



Metropolitan Group
the power of voice

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies
KNOWLEDGE ★ REPRESENTATION ★ COMMUNITY

Advocacy Narrative and Messaging Training: Part 2

March 31, 2021

Overview

- Research methods
- Key findings
- Message framework at-a-glance and its research backing
- Discussion

Research Methods

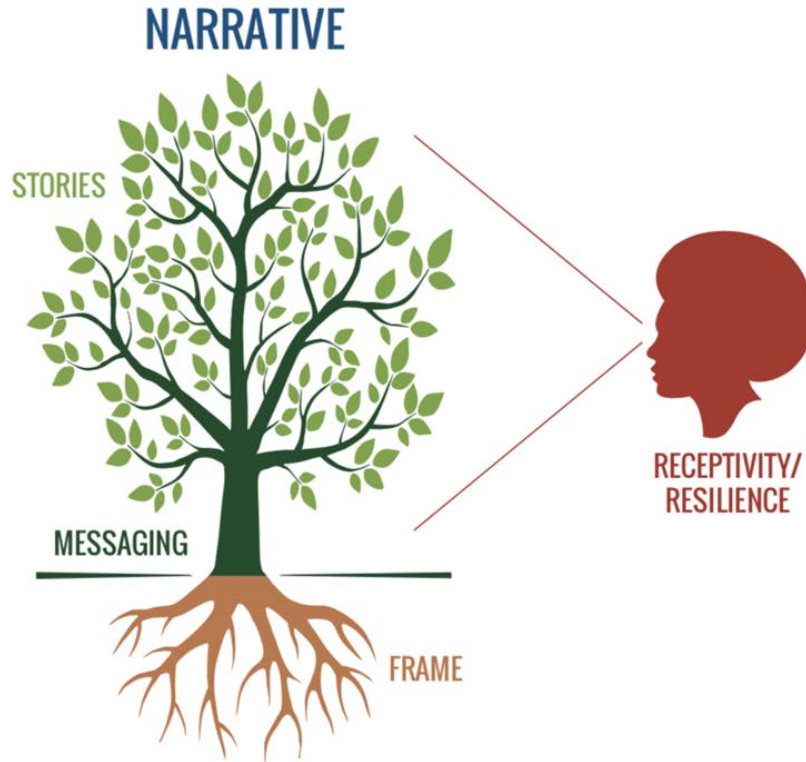
Formative research

- Literature scan and discourse analysis.
- Executive interviews among leaders in sectors that have broadened political will and deepened public funding.

Message development and testing

- Two Advisory Group Meetings.
- 27 Interviews.

What Is Narrative?



NARRATIVE: A way of seeing that shapes what we think, believe and do.

STORIES: What we see, hear and experience over time that aggregates to create or reinforce narrative.

MESSAGING: The articulation of the narrative frame that serves as the strategic foundation for storytelling.

FRAME:

- Core values
- Definition of the problem
- Identification of the solution
- Assignment of blame or responsibility

RECEPTIVITY/RESILIENCE:

- Lived experience
- Environment
- Echo chamber(s)



Findings



Formative Findings

- **Strength**—of families, communities, states and nation—emerged as an overarching theme in conservative narratives, as well as advocating from a position of strength.
- **Connecting to innovation** and global competitiveness were core to advancing public funding in two out of three fields we studied.



Formative Findings

- **Values** that resonate with lawmakers and motivate public funding for arts and creativity are:
 - strength
 - innovation
 - prosperity
 - community



Formative Findings

- Policymaker champions talk about the tangible benefits of arts and creativity.
- **Champions** and public funding supporters span the political spectrum.



Testing Findings

- The message frame we tested resonates with policymakers across the political spectrum and motivates public funding. Testing also validates that triggering this set of values motivates public funding.



Testing Findings

- “Strength” is experienced as new and additive to arts and creativity advocacy—shifting the narrative from “nicety” to “necessity.” Interviewees believed this frame to be true, and often connected it to benefits messages without prompting.



Testing Findings

- The frame “arts and creativity” expands paradigms for who the field serves. For some, it is important to clarify how “creativity” spurs “innovation.” The narrative guide will speak to this.



Testing Findings

- In making the case for public funding, explaining that federal investments are essential to ensure benefits accrue in “every community,” including “rural and small towns” and “not just in the biggest cities,” is compelling across the political spectrum.



Testing Findings

- **Benefits** are core to the case policymakers make. Specifically:
 - Economic success and global competitiveness
 - Health and well-being
 - Communities
 - Education
 - Beauty
- **The priority order and emphasis** of these benefits should be customized for the elected official you are engaging.
- **The level of priority** does not follow neat political lines.

Testing Findings

- Some tried and true messages also tested well when following the framing of “benefits every community”:
 - Public-private partnerships.
 - Leveraging \$9 in private funds for every public dollar invested.



Testing Findings: Additional Consideration

- **COVID-19 is front of mind:** Because of the current context, it will be important for advocates to contextualize framing and calls to action with respect to COVID-19.



Message Framework



Message Framework At-a-Glance Overview

Narrative

Core Message

Messages on the Benefits of Public Funding for Arts and Creativity

Why Public Funding

Call-to-Action Frame


Narrative

Arts and creativity strengthen our nation.

Core Message

Arts and creativity make us stronger—as individuals, families, communities, states and as a country. They are a backbone of innovation, prosperity, and thriving people and places. Public funding for arts and creativity is a high-return investment that benefits every American in every city, town and rural community nationwide.

Core Message



Strength, economic and otherwise—of individuals, families, communities, states and nation—is a core priority for policymakers, especially conservatives.

Arts and creativity make us **stronger**—as individuals, families, communities, states and as a country. They are a backbone of innovation, prosperity, and thriving people and places. Public funding for arts and creativity is a high-return investment that benefits every American in every city, town and rural community nationwide.

Core Message

Linking all arts—not just “the arts” — with “creativity” has tested well across the political spectrum, as has shifting away from “arts and culture.”

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Innovation, prosperity and community—along with strength—emerged as key values in motivating policymaker support for public funding across sectors.

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Framing public funding as a smart, effective, highly leveraged investment is key in lawmakers’ own arguments and performs well in message testing.

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Message Framework At-a-Glance

MESSAGES ON THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC FUNDING FOR ARTS AND CREATIVITY

ECONOMY: **Arts and creativity are an American economic engine.** They provide people with the foundation for creativity, equipping an innovative workforce, generating new ideas in every field, and keeping our nation globally competitive. Arts and creativity strengthen economic health by creating jobs in multiple industries, driving tourism, and providing opportunities for young people.

HEALTH: **Arts and creativity improve Americans' health and well-being.** They are one of the most effective treatments for trauma, depression and anxiety, including among our nation's veterans. Arts and creativity reduce our susceptibility to stress-related diseases. And arts therapies help to forestall Alzheimer's and promote lifelong brain health, while stemming the tide of the opioid crisis.

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MESSAGES ON THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC FUNDING FOR ARTS AND CREATIVITY

COMMUNITIES: **From rural towns to big cities, arts and creativity strengthen the fabric of America's communities.** They celebrate local culture—both cherished traditions and exciting new ideas—telling stories of people and places. Arts and creativity promote connection and cohesion, foster the entrepreneurial spirit communities need to thrive, and create the kinds of communities where young people want to build families.

Message Framework At-a-Glance

MESSAGES ON THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC FUNDING FOR ARTS AND CREATIVITY

EDUCATION: **Arts and creativity strengthen education.** They set young people up for success, close the achievement gap and improve test scores. Arts and creativity unleash human potential, promoting cognitive development and readiness to learn at every age. And they develop an innovative, globally competitive workforce by adding the key ingredient of creativity to STEAM education.

BEAUTY: **Arts and creativity inspire us, and bring grace and beauty into our lives.** They give us opportunities to share our creative gifts, and experience the creativity of others.

Message Framework At-a-Glance

WHY PUBLIC FUNDING

Public funding for arts and creativity is a high-return investment in every town and rural community nationwide, not only in the biggest cities. It improves the lives of all Americans, equips an innovative workforce, and keeps us competitive globally. It is a great example of government done right that fuels public-private partnerships, leverages \$9 in private funds for every public dollar invested, and puts tax dollars and decision-making authority into state and local hands.

CALL-TO-ACTION FRAME

Arts and creativity strengthen our nation. We must increase our public investment in the many benefits they provide to people in [our state/district/community/] and nationwide.

I urge you to support [INSERT SPECIFIC ASK HERE].

Narrative and Message Discussion

Individual Work Time

- Identify public official(s) you seek to influence.
- Which benefits messages will motivate them to take the action you seek, and why? (Pick at least one. If economy is one of them, focus time during this exercise on other benefits instead of economy.)
- What stories could you tell to illustrate this benefit in the context of the communities they serve?