

# Artist Advocates Secrets for Success

## **PURPOSE:** Why are you advocating?

The answer to that question will inform everything else. Is it for funding? If so, who should receive that funding and why? Is it for a policy? What good would it serve and for whom? Advocacy for its own sake may feel good, but it will not accomplish very much. Whether it is personal or part of an organized group's agenda, such as Arts NC, you should know your purpose first, before you do anything else.

## **PREPARATION:** Who, What, Where, Why, and How?

- Know the decision-making system that you are trying to influence. You want to be sure you are speaking to the right people, at the right time about the right thing.
- Know the facts that can support your purpose. Also, be prepared for opposing perspectives.
- Patience, politeness, gratitude, and persistence are the best ways to schedule a meeting.

## **HUMANITY:** Tell the right story.

Decision makers are human, so telling a story about a person or people that supports your purpose, especially if it is emotionally poignant, is the best way to connect. The story can be personal but should serve as an example of how others would be affected by supporting your cause, not solely how it would affect an individual. Focus on the impact which art has on people.

## **CONTEXT:** Facts and figures provide perspective.

Decision makers want to make an impact. While populations, demographics, and economic statics do not feel very artsy, they are essential to helping a decision maker understand the true value of your request.

Choose data which, coupled with the right story, will put your purpose into the perspective of a larger context. Nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and most private foundations want to invest in the programs and projects that will serve the most people with the greatest need.

Funders want to support art that does good, not art that is good.

## ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE: Who doesn't like to be thanked?

Be grateful when you're talking before. Say thank you when you walk in the door. Be grateful as you are starting to leave. Say thank you in the note they'll receive. Handwritten notes are always best, just like our elders say. Then send an email with links and stats to remind them of that day. But even if letter or email is all that you can do- never forget to make the time, to say a simple "thank you."

## THE ART & THE ARTIST: Should you be the priority?

An advocate should share just enough information about themselves to show that they have knowledge of the topic, but not so much that they become the topic. Unless the decision maker has specifically said that their purpose is to support artists (such as for a program or grant) the qualifications, reputation, or talent of the artist, and the originality, quality, or importance of the art, should not be the focus of your advocacy.

This document is sponsored by: Artists Thrive and Arts North Carolina