

Advocacy for Arts Organizations:

A Toolkit for
Engaging in the
2019 Federal
Election



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Ontario Association of Art Galleries

OAAG is a registered charitable organization. Established in 1968, OAAG was incorporated in Ontario by letters patent on October 9, 1970. The Charitable Objects from the Letters Patent are:

- To encourage co-operation between member galleries and museums
- To encourage co-operation with the Ontario Arts Council and similar agencies
- To assist in the development of visual art centres in the province of Ontario
- To promote high standards of excellence and uniform methods in the care and presentation of art
- To serve as an advisory body in matters of professional interest in the province of Ontario

Our Vision of the Future

The Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) will be an essential and sustainable art service organization serving public art galleries.

OAAG will be recognized as a leader in Canada’s cultural sector, whose voice is respected and trusted by stakeholders. OAAG will be enterprising in its delivery of services that members value. It will enable member connections through a state of the art digital platform. Members will be in ongoing contact with each other, to share resources and to develop the capacity of each individual and organization. OAAG and its partners will provide relevant, groundbreaking professional development courses to members.

Our long term vision is when our members and the entire public art gallery sector are thriving, art galleries will be contributing to the well-being of their communities through innovation and inspirations to move beyond the status quo. The art gallery as a site of learning will be at the centre of civic conversations, fostering curiosity and understanding. Galleries of all sizes occupy beautiful, functional facilities (physical and virtual) that inspire and display new creative forms. Galleries are sustainable because they are supported by members of the community and all levels of government.

Our Mission

Through advocacy, professional development, and network-building, OAAG advances and empowers Ontario public art galleries.

The Value of the Arts

OAAG is an arts service organization that is proud to represent over 270 members across the province, and to support Ontario public art galleries. As OAAG approaches its semicentennial, we reflect on the progress made over the last 50 years and remain mindful of the work that remains to be done.

Ontario’s galleries and the public arts sector are vital to the cultural fabric and vibrancy of the province. They highlight our rich diversity, improve quality of life, and strengthen our communities. Healthy government investment and support of the arts is necessary to accomplish this work. It is for this reason that OAAG continues to advocate on behalf of the arts sector.

OAAG believes that, together, we can work towards our common goals: supporting the growth of dynamic and diverse communities, promoting cultural engagement and inclusion, and fueling the creative economy. We hope that you share this vision, and help us achieve it.

Introduction

The OAAG Election Advocacy Toolkit is intended to assist individuals and organizations who wish to publicly support the arts during Canada's 2019 federal election. It will provide you with the necessary information, guidance, and strategies to effectively advocate for issues that are important to your organization, and help bring about the changes that you would like to see in your community.

Did you know? 9 out of 10 Canadians agree that the government should support arts and culture.¹

Toolkit Overview

With the federal election approaching, this year offers exciting possibilities to make a difference and bring about lasting positive changes in the arts and culture sector.

The Canadian federal election is scheduled to take place on **October 21, 2019**.

Election Basics

Canada Federal Election

Key dates: The Canadian federal election is scheduled for **October 21, 2019**.

Federal campaigns operate at two levels: **local and national**.

- At the **national level**, attention is focused on the leaders of the main federal political parties who campaign as candidates for the office of Prime Minister, which they win if they can get more members elected to the House of Commons than any of their rivals.
- At the **local level**, the individuals running for seats in the House will campaign exclusively in their own electoral districts, also known as ridings. Much of what they promise and promote will be closely tied to their leader's national campaign, since it's only by electing enough local members of parliament, or "MPs," that voters are able to install that party leader as PM, and thus have his promises fulfilled. There is a total of **338 ridings** represented by MPs in the House of Commons
- **After a general election**, by convention, the leader of the party with the largest number of elected representatives will form the Government. The Governor General will ask the leader of that party to be the Prime Minister. The Governor General will ask the leader of that party to be the Prime Minister. The Governor General will ask the leader of that party to be the Prime Minister.

Read more about the Canadian federal election process on [*The Canada Guide, Elections*](#)

Get Ready to Vote

Are you ready to vote in this year's general election? Your vote counts! Ensure that you, and those around you, are ready for the polling booth by following Elections Canada's 'Voter's checklist':

- Make sure you're registered at your current address
- Watch for your voter information card in the mail

Make a plan to vote

- At your assigned polling station on election day
- At your assigned polling station on advance polling days
- At any Elections Canada office across Canada (deadlines apply)

By mail: visit elections.ca to find out more (deadlines apply)

- Find out who the candidates are in your riding
- Bring ID when you go to vote

You can **check if you are registered, register to vote, as well as confirm or update** your personal information on the [*Elections Canada Website*](#).

You can find your electoral district, list of candidates, locations of advance and election day polling places, the address of your local Elections Canada office and a map of your electoral district here: [*Elections Canada Voter Information Service*](#)

The [*Elections Canada*](#) website also offers information such as the many ways to vote, voting accessibility, responses to frequently asked questions, and more.

Arts Advocacy — Get Informed!

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the deliberate strategic effort of an individual or organization to bring about social and policy change through public support for, or recommendation of, a particular cause or action. Advocacy can take place at all levels of government, and includes activities such as organizing, campaigning, and lobbying.

An advocate, therefore, is defined as “a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy” or “a person who puts a case on someone else’s behalf.”²

Registered Charities and Political Activities

It’s important to note that in Canada, registered charities can participate in political activities as long as they are non-partisan. Charities must adhere to the Canada Revenue Agency’s legal guidelines regarding political activity outlined in [The Canada Revenue Agency Policy Statement \(CPS-022\)](#). These restrictions do not apply to non-profits that are not registered charities.

The CRA offers a website to help organizations understand and comply with the rules guiding political activities. It includes a summary of the guidelines that charitable organizations must follow when engaging with campaigns and candidates.

You can access it here: [CRA Resources for Charities About Political Activities](#).

Making a Case for the Arts

Tips for Campaigning in the Interest of the Arts Sector

- Conduct credible research and have a thorough understanding of the issues.
- Stay informed about the candidates’ positions and platforms. You can often keep up to date on any developments by following them on social media.
- Understand how your position relates to the candidates’ concerns and priorities.
- Track changes in policy and legislation, as well as new proposals, committees, appointments, and related studies.
- Attend debates, budget consultations, and other public events.
- Establish points of convergence between public needs, organizational priorities, and the concerns of decision makers.
- Never assume. Members of the general public may not have the information needed to understand all of the issues. Likewise, candidates may not be fully aware of the concerns and challenges of galleries and cultural institutions.
- Furthermore, don’t assume that the information and statistics that you find are correct or unbiased. Always double-check facts and evaluate your sources. Sharing false information can make your organization lose credibility.

The Do’s and Don’ts of Advocacy

While advocacy can take many forms, there are some do’s and don’ts that can guide you to success.

Do:

- Get informed! Having a deep understanding of the issues, current policy, and the political positions of candidates is key to successful advocacy efforts.
- Define your objectives, intended outcomes, and goals.
- Have a plan — having concrete goals and a strategy to achieve them is central to sustained advocacy work.
- Be proactive, not reactive — preparation will allow you to take the lead on issues.
- Be adaptable — respond to changing realities and new information by adjusting your strategy.
- Keep your message consistent — ensure all members of your organization are aware of your campaign strategy.
- Partner with others — support and share resources with those around you, and allied organizations.
- Ensure that your advocacy is inclusive and accessible.
- Ask questions and listen to community members.
- Listen to the suggestions and concerns of others, and take them into account.
- Engage with those who may disagree with you.
- Remain non-partisan — aim to cultivate a working relationship with all political parties.
- Always be courteous and respectful.
- Thank those involved and acknowledge any past support.
- Share your success stories and celebrate victories.
- Be authentic and passionate.
- Make your advocacy sustainable.

Don’t:

- Vilify opponents and those that don’t share your opinion.
- Be partisan — not only is this less effective, it is also not permitted for charitable organizations.
- Ignore differing views — understanding and being able to speak with those who may not share your position is important.
- Approach only those who already share your viewpoint. Instead, find new audiences and allies.
- Refuse to make any compromises — sustainable change is often gradual change.
- Focus on the negative — achieving meaningful change can take a long time, so celebrate the small victories along the way!

Important Tip:

Tailor your message to your target audience and the media that you will use. Acting on several fronts allows you to apply more pressure on decision makers, who will then be more likely to consider your recommendations. Utilize compelling figures and statistics. Be sure to incorporate personal impact statements and illustrative examples to humanize the issues.

Individual, Social, and Economic Impacts

Gathering accurate, relevant, and up-to-date information is essential for making a strong case for the arts. This knowledge will enable you to speak confidently about your position, which is key to successful advocacy efforts. In this toolkit, we have included useful figures, statistics, and talking points that can help inform your campaign.

Arts and Culture Participation

- According to a 2016 survey, 87% of Canadians attended a live performance or arts event in the previous year.³
- Art gallery attendance has seen a steady increase, with 35.8% of the Ontario population visiting in 2010, up from 18.9% in 1992.⁴
- More than half (53%) of Canadians have personally participated in creative pursuits such as visual art, singing, dancing, or creative writing, within the previous year.⁵
- 95% of Ontarians surveyed stated that they would like to participate in more arts-related activities.⁶

Individual Impacts of the Arts

- In 2015, 84% of Canadians engaged in at least one traditional arts activity such as visiting an art gallery or museum.⁷
- 95% of Ontarians believe that arts activities help “enrich the quality of our lives.”⁸
- Art gallery attendance has a significant positive impact on several indicators of well-being, such as physical and mental health, satisfaction with life, volunteering, and participation in altruistic behaviour.⁹
- For example, even controlling for demographic factors, art gallery visitors are 35% more likely to report very good or excellent health, and are 89% more likely to volunteer than non-visitors.¹⁰
- The positive impacts of participating in cultural activities are even greater for people who are part of marginalized groups, such as individuals with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged, and individuals that are members of minority communities.¹¹

The Social Benefits of Arts and Culture

- A majority of Canadians agree that arts and culture provide a variety of social benefits. These benefits include improving communities (62%), bringing people together (62%), increasing creativity (61%), and enhancing individual wellbeing (51%). These rates have increased in recent years.¹²
- Studies show that art enhances children’s intellectual and emotional development, and has the potential to empower disadvantaged youth.¹³
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that cultural participation can help bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities through the fostering of understanding, respect, and meaningful relationships. It can also serve as a way to communicate underrepresented histories.¹⁴

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Did you know? The arts and culture sector fosters a sense of pride, belonging, and wellbeing within communities through the expression of diverse traditions, languages, and identities.¹⁵
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The Economic Impact of the Arts

- In 2014, the estimated direct economic impact of cultural industries in Canada was \$61.7 billion. This impact is greater than of other sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (\$29 billion); accommodation and food services (\$38 billion); and utilities (\$43 billion).¹⁶
- In the 2011 National Household Survey, 136,600 individuals identified artistic practice as their primary occupation. One in every 129 Canadian workers is an artist.¹⁷
- Ontario alone is home to more than 58,000 professional artists.¹⁸
- In 2014, Ontario’s cultural sector contributed 301,933 jobs as well as \$27.7 billion in direct economic impact, or 4.1% of the province’s GDP. This also represents 45% of the total cultural GDP in Canada.¹⁹
- In 2011, each dollar that the Canada Council for the Arts invested through operating grants for Ontario arts organizations leveraged \$17.16 in total revenue.²⁰

Developing an Advocacy Strategy

Having a plan is essential to a successful advocacy campaign. Your advocacy strategy should be tailored in response to the current state of affairs; taking changing public opinion, political realities, and other environmental considerations into account.

An advocacy plan outlines a well-considered course of action that can best accomplish your goals. Establishing a strategy can help your organization be more efficient, minimize risks, leverage strengths, and identify new opportunities. Having a plan and sufficient assets also allows you to react swiftly and decisively.

Creating an advocacy strategy for your organization is not as difficult as it may seem. By following the steps listed in this guide, you will have a clearer idea of what may be appropriate for your organization.

1. Determine your advocacy priorities

- The first step in building an advocacy strategy is to establish your organization’s priorities, and what you hope to accomplish.
- When determining which issues you want to prioritize, consider your capacity, the mandates of your organization, and your unique expertise.

2. Outline your advocacy goals, desired impacts, and objectives

- Having defined objectives will shape your advocacy strategy.
- Taking on fewer, but focused issues can be more persuasive than having a broad set of priorities, and will make tracking progress easier.
- Ensure that your goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely).

3. Take stock and identify gaps

- Audit your organization’s current capabilities, assets, and any past advocacy work. This knowledge will help you determine your strengths and weaknesses, and what work remains to be done to reach your goals.
- Establish your organization’s current footprint and reach.

4. Identify your target audiences

- Determine the audience you wish to reach by considering your desired impacts and goals; this could include “high value” audiences who are most likely to engage with your campaign meaningfully, the general public, new audiences, potential allies, or opponents.
- Research and understand the interests and motivations of your target audience.

5. Choose your message and develop an advocacy platform

- Develop a clear and concise message informed by your target audience and desired outcomes.
- Your message should convey your central idea or issue, provide supporting evidence or examples, and state the desired actions or goals.
- Ensure that your messaging is accurate, relevant, and timely.
- Create a media relations strategy that includes social media (Facebook, Twitter, email campaigns), earned media (op-eds, non-paid articles, television or print media coverage) or paid media. Your media strategy will depend on your organization’s resources, target audiences, and end goals.

6. Identify opportunities, tactics, and activities

- Your tactics should fit your message and aim to engage the audience in active participation. Some activities will be more appealing to a part of your audience while others may engage a different segment.
- Be aware of the limitations, gaps and strengths of your audience, volunteers, and advocates.
- Advocacy activities can include surveys, petitions, letter writing, social media campaigns, rallies, town hall meetings, and in-person meetings.

7. Developing an implementation plan

- Create a guidebook that maps out your messages, goals, timeline, and course of action.”
- Determine who will lead the campaign planning, the roles that need to be filled, what resources are needed, and create a critical path.

8. Monitoring and evaluating progress

- Monitoring your progress throughout your advocacy efforts is vital as it gives you the opportunity to adjust your strategy, and ensures that resources are being used efficiently and effectively.
- Indicators of progress can include activities and outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Observe what strategies or tools have been useful, and which have not, leveraging the tools that have shown previous success.

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Want to learn more? Read the [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit](#), which can be adapted for the arts and culture sector.
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Engaging Political Leaders

What are Some Ways to Engage Candidates?

Candidates want to hear about the issues that are important to their constituents. There are many ways to engage your representatives and candidates, at all levels of government. By building relationships, you gain champions for your cause that can advocate on your behalf, during the election and beyond.

☐ LETTERS AND EMAILS

You can write directly to government officials to voice your organization's primary concerns, as well as how these issues are relevant to the local and broader populations. Templates and sample letters that you can customize are readily available online, and examples are included in the additional resources found at the end of this toolkit.

☐ COMMITTEES AND CONSULTATIONS

Throughout the year, publicized opportunities to speak to committees and participate in consultations may arise. It is important to stay aware of opportunities such as those related to the yearly budget cycle, consultations, and committees tasked to tackle a specific issue or topic.

☐ TOWN HALL MEETINGS AND PUBLIC EVENTS

Attending town hall meetings or other events where candidates or decision-makers will be present offers you the opportunity to speak to representatives in a less formal setting. Although these encounters may be more casual, remain mindful of your role as a representative of your organization, as well as your advocacy strategy.

☐ SOCIAL MEDIA

Many politicians and political parties have a strong online presence via social media. This may include a verified personal profile on Twitter, a page on Facebook, or even an Instagram account. Conduct research about the social media profiles of your representatives and tag or mention them to engage in a relevant and open online conversation.

☐ ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

In-person meetings are one of the best ways to create lasting relationships with candidates and decision makers. Although officials are very busy during election season, they may meet with you if you present a strong case or represent a large constituency.

Steps for Organizing a Meeting

- 1.** To set up a meeting with candidates and other decision-makers, contact their office and identify yourself, your organization, and the purpose of the meeting request.
- 2.** Send a follow-up email to confirm the meeting time and place, agenda items or issues that you wish to discuss, who will be attending the meeting and their roles, as well as background information on your organization.
- 3.** During the meeting, communicate the goals or needs of your organization. Suggest specific measures that can be taken by the candidate to support arts and culture.
- 4.** Identify and actively listen to the decision-maker's position on the issues. This understanding will assist you in deciding how to best move forward, and establish an ongoing relationship.
- 5.** Write a thank you note to the official and their staff, reviewing your main points, outlining how the meeting was useful and any next steps. Follow up, if appropriate.

Important Tip:

It is valuable to understand the responsibilities and limitations of your Federal Members of Parliament (MPs), Members Of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and Members of Municipal Government (Councillors). This understanding will help you tailor your message.

Advice for Engaging your Candidates

- Be respectful in all communications, with not only your candidates but also with their staff, who often act as gatekeepers and mediate your message.
- Provide concrete policy solutions and recommendations that are realistic and within the decision-maker's scope.
- Share personal stories that can help bring the issues to life.
- Ask questions that are relevant to those you represent.
- Always give the candidate or decision maker an opportunity to respond — a dialogue is more productive than a one-way conversation.
- Be prepared for any follow-up questions.
- Take notes during or immediately after the meeting to review and reference for any further steps.
- Be brief and concise — whether talking to a candidate in person or writing a letter, their time is often limited.
- When speaking at committees and consultations, respect the time allotment for your statements. Similarly, if submitting briefs or submissions, stay within the requested page or word limit.
- The goal is not to make one-time contact, but to become a reliable liaison that the candidate can consult or partner with.
- Since you often cannot cover all of the issues in depth, offer to meet for further discussions, or submit additional background material, if possible. Providing information packages allows the decision maker to review them at a later date.

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Remember: The Federal Government is responsible for national issues such as trade regulations and copyright, the Provincial Government is accountable for sectors such as education, health, and welfare, and the Municipal Government is responsible for local responsibilities such as supporting local economic development, libraries, and parks. You can read more about this in the [Government of Canada's Intergovernmental Affairs Primer](#).
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Key Questions for Representatives

During an election, there are many opportunities to pose questions to your candidates and political parties. You can ask questions during one-on-one meetings, town halls, consultations, events, as well as through social media, mail or email.

Keep in mind to:

- Always remain respectful.
- Ask questions that are concise, clear and specific.
- Tailor your questions to the needs of your organization.
- Ask open-ended questions to avoid “yes” or “no” answers.
- Share the responses with your network.

Some Questions to Ask Your Candidates:

What is your vision for arts and culture in our riding/ province?

What specific actions will you/your government take to strengthen the arts and culture sector in our riding/ province?

How will you/your party promote Ontario’s arts sector, galleries, and cultural institutions, locally, nationally, and internationally?

How will you/your party address the facilities challenges of arts institutions?

What is your/your party’s position on funding for the Ontario Arts Council (and other Municipal and Provincial funding agencies)?

What is your/your party’s position on the Status of the Artist?

How will you/your party work with arts and culture community members and organizations?

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Want to learn more? Read the [Nonprofit’s Guide to Planning, Publicizing and Hosting a Candidate Forum from Nonprofit Vote](#).
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How to Stage Town Hall Meetings

Engaging your candidates at community events gives you the opportunity to speak with them in an informal setting, and highlight the work that your organization is doing. Town hall meetings also increase opportunities for public engagement and media coverage.

- Consider format; a town hall meeting can consist of a moderated debate, round table discussion, a Q&A session, or a combination of these.
- Partner with allied organizations that have experience staging similar events to share your skills, pool your resources, and magnify the impact of your message.
- If inviting candidates, be sure to extend the invitation to all nominees. Having only one candidate or a single political party represented can appear partisan.
- Contact candidates and other stakeholders as early as possible and work with the campaign team to confirm the schedule and agenda for the event.
- Utilize several platforms for publicizing the meeting such as posters and flyers, posting to social media and sharing the event through professional networks. Notify local media and send out a media advisory or media kit with key information.
- Designate a host or MC. They should be well-respected, knowledgeable on the issues, non-partisan, and have experience with public speaking.
- Ensure that you have adequate technology for the event: this may include Wi-Fi, a microphone, speakers, a projector, or a laptop.
- Consider the accessibility of the event and ways to improve it. Ensure your venue is physically accessible and barrier-free.
- Post a team member at the door to greet and direct participants as well as to hand out flyers. They can also take contact information such as email addresses of those who wish to receive updates.
- Assign board members or organizational leaders to greet candidates when they arrive, ensure that they are comfortable, introduce them to others, and escort them to their seat, podium, or stage. The liaison should be knowledgeable about the issues.
- After the event, thank everyone who was involved: candidates, staff, and volunteers. Maintain an ongoing relationship with those who you have partnered with to build coalitions.

Engaging the Public and Individuals

Engaging Your Audience

Achieving positive change often requires momentum and critical mass. This level of participation can only be realized through consulting with, and engaging members of your local community. Others will feel more empowered to support your cause if they have a thorough understanding of the issues, and can speak about them confidently.

You can reach current and new audiences through several platforms, including social media, email-blasts, community and town-hall meetings, posters and flyers, as well as street canvassing.

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Remember: Two-way exchanges and sustained interactions encourage meaningful engagement. Encourage feedback and contributions from all sides.
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Tips for a Successful Communication Strategy:

- Ensure that members of your community understand the issues, the political system, how to vote, and the importance of voting.
- Keep your advocacy strategy in mind when planning your outreach efforts.
- Organize community information sessions.
- Provide resources — these can be distributed as handouts or electronically.
- Make outreach efforts as accessible as possible by reducing barriers to participation.
- Depending on your organization’s capacity, this can include hosting sessions in an accessible location, providing childcare services, or assisting with transportation.
- Use accessible language and avoid jargon.
- Live stream or record the session to benefit those who may not be able to attend. This can be done as a Facebook Live stream or recorded as a video that is shared later on your social media channels.
- Make the issues relevant. Don’t just provide facts and numbers, explain why these issues are important in your community, and how individuals will be impacted.
- Be open and responsive to any questions, suggestions, criticism, or comments.
- Invite further participation and provide next steps for those who wish to become more involved.

How Do I Activate Volunteers and Advocates?

In our sector, many organizations struggle to engage volunteers and advocates due to “issue fatigue.” The prevalence of social media, sensationalized news, and increased demands have made it difficult for people to engage in long-term advocacy work. To prevent this, and sustainably activate volunteers and advocates, you can:

- Empower potential volunteers and advocates by explaining the impact of their work.
- Provide enough information and tools for potential volunteers and advocates, so that they can act as leaders. They must be able to speak on the issues in a confident and informed manner.
- Empower “champions” — those in your campaign that are engaged and effective communicators, have personal stories, or whose passion can help ignite others.
- Engage champions in high impact activities.
- Provide coaching and teach skills that are transferable. Not only will this be more meaningful for the volunteers, but they will also be more likely to participate in future campaigns.
- Foster knowledge sharing — each volunteer brings different knowledge and experience, providing opportunities for individuals to learn from one another.
- Keep the work meaningful — utilize the unique skills and talents of your volunteers so they feel they are contributing in a genuine and meaningful way.
- Invite members and advocates to take action through their networks; this includes newsletters, emails, blogs, or by posting on social media.
- Make the experience fun! A great way to do this is to relate it back to the arts or a medium your organization specializes in — create zines, hold material making workshops, print t-shirts, etc.

Creating a Public Awareness Toolbox or Resource Library

Whether you chose to work with volunteers or not, it is beneficial to create your own toolkit or a resource library that can be shared with your network. Some items that you can include in your resource toolbox are:

- Information about your organization, mission, vision, and mandate.
- Shareable resources with your messaging and talking points, such as fact sheets or issue briefs.
- Resources for voting and encouraging others to vote.
- A sample “elevator pitch,” or a quick synopsis, of your message.
- Sample scripts for approaching the public and officials.
- Customizable draft letters outlining your organization’s message.
- Sample thank-you letters for candidates and others.
- Pledge-to-vote cards or stickers that can be distributed.
- Training materials and playbooks.
- Additional readings that may be of interest.
- Contact lists for officials and allied organizations.

Connecting With Others Through Media

Connecting to others through a variety of media can be an important tool in disseminating your message, and reaching a broader audience. Platforms for connecting with others can include traditional media, social media, or a combination of both.

Traditional media can take the form of:

- Newspapers and magazines.
- Letters to the editor and opinion pieces (op-eds).
- Television, radio, and podcast appearances.
- Media events and news conferences.

Tips for Using Media Effectively:

- Consider your target audience and ideal outcome of each campaign.
- Be proactive — generate stories by responding to policy, proposals, budgets, and public events. Share positive news, and highlight the work and successes of other organizations.
- Maintain an updated contact list of local arts and culture related newspapers and media contacts that may be interested in these fields.
- Have boilerplate information prepared that can be used to create articles, provide summaries, or media releases.
- Remain non-partisan. It is important to develop working relationships across the political spectrum in order to respond to the changing political climate.

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[Read the Sustainable Development 2015 Toolkit: *Engaging With the Media* for additional information about writing press releases, approaching journalists, and more.](#)
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Why Use Social Media?

During the elections, it may be more difficult to garner traditional media attention. However, using social media creatively can be just as, if not more, effective in communicating your organization’s message.

Social media also provides you with opportunities to quickly and easily engage with your target audience and partner or affiliate organizations. Politicians are also increasingly active on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, giving you the opportunity to directly engage with influential figures without traditional gatekeepers.

When Using Social Media:

- Remain on topic and focus your message. Target the issues, not the candidates or parties.
- Include eye-catching images or videos to draw more attention to your posts.
- Ensure your live events have an online presence. This can include live-tweeting, newsletter recaps, or hosting a Twitter talk.
- Mention other organizations and users by tagging them.
- Conduct research on the social media profiles of your candidates, partner organizations, and individual members.
- Most importantly, stay consistent and engage with your online community to maintain interest.

Connecting With the Federal

Connect with Federal Party Leaders on **Twitter**:

- [Yves-François Blanchet](#) of **Bloc Québécois**
- [Andrew Scheer](#) of the **Conservative Party of Canada**
- [Elizabeth May](#) of the **Green Party of Canada**
- [Justin Trudeau](#) of the **Liberal Party of Canada**
- [Jagmeet Singh](#) of the **New Democratic Party**
- [Maxime Bernier](#) of the **People's Party of Canada**

Connect with Federal Party Leaders on **Instagram**:

- [Yves-François Blanchet](#) of **Bloc Québécois**
- [Andrew Scheer](#) of the **Conservative Party of Canada**
- [Elizabeth May](#) of the **Green Party of Canada**
- [Justin Trudeau](#) of the **Liberal Party of Canada**
- [Jagmeet Singh](#) of the **New Democratic Party**
- [Maxime Bernier](#) of the **People's Party of Canada**

Approaching ‘Grasstops’

Many organizations in the non-profit and art sector have experience with some form of local “grassroots” efforts, targeting individuals in their community such as artists, youth, and educators. Connecting with “grasstops,” on the other hand, can seem more daunting.

What are “Grasstops”?

Grasstops are individuals who have a high professional or public profile and are well regarded in the community. These could include political representatives such as MPs, MPPs and Ministers, policymakers, or other organization leaders such as art board members, experts and philanthropists. Decision makers depend on these community leaders to inform them about the impact of issues and policies on constituents.

Grasstops have the reach and influence that grassroots organizers may not have. Recruiting “grasstops” as your campaign champions can add influential voices to your cause, rally your members, reach supporters as well as their networks, and access previously unavailable resources.

How Do I Engage “Grasstops”?

- 1.** Identify potential community leaders that can be compelling spokespeople.
- 2.** Think of potential networks and connections. Consider the following: *Does someone in your organization already have a personal or professional relationship with this person? Or, can someone introduce us to them?*
- 3.** Create a contact list and assign liaisons to reach out to the identified individuals. Depending on the person who you wish to contact, the contact person may vary.

4. After establishing support, begin with non-time consuming “asks” and move up the ladder of involvement as you build rapport.

5. Asks can include having a meeting to speak about the issues, signing-off on letters, contacting decision makers, talking to the media, or attending public events such as town halls.

6. Complete as much prep and ancillary work as you can to ensure that participation is not arduous for the community leader.

7. Always thank the person, and aim to maintain an ongoing relationship.

Partnerships and Coalition Building

In advocacy, the adage that there is strength in numbers holds true. Building relationships and partnerships is vital to successful and sustainable advocacy efforts.

Creating partnerships and building coalitions can help your organization leverage resources. It will also add legitimacy and strengthen your cause and message. Coalitions can mobilize a greater number of people, across broader geographic areas. For example, local organizations can be linked to similar provincial and national efforts.

How to Build Successful Partnerships

- Understand the position of other groups, associations, and stakeholders, to identify possible allies. Also consider credibility, organizational culture, as well as strategic and tactical fit.
- Consider less obvious partnerships with organizations such as trade unions.
- Be mindful of risks and additional challenges associated with working with others. These can potentially include disagreements, power struggles, loss of autonomy, and in some cases, competition.
- Build mutual trust through transparency and accountability. Be clear about your motivations and expectations.
- Ensure that your partnership is balanced, with all organizations benefiting, sharing in responsibilities, and being equally committed.
- In larger coalitions, you may benefit from creating a steering committee, joint strategic advocacy plan, guidelines, and a code of conduct.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate successes, and any issues or conflicts that may arise.

For a more in-depth guide on partnerships, see [Building Relationships and Securing Partnerships](#) in the UNICEF Advocacy toolkit.

Appendix I: Further Readings

Canadian Council for the Arts’ Strategic Plan
Shaping a New Future: Strategic Plan 2016-21

The Government of Canada
Creative Canada Policy Framework

Federal Government of Canada: The Status of the Artist
Status of the Artist Act, 1992

Provincial Government of Ontario: Status of Ontario’s Artists
Status of Ontario’s Artists Act, 2007

The Conference Board of Canada Report
Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy

Appendix II: Useful Links and Resources

Election and Advocacy Resources

Election and Advocacy Toolkits

[Canadian Arts Coalition's Federal Election Platform 2019](#)

Ontario Nonprofit Network

[A Guide for Nonprofits to Meaningfully Engage in Elections](#)

BC Alliance for Arts+Culture

[2015 Federal Election Toolkit](#)

UNICEF

[Advocacy Toolkit](#)

Canadian Conference of The Arts

[The ABC's of Advocacy](#)

Provincial Arts Service Organizations of Ontario - Organisation Provinciale de Services aux Arts de l'Ontario (PASO-OPSA)

[Useful Links for Local, National, and International Organizations](#)

Canadian Conference of The Arts

[Advocacy Resources](#)

Nonprofit Vote

[Voter Engagement Resource Library](#)

Ontario Nonprofit Network

[Advocacy 101: Understanding and Engaging Your Government](#)

Government Agencies

Government of Canada

www.canada.ca

Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

www.mtc.gov.on.ca

Department of Canadian Heritage

www.canada.pch.gc.ca

Arts Funding Organizations

Canada Council for the Arts

www.canadacouncil.ca

Ontario Arts Council

www.arts.on.ca

Ontario Trillium Foundation

www.otf.ca

Major Federal Political Parties

Bloc Québécois

www.blocquebecois.org

Conservative Party of Canada

www.conservative.ca

Green Party of Canada

www.greenparty.ca

Liberal Party of Canada

www.2019.liberal.ca

New Democratic Party of Ontario

www.ndp.ca

People's Party of Canada

www.peoplespartyofcanada.ca

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