

**Assembly 2007
Workshop Notes**

**STATE ARTS AGENCY ADVOCACY:
STRATEGIES FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS**

Baltimore, Maryland
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Workshop Goals:

- Examine the strengths and weaknesses of current SAA advocacy practices
- Identify factors that help or hinder SAA advocacy efforts
- Address SAA success strategies; harness SAA advocacy assets

NASAA Advocacy Checklist Responses:

Workshop participants reviewed the advocacy checklist to identify areas of strength and weakness in arts advocacy their states.

Strengths

- Present arts in the capitol
- Advocacy on the agenda at every council meeting
- Advocacy in job descriptions of council members
- Engage legislative counsel/lobbyist
- Seek advice from legislators
- Grantees write thank you's
- Good relationship with legislative caucus

Weaknesses

- Weak relationships with legislative staff
- Fail to keep legislature involved
- Neglectful in developing board as advocates
- No convening of advocates (or legislators) for setting agenda at start of legislative session
- No attention to recruit campaign contributors as arts advocates: i.e., those who are likely to combine a strong arts interest with access to elected officials

SAA Advocacy: A Shared Responsibility

Workshop participants reviewed factors which help or hinder their SAAs' advocacy practices involving significant advocacy players and partners.

SAA Council Members as Advocates

- What helps:
 - Political/personal connections
 - Community ties
 - Diverse perspectives
 - Turnover brings fresh voices and connections
 - Provide balance of political voices
- What hinders:
 - Won't use clout
 - Knowledge and skills vary
 - Overly enthusiastic
 - Reluctant to oppose governor
 - Turnover means losing the good ones

SAA Staff as Advocates

- What helps:
 - Highly knowledgeable; possess technical/programmatic information
 - Fluent on benefits of public arts support
 - Advocacy a priority of SAA
- What hinders:
 - Face statutory barriers to advocacy
 - Unable to oppose governor/Secretary of State
 - Mixed attitudes about staff time spent on advocacy

SAA Grantees as Advocates

- What helps:
 - Statewide network
 - Arts community tells the story
 - The experience of the benefit of producing art
 - Connect SAA support with political connection to legislators
 - Legislators announce SAA grants to constituents
- What hinders:
 - Grantees won't take the time
 - Small dollar incentive for large groups to advocate for SAA

SAA Partners as Advocates

- What helps:
 - State advocacy groups mobilize, partner with SAA
 - Enlarges network
 - Stakeholders in education, tourism, etc. as advocates
 - Explain added value of arts to them—be at *their* table
 - E-advocacy eases communication
- What hinders:

State advocacy groups' capacity varies; adversary to SAA
Arts interest not at top of partners' advocacy list
Form letters lack impact; e-mail not enough, all types of communications are
needed to engage legislature

SAA Advocacy Assets: Future Directions

How better to engage Council Members in advocacy

- Training for council members in advocacy
- Arrange meetings to build relationships with legislators
- Create role for council members in arts advocacy day
- Encourage membership in state arts advocacy organization

How better to engage Staff in advocacy

- Training/meeting with executive director on advocacy responsibilities
- Discuss and clarify what is possible as advocates for the SAA
- Education about all SAA programs – what do other staff members do?
- Present advocacy as an ongoing activity
- Help legislators write letters to editors and editorials

How better to engage Grantees in advocacy

- Workshop/training for grantees; discuss advocacy at all grantee meetings
- Engage grantee boards as advocates
- Encourage grantees to invite decision-makers to arts events: consider making it a policy in receiving the award
- Require grantee to give credit to SAA
- Join state arts advocacy group
- Require grantees to outline advocacy work on grant applications.

How better to engage Partners in advocacy

- Work with lobbyists of other advocacy groups
- Strengthen relations with other issue advocacy groups, such as tourism