



Why the arts matter

Advocacy toolkit

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1. Introduction

By working collaboratively, the arts sector can make a compelling case for why the arts matter.

This toolkit is to help your organisation make a persuasive case that cuts to the arts should be as small as possible and that any reductions should be managed intelligently over four years to minimise the effect.

Please share your case studies, facts and figures with your Arts Council regional communications officer. It will really help us in making the case for the arts if we have access to your examples.

Please let us know if you have any feedback about this toolkit.

2. Three top tips for making the case

- Be positive in your approach. Aim to shape and respond to government policy rather than criticise it.
- Tailor your approach and tone to be in tune with the people you want to influence.
- Make the case collaboratively with other arts organisations. This will add weight to your message.

3. Actions

This toolkit is designed to help you to influence the Government's spending review. This process is already underway, so the sooner you can do your bit to make the case the better.

Here are some of the practical actions you can take to make the case for why the arts matter.

- Think about how the key messages apply to your organisation
- Email your MP to tell them *why the arts matter* and how this applies to your organisation. Invite them to see the work of your organisation.

- Email your stakeholders to tell them *why the arts matter*, urging them to make your case to MPs
- Tell your social networking followers *why the arts matter* to you. Ask them why they matter to them and urge them to make your case to local and national politicians
- Update your website with content on *why the arts matter* and include this content in your newsletters
- Include information on *why the arts matter* in your media releases and be interviewed (perhaps with representatives from the Arts Council) about arts funding

4. Messages

We have put together some key messages about why the arts matter. If we work together to use these messages, we can strengthen their impact.

The full messages are available on our website at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/why-arts-matter/>

- the arts are essential to our quality of life
- the arts are a UK-wide international success story thanks to sustained investment
- the arts budget is tiny, and the return on investment is huge
- sustained support of the arts will allow them to play a vital role in Britain's economic recovery
- the arts are central to a government that places a healthy society at the heart of its agenda
- any cut to the arts will have a disproportionate effect for a relatively tiny saving to the public purse

You can tailor these messages so that they are relevant to your organisation and work. It is useful to provide facts and figures about the impact of your organisation.

For example:

- the number of people you employ
- the number of people attending performances, exhibitions and workshops
- the secondary spend your organisation generates

- your connection to the creative industries
- your work with communities and young people
- your links to tourism
- your links to health, regeneration and other agendas
- the number and activities of volunteers who work with you would link to the Government's ['Building the Big Society'](#).

As well as facts and figures, anecdotal feedback from your audiences is also valuable.

Summarise your case in a concise way. If your message is clear then it will be easier for other people to understand and support your campaign.

5. Stakeholders

Who do you want to influence? Who influences them?

The key to making the case successfully is to identify the people who have influence and to equip these people with the right messages to influence the decision makers at the right time.

Think about your organisation and your stakeholders.

- Who do you have strong links with? Who might they be able to influence?
- How might you be able to involve them in making the case?

One of the most important groups of people to influence in the spending review process is MPs.

Who are MPs influenced by?

- local councillors
- people living in their constituency – the voters
- the media
- the blogosphere
- local businesses/business leaders
- community groups and leaders, school governors
- Peers
- local political party
- other MPs

Harnessing the influence of board members, trustees, leaders and artists

Consider holding a session with the members of your board or trustees on making the case for the arts. You may be able to work with them in the run up to the

spending review by identifying who they may be able to influence and preparing them to use key messages.

You might also want to do something similar with artists, curators or artistic directors. They might also be good spokespeople for the campaign.

Involving your audience/friends/volunteers

Think about how you can involve your audiences, volunteers and any 'Friends' groups in making the case. In what ways can they help spread the word about how your work makes a difference to them? For example, they could write to their MP or get involved in a social networking campaign. How else could they help?

6. Making the case

Working with MPs and other political stakeholders

Here are some tips on how to make the case effectively to your MP. For a fuller guide to working with MPs click [here](#).

All MPs have influence that they can use in Parliament or in the government. If you don't already have a strong relationship with your local MP consider cultivating their support as soon as possible. Bear in mind that MPs receive many appeals for support and have a limited amount of time. MPs are usually available in their constituencies on Fridays and weekends.

Do research the MP's interests. For example, research memberships of Select Committees and All Party Parliamentary groups, find out if they have asked relevant questions in Parliament, and see if the organisations they are patrons of will help you to tailor your approach.

Use your networks to make a compelling offer for your MP or an appropriate minister or shadow minister. For example you could host a visit themed around children and young people with other arts organisations in your area.

How to contact your MP

Visit www.parliament.uk to find out who your local MP is. It is best to contact the MP via their constituency office (rather than Westminster). Find the MP's personal website to get their constituency contact details. Otherwise you can send a message via www.theyworkforyou.com. However a personal approach is best.

Make your approach relevant to the MP's constituency. If you have a city or area wide remit then it might be more appropriate to ask a person who lives in the MP's constituency to contact them first.

Events with MPs

Invite your local MP to an event or to see the work of your organisation. Offer to provide a behind the scenes guide or tour, with the opportunity to meet some of your staff and some of the people who benefit from what you do. If your invitation is accepted, suggest that you set up a photo call with the local media.

Developing the relationship

- Follow up your contact with the key stakeholder and thank them for visiting your organisation
- Continue to invite them to opening nights, launches, events.
- Provide regular updates on what your organisation is doing, for example through press releases and your social networking channels. Use the key messages in these updates.
- You could also encourage people who have benefited from your work to write to their MP or other key stakeholders expressing support for the work you do

Over the long term this approach helps politicians and key stakeholders to see the value of the arts to their constituents and the local community.

Working with the media

Getting a relevant story into the media can help to communicate messages about arts funding to MPs, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Our [sample press release](#) shows how you may be able to incorporate the key messages in your news releases. This fictitious example release shows how 'Why the arts matter' messages have been incorporated to demonstrate the link between public funding and the outcomes of that investment.

A few tips on working with the media:

- Developing relationships with journalists can help to get your stories in the news. If a journalist knows you, and knows you can deliver good content, it makes their job easier

- Positioning leaders or artists from your organisation as spokespeople strengthens your message regionally and nationally. A good spokesperson helps to get your story into the news.
- Regional radio stations often feature discussion shows on issues that affect local people. Volunteer your spokesperson to take part and highlight why the arts matter in your community.
- Your regional Arts Council communications officer may be able to provide you with an Arts Council quote for your news release.
- Some MPs write a column for their local newspaper and may be prepared to feature your organisation and a story about arts funding.
- Working with other arts organisations could strengthen your message and make the story more newsworthy.
- Letters from audience members, friends and volunteers can keep your story in the news and show newspaper editors where readers' interests lie.
- A good photo or filming opportunity helps to get coverage for your story. This might be an opportunity to invite your local MP along.

Social networking

- Consider how to use your social networking channels as an active part of making the case for the arts. These can be powerful tools and can help you to engage in a dialogue and generate an immediate response from your followers.
- Are you following the people you identified as influential on twitter? tweetminster.co.uk can tell you which MPs are active on twitter. Encourage them to follow your organisation.
- Think about how you can use your organisation's Facebook and twitter channels to bring to life key messages about why the arts matter. Give examples of how your organisation or work contributes to the economy or society. Use audience responses to demonstrate the public value of your work.
- Identify 'digital natives' amongst your staff, board, artists, volunteers etc and encourage them to think about how they might be able to make use of key messages.
- Use the twitter hashtags #whytheartsmatter and #artsfunding
- Contribute to the debate at <http://artsfunding.ning.com/>

Enewsletters

Consider how you can use your enewsletters or emarketing to make the case for the arts. For example, could you include news stories or features that incorporate

key messages and illustrate what public funding of your organisation helps you achieve?

Make sure that your local MP, key local authority members (eg local councillor(s), Council leader, Cultural Portfolio Holder, Director of Culture) and other influencers you've identified are all on your newsletter mailing lists.

7. Grant award logos

Credit your public funding by using grant logos on your website and all your publicity materials. This will help people understand that the work of your organisation benefits from public money. If you receive funding from the Arts Council, see www.artscouncil.org.uk/grantawardlogo for guidelines on how to acknowledge your funding.

8. Charity lobbying guidelines

The Charity Commission provide some useful information which you can read [here](#)

9. Regional communications contacts

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