educational activities simply because a political campaign is in process.
- In fact, it is during the election season that the interest of voters in key issues may be at its highest.
Some Helpful Factors for Issue Education During a Campaign

- A history of non-electoral issue education
- Research showing the need for education
- Disclaimers of endorsements
- No reference to a candidate
Examples of Prohibited Political Conduct

- Endorsement of a candidate
  - Fundraising appeals
- Rating of candidates
- Contributions to candidates
- Distribution of materials prepared by candidates
- Establishment of a PAC
Questions?

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Breakout Scenarios

Using these steps to create a campaign, break into groups to discuss the following scenarios:

• The state legislature is going to vote on an anti-smoking law that would end up prohibiting the use of cigarettes in live performances.
• A local school board prohibits a high school drama club from performing *The Laramie Project* due to concerns about the play’s content.
• The state department of education has asked for comments on educational requirements.
• A group of citizens has let it be known that they are going to protect a controversial play. What do you do?