

The National Endowment for the Arts  
Final Communication Campaign Proposal

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To: National Endowment for the Arts

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Subject: National Endowment for the Arts Communication Campaign Proposal

Because of the recent decision by the current White House Administration, funding for the National Endowment for the Arts has been significantly reduced. Additionally, there is concern that the future funding may be eliminated altogether. This presents a need for immediate strategic planning in order to ensure the survival of this organization's mission, "To strengthen the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation."

The goal for the campaign is to raise awareness around this issue as well as increase funding from the private sector. Ideally, the National Endowment for the Arts can move to be self-sufficient and close the gap which the lack of government funding creates. Because of this desired outcome we have lots of work to do. This campaign allows us to step forward with a clear plan in place to achieve our desired results.

The communication campaign includes identifying the core problem, establishing goals, objectives, strategies, primary and segmented markets, evaluation criteria, conclusions and recommendations. We anticipate this comprehensive approach will deliver a robust and fresh approach to our core audience as well as attract many new supporters to the arts. We appreciate your insights and feedback as we move forward in the next chapter of the National Endowment for the Arts as a significant supportive organization for the arts in America.

Thank your continued commitment,

Thomas Schultheis

## National Endowment for the Arts Communication Campaign Proposal Executive Summary

The National Endowment for the Arts Communication Campaign Proposal is a strategic approach to address the serious decrease in funding. The goal of the campaign is to expand awareness as well as increase significant additional revenue. While the organization will continue to serve the established mission and objectives, there is an urgent need to alter course in order for the NEA to survive.

The primary objective is to increase the support and awareness of the core loyal audience. Starting with this known and trusted key public will provide a foundation on which to build this new campaign. The current art supporters are passionate and understand the urgency of the current circumstances. The time is now to capitalize on the good will we have gained.

We have taken a look at the current goals of the National Foundation for the Arts and are reprioritizing them accordingly.

Goal 1. Increase funding through various sources beyond government support.

Goal 2. Cultivate Public Engagement with, and Access to, Various Forms of Excellent Art across the Nation

Goal 3. Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts

Goal 4. Support Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence

Goal 5. Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence

We have set forth a series of communication strategies to capitalize on the uniqueness and essential aspects of the arts. We will create robust engagement on social media platforms as well as introduce fresh, innovative events to raise awareness and increase funding for the NEA.

We expect growth in revenue as well as an increase in audience attendance to all arts related events.

The newfound focus on fundraising allows the National Endowment for the Arts to step forward in the future with a strong confidence in support of the mission. Through awareness, strategic messages regarding the importance and uniqueness of the arts, and the potent message of independence from government funding offers incredible growth opportunities for this organization.

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## Introduction

Creating a strategic communications plan for the National Endowment for the Arts presents both opportunities and challenges. The organization is an independent federal agency which connects funding from Congress “through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector” (NEA, 2019). However, the arts organization is in a crisis situation where the very institution is under threat (Ables, 2019). While there is private support for the arts, “private funding will not sustain the arts nationally if public funding goes away” (NEA, 2019). Additionally, there are limitations on advocacy and donations as set by Congress, presenting even further obstacles. (NEA, 2019). With the strategic communications plan, there is a possibility for new solutions which would ensure both the survival of the National Endowment for the Arts as well as a chance for the organization to thrive.

## Background

The National Endowment for the Arts was established in 1965 where “funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities” (NEA, 2019). Additionally, “the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America” (NEA, 2019). The arts disciplines, fields, and initiatives include: arts education, dance, design, literature, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, opera, theater, and visual arts (NEA, 2019). The creation of the organization is built on the premise that the arts matter. One reason the arts matter, according to Jennie Terman, a staff member of the National Endowment for the Arts,

Because they help us see the world from different perspectives. They give us empathy and help us understand people, places, periods of history, and issues with which we may otherwise be unfamiliar. They comfort us in grief and energize us in celebration. They are important because they can act as a catalyst for change...they can start a revolution! The arts ignite something in our brains that I can't explain, but I know it's essential for life. (NEA Staff, 2019)

The economic impact of the National Endowment of the Arts includes 804.2 billion contributed to the United States economy (NEA, 2019). Also, 4.8 million Americans “work in the arts and cultural industries” (NEA, 2017). 30 million Americans attend a live arts event supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA, 2017). The NEA’s budget for 2019 was 155 million (Ables, 2019). The arts and culture sector “accounted for 4.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016 as noted by the Bureau of Economic Analysis” (NEA, 2019).

### Situation Analysis

The goal for the National Endowment for the Arts of funding the arts serves as a primary motivation for the organization. However, the “2020 budget released in March, the administration called for the elimination of the NEA as well as the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), citing Kickstarter campaigns as better sources of funding for the arts and asserting the organization does not serve any ‘core responsibilities’ (Ables, 2019). Therefore, the stakes are higher than merely funding, the priority is survival. In the current climate, robust strategies will need to be effectively developed, executed efficiently, and delivered with major impact.

The arts funding organization had a strategic plan which was created prior to the recent announcement calling for the elimination of NEA. Therefore, the previous strategic plan requires an immediate update in order to adjust to the new circumstances. The organization had listed 4 strategic goals for FY 2018-2022:

Goal 1: Support Art that Meets the Highest Standards of Excellence.

Goal 2: Cultivate Public Engagement with, and Access to, Various Forms of Excellent Art across the Nation.

Goal 3: Promote Public Knowledge and Understanding about the Contributions of the Arts.

Goal 4: Enable the NEA Mission through Organizational Excellence.

(NEA, 2019).

The above goals require examination and reprioritization in order to properly adapt to the fresh threat. Supporting art which meets high standards should no longer be priority number one, keeping the endowment alive is now the first goal.

SWOT Analysis Table

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History since 1965</li> <li>• Large GDP</li> <li>• National support</li> <li>• Positive impact of the arts</li> <li>• Provides grants</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot advocate for budget</li> <li>• Dependent on government approval</li> <li>• Indirect reach and impact</li> <li>• Lack of universal support</li> <li>• Perception of support to wealthy programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative funding sources</li> <li>• Arts integration</li> <li>• Community involvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elimination</li> <li>• Reduction in funding</li> <li>• Unsustainable private funding</li> </ul>

(NEA, 2019).

Core Problem/Opportunity Statement

The creation of a new, unique strategic communications plan is essential to the survival of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Goal

The strategic communications plan for the National Endowment for the Arts aims to increase and secure funding to ensure the survival of the organization.

Objective Statements

- Expansion of awareness of the National Endowment for the Arts

- Growth in public support for the National Endowment for the Arts
- Increase in arts participation
- Increase in donors and donations

### Target Market/Key Public

In order for the National Endowment for the Arts to thrive the focus will need to be on efforts of fundraising with earned income from the general public.

### Six Elements

*Objectives accomplished by key publics:* Attendance for arts event intended to increase by 8-10% in the next calendar year through new awareness and support for the arts.

*Demographics and psychographics:* The demographics include adults, parents, young adults, and retirees. The values of arts participants include: being devoted and loyal, listening to other perspectives, being creative, original, trying new things, enjoying the excitement, adventure, and risk-taking (NEA, 2019).

*Relationship with organization or issue:* The general public will need to understand more fully the impact the arts and how experiencing art is beneficial.

*Opinion leaders:* Prominent arts institutions, leading theatres in the United States are among those organizations with influence in the arts community.

*Motivating self-interests:* Motivations to attend the arts include: to socialize, to motivate, to experience, to support. The barriers to attend the arts include: time, cost, and access, as well as a companion to attend with (NEA, 2019).

*Viable communication channel:* Social Media platforms include: Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest. The prominent television station is the Public Broadcast Service (PBS). Additionally, live event programs such as concerts, plays, musicals, art shows, and music festivals would serve as communication opportunities throughout the United States.

(Wilson & Ogden, 2016).

### Messages



“The arts are for everyone.”

In an effort to appeal to the general public, messaging promoting equal access to the arts is a primary initiative. While major donors are crucial, taking the message to the masses offers an opportunity to encourage growth within the general populace. When the general population experiences the arts the potential base revenue increases, and therefore, the pressure eases on donations and government funding.



“The arts are essential.”

The arts are an essential element in life which reflects the human condition. The National Endowment for the Arts is “to provide a means for fostering creativity to give all Americans the ability to create” (McLucas, 2017). The message of urgency and necessity is important to deliver to the target audience. The time is now to take action for the public to support the arts.



“Art makes life better.”

A precedence was established with the first President of the United States advocating for the arts. George Washington is quoted as saying, “to encourage literature and the arts is a duty which every good citizen owes to his country” (McLucas, 2017). Historical evidence provides a

platform from which to continue to build support for the arts as both a worthy cause as well as an initiative which can be traced through the history of the United States.

### Strategic Primary Target Outline

#### *Primary Target Market/Key Public*

The core arts attending audience is the primary target market/key public. Beginning with devoted audience members will provide an opportunity to build from within. Enlisting and inspiring the devoted patrons to spread the message organically and enthusiastically.

#### *Message/Vision*

“The arts are essential” is the specific message which identifies and strikes directly at one of the key debates, that arts are not essential to require government funding. The message/vision provides a platform from which to build upon the belief that the arts are an essential part of the human experience and deserve as much funding as possible.

#### *Core Values*

On a basic level, people attend the arts, “because they make them feel good, not because they feel they are supposed to attend or because culture is ‘good for them’ (The Wallace Foundation [TWF], 2008). Additionally, “beyond age and race, consumers have increasingly diverse cultural tastes” (TWF, 2008). Also, there are the following findings:

- ✓ Being devoted and loyal is a value for 83% of arts participants
- ✓ Listening to other perspectives is 76%

✓ Being creative, original 60%

✓ Trying new things 47%

(NEA, 2019).

### *SWOT*

- Strengths include: a loyal market, passionate word-of mouth, and well-connected patrons.
- Weaknesses include: engagement exhaustion, audience already stretched too thin, appealing to all diverse audiences.
- Opportunities include: fresh new engagement, tapping into passionate base, and new artistic endeavors.
- Threats include: restrictions on marketing, crises which lower the priorities of patrons, and apathy and malaise.

### *Objectives/Strategies*

Increase awareness, increase engagement with core audiences, spread the key message, and increase funding.

### *Measurements*

The increase in funding revenue will be measurable. Engagement with core audience will be measurable through social media platforms. Additionally, increase overall attendance to arts events.

There is a perception the arts are superfluous and unnecessary and therefore do not deserve government funding. By appealing to 83% of the core audience's loyalty and devotion

value there is an opportunity to strengthen the message “the arts are essential” through their stewardship. The power of the message will also be through “trying new things”, which is a core value for 47% of the demographic (National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 2019).

Additionally, the messaging will be creative and original, appealing to the value of 60% of the core group (NEA, 2019). As diversity continues to be increasing “in the audience base”, “segmentation is a strategy for addressing this diversity” (TWF, 2008). By using segmentation there is an opportunity to craft the best message to deliver to the specific audience at the appropriate time.

### Channels

The primary channels to deliver the campaign message include: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and the National Endowment for the Arts website. The strategy for the primary and alternative channels derives from the concept that “digital is where the online world of information and the physical world of people meet” (Visser & Richardson, 2013). Art is a social medium which should be supported by both online activities and real life social events. In this era of the internet perceived connectivity, real life social interactions continue to be beneficial (Qualicare Family Homecare, 2019).

Social Media promotion now demands content across multiple platforms. Therefore, the primary channel is a selection of the current crop of social media platforms including: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. The four selected platforms are listed in the top 6 social media event marketing networks (Huggins, 2018). For example, “paid ads through Facebook have also generally been more effective” for promoting events (Davies, 2015). Additionally, “Instagram works especially well when paired with Facebook, as pictures shared to Facebook from Instagram receive 23% more engagement than images published via Facebook itself” (Huggins,

2018). For every strategic marketing campaign, social media is an essential element to a successful plan.

### Alternative Channels

The alternative channels include: community networking events, opening night presentations and engagement activities, and live art installations centered around “the arts are essential” theming.

### Tactics

1. Community engagement social events promoting message include:
  - a. Arts educator events
  - b. Health professional events
  - c. Live arts events
  - d. Local business events
  - e. Travel Planner events
  - f. Unique arts events
  - g. Young Arts enthusiasts events
2. Create and promote hashtag #theartsareessential for social media.
3. Develop merchandise with “the arts are essential” logo.
4. Postcards listing Top 10 reasons to support the arts to be distributed at all events:
  - a. Arts improve individual well-being
  - b. Arts unify communities
  - c. Arts improve academic performance
  - d. Arts strengthen the economy
  - e. Arts are good for local business
  - f. Arts drive tourism
  - g. Arts are an export industry
  - h. Arts spark creativity and innovation
  - i. Arts improve healthcare
  - j. Arts and healing in the military(Cohen, 2017)
5. The “arts are essential” loyal patron pins program for audience members who share tickets to at least 2 recent live arts events.

Real life social events as part of the alternative channels are closely tied to the online promotion campaign strategy. The importance of social activities include: “maintain and build new relationships, acquire new skills, stimulate the mind, stay connected, improve health & well-being, increase motivation, and retain integrity” (Qualicare Family HomeCare, 2019). The combined strategy of social media and online presence with real life social events allows the message to be delivered strategically and effectively to the variety of audience who support or may come to support the arts.

### Strategic Segmented Market Outline

#### *Segmented Target Market/Key Public*

A growth market within the arts is “experience seekers: a younger culturally diverse group of arts attendees who are looking for an all-round experience” (Davies, 2015). Manchester Camerata, a British chamber orchestra, found that “introducing more social elements to our events, such as pop-up gin bars, quirky venues and inviting the audience to sit on stage with the orchestra, has attracted a much higher proportion of this group” (Davies, 2015). By targeting customer segments there are opportunities to specifically promote to each group. Creating an event for each segment may not be necessary as “determining which common characteristics to choose and understand the effect those choices will have on the group of patrons that end up in your segments” (The Result Group for the Arts, 2017). The alternative channels open up vast possibilities in diversifying and including newer identified audience groups including: mavericks, experientials, remixers, diversity seekers, classical devotees, networked students, blockbusters, critically engaged, faith and family, and finally, serenity seekers” (TWF, 2008). The robust segments allow unlimited possibilities to communicate and interact with fresh new

targeted audiences.

### *Message/Vision*

“The arts make you feel good” message builds upon a discovery in research from The Wallace Foundation where there is “the need to move beyond traditional marketing methods” (TWF, 2008).

### *Core Values*

The experience seekers are “highly active, diverse, social and ambitious, engaging with the arts on a regular basis” (The Audience Agency [TAA], 2019).

### *SWOT*

- Strengths include: open to new experiences, disposable income, and culturally diverse.
  - Weaknesses include: engagement wide but not deep, easily distracted, and commitment.
  - Opportunities include: unique and fresh events, growth of future audience, and diverse programming.
  - Threats include: disinterest, lack of engagement, and competition from other experiences.
- (TAA, 2019).

### *Objectives/Strategies*

The objective of working with this segmented target market would be increased prolonged participation, increased donations, and growth in online interactive presence.

### *Measurements*

The increase in funding revenue will be measurable from this specified segment. Engagement with experience seeker audience will be measureable through social media platforms and attendance at unique events.

### Channels

The experience seekers are “digital natives, they use websites and social media to manage their lives and to help plan and access news and information to make decisions” (TAA, 2019). Twitter is the primary social media platform for this segment as “they share experiences by ‘chatting’ or posting content and a higher proportion use Twitter” (TAA, 2019). Therefore, the primary channels for this segment will include the National Endowment for the Arts and Twitter.

### Alternative Channels

The alternative channel will focus primarily on unique, quirky events and experiences. This segment is:

Seeking new experiences to support and drive their social lives. This group are open to a wide range of mainstream and alternative offers. Mostly digital natives they search out information online and are keen to ‘share’ and follow recommendations. They are well informed, feel that they have a range of choices and are likely to form key influencers amongst their peers. (TAA, 2019).

New experiences with the experience seeker segment will help to encourage creativity, risk-taking, and fresh involvement. The specific targeted events will also have a positive benefit to new approaches with the core audience. Most importantly, engaging with the segment will provide a foundation for the new generation of arts supporters. The experience seeking segment is the future and next generation of arts consumers, therefore, engagement with this segment helps to secure the future of arts participation and funding.

### Tactics

1. “The arts make you feel good” social media promotion includes:
  - a. Twitter hashtag #theartsmakeyoufeelgood
  - b. Snapchat filter
  - c. Instagram stories
2. *The Arts Make You Feel Good* Happy Hour Events
3. Immersive arts experiences including:
  - a. On stage events
  - b. Backstage parties
  - c. In gallery events
  - d. Live music dating experiences
4. Instagram worthy visual events

### Primary and Secondary Messages for Key Public

The arts are an essential element to the human experience. Supporting the arts through participation, support, and funding are crucial to the continued growth and prosperity of all artistic endeavors.

- The arts make you feel good.
- "The arts matter because they offer a unique space for self-affirmation and reflection." – Carlos Arrien
- “The arts matter because they are the record of our civilization and the arrow pointing forward to our future.” – Greg Reiner

- “The arts matter because they allow you to experience different ways of seeing and thinking about life.” – Don Ball
- “Art is, the works of our hands and feet, the thoughts and innovations coming from our mind, and the inspiration coming from our spirit and our soul. It is how we survive.” – Deborah Washington
- “The arts matter because we matter, and our stories matter. We are moving miracles, walking creators engaging in a cosmic dance. The art we express is timeless.” –Mohammed Sheriff (NEA Staff, 2015).

### Evaluation Criteria

*Objective:* Increase revenue and funding. Close the gap between government funding by an increase in private donations and increased revenue from arts events.

*Criteria:* Within 2 years of launch close the 121 million gap. Federal funding has been cut from 150 million to 29 million for 2018.

*Tool:* Crunchbase.com “is the destination for discovering industry trends, investments, and news about hundreds of thousands of public and private companies globally” (Crunchbase, 2019). Using Crunchbase will allow the NEA to find prospects, find investors, find investments, and conduct market research.

*Objective:* Increase engagement. On social media platforms and live events, increased engagement through measurable likes, shares, comments, and followers.

*Criteria:* 25% increase in engagement in 6-12 months.

*Tool:* Hootsuite, the social media management tool, will allow the NEA to measure the success and engagement of the campaign.

*Objective:* Increase audience attendance to mainstay events. This objective is inclusive of museums, theatres, galleries, concerts, and the like.

*Criteria:* Ticket revenue and volume to increase by 15% in the calendar year following the launch of the campaign.

*Tool:* Ticket Sales Tracker by Microsoft Office will be used to track ticket sales from each of the different arts venues. The tool will also track number of tickets sold as well as calculate total sales revenue.

*Objective:* Increase attendance to live events. There are planned social events which capitalize upon market segments through unique, new, and immersive experiences.

*Criteria:* 50% increase in new events as well as 20% increase in expected attendance in the first year after launch.

*Tool:* Cvent Attendee Tracking, a software-as-a-service company, will allow the NEA to track attendance, session duration, and provide real time data per event. This tool will be essential as it will provide insights into the ROI per event.

*Objective:* Productivity for the team will include measurements of revenue per employee, total cost of workforce, and effectiveness ratio (Harper, 2019).

*Criteria:* In the first year expected productivity to increase by 10-15%.

*Tool:* Revenue per employee will be calculated by dividing the revenue by the total number of employees. Total cost of workforce is the “sum of all the compensation, benefits, and other expenses for the team” (Harper, 2019). Effectiveness ratio will be calculated by dividing the gain earned by the total investment.

*Objective:* Client Satisfaction will be an effective measurement of the success of the team during the campaign as it will reflect the efforts through the perceptions and experiences of the attendees/clients.

*Criteria:* Audience satisfaction ratings “above average” and “excellent” for all events 6 months after the campaign launches.

*Tool:* Survey Monkey will allow a post event survey for every event to be distributed to the attending audience.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The strategic communication plan for the National Endowment for the Arts is vast and ambitious. However, the urgent need for funding and time for action is now. The dependence on the government to provide funding must be addressed in a new way. The changing political whims put the organization at too much risk as we move towards the future. A more autonomous approach to funding must be explored and realized in order to continue to support the NEA mission.

Recommendations essential to the success of the campaign primarily address the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts must increase alternative sources for funding. Additionally,

there must be a focus on encouraging new and existing audiences to actively support funding initiatives. By engaging with the loyal core audience and potent new audiences the organization has an opportunity to write the next successful chapter. Instead of viewing the decrease in funding as a sign of the end of the organization, it is actually a moment for the NEA to boldly move into a new frontier. Just as with the arts, this campaign is a chance to rise above and create something memorable, impactful, and extraordinary in the valiant effort of support for the arts.

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