



Style Guide & Organizational Principles

Arts for LA uses the following basic principles when crafting campaigns or stakeholder communications to support our policy of positive, strategic advocacy. While not a comprehensive list, this guide outlines our general philosophy and organizational style.

Positivity

Arts for LA uses positive language, both in campaigns and in our everyday communications with stakeholders. We believe a positive angle helps decision-makers view us as strategic partners instead of adversaries. We also believe our stakeholders are more likely to take action consistently when approached with a positive suggestion instead of panic, anger or guilt.

Instead of: *Tell the City Council they are destroying the arts!*

We use: *Encourage the City Council to maintain their support for arts and cultural facilities in our community. We encourage you to tell your story: how have cultural facilities benefited you or your family?*

Instead of: *Don't just sit there—take action! It depends on you!*

We use: *You can make a difference!*

Avoid “Storming the Castle”

Advocacy is built on relationships. We encourage advocates to come to decision-makers with solutions instead of approaching with anger or blame. When we encourage stakeholders to attend a meeting, we discourage “storming the castle” by providing attendees with positive, constructive talking points.

Instead of: *Come to City Hall and let the government know what we think of their decision!*

We use: *Join us at City Hall to provide a visible show of support for continued funding for arts and culture. If you are interested in providing public testimony, please click here for suggested talking points.*

Solutions-Based Thinking

In both external campaigns and internal staff relations, we try to develop and offer solutions instead of focusing on problems. We believe in coming to our stakeholders with steps toward a solution instead of communicating a problem.

Instead of: *The School Board is eliminating this position on Monday.*

We use: *Act now! Tell your School Board member the Arts Coordinator plays an essential role in our district.*

Strategic Action

Campaign actions and organizational decisions must be strategic instead of generic or too broad. We take the time to plan our actions and programming, making sure each meeting, program or campaign has specific objectives and a clear path to meeting those objectives. We do not bombard authority figures that have no control over the issue (i.e., sending the Mayor a thousand emails when an issue will be decided by a specific City Council Committee). We often use an online tool called a SMART Chart to plan strategic action.

Instead of: *We're meeting because it's been a month since the last one.*

We use: *We're meeting to discuss the upcoming election and create a plan of action for surveying candidates.*

Instead of: *Send the Mayor a message to protest the new regulations.*

We use: *Ask the Budget & Finance Committee to review the regulations and submit a fiscal impact statement at the October meeting.*

Issues, Not People

Even if a decision-maker is enacting policy that does not support arts & culture, we do not take an antagonistic stance toward them as a person or call them out as anti-arts. We will not be able to count that person as an ally down the road if we burn our bridges. It is about the issue, not about the person.

Instead of: *John Smith and Bob Jones voted to kick artists out of their homes. Send them a letter and tell them what you think of them!*

We use: *The City Council eliminated the provision for affordable artists' housing, which could displace up to 100 artists in the next six months. Please customize and send this letter requesting that the housing be maintained through the next fiscal year while additional support is sought.*

Partners, Not Adversaries

Arts for LA seeks to create lasting and productive partnerships, not adversarial relationships. Our goal is to have a good working relationship with policymakers and decision-makers Countywide. Fundamentally inclusive, Arts for LA recognizes that our subscribers and members are critical to every initiative, and seeks to involve them as partners whenever possible.

Instead of: *Arts for LA is victorious! We won the battle against City Hall.*

We use: *Over 3,000 stakeholders voiced their support to the Mayor, who will maintain his support of cultural facilities in the City of LA.*

Policy, Not Fundraising

Arts for LA serves the greater Los Angeles County region by advocating for policies and practices that support the arts and cultural community. We do not advocate for individuals or single nonprofits, and we do not engage in fundraising for other entities or organizations. Our work is focused on communities and groups of stakeholders. This enables us to remain neutral and serve the greater field.

Instead of: *Help save the East Valley Playhouse!*

We use: *Encourage your local Councilperson to support the \$1 lease policy to maintain cultural facilities in the East Valley.*

Professional Branding

Every communication, from emails to publications to interviews, follows the guidelines outlined above to maintain a professional, positive and collegial tone. Arts for LA uses a set of “boiler plate” templates for published and distributed materials to create an identifiable brand. Usually, communications come from Arts for LA as an organization, rather than from one staff member.

Instead of: *Hey guys—don't forget to show up for the meeting. - Camille*

We use: *Arts for LA is looking forward to seeing you at the planning meeting on July 31st at our downtown offices.*