



# Session Toolkit

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Scaling up your advocacy to  
maximize change



OTTAWA ARTS  
COUNCIL | CONSEIL DES  
ARTS D'OTTAWA

# SESSION OVERVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic spurred on many challenges for artists. It also created some new opportunities for artists to voice and lobby for social change during moments of injustice.

The following toolkit summarizes **Fae Johnstone's** video session lending her expertise in scaling up one's advocacy to maximize impact.



## Understanding your audience



## Getting attention



## Caring for yourself



## Be your authentic self



## The world needs more advocates

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## Understanding your audience

When crafting an advocacy agenda, it is important to think about your audience. Who you are trying to reach will fundamentally affect how you approach your advocacy, your key messages, and what kind of language you use. At times we can find ourselves speaking into an echo chamber, so appealing to those who already agree with us, rather than those we are trying to bring on board.

**TIP #1** If your audience is the general public, it is important to simplify your messaging and speak to concepts that most of us hold dear. Ideas like safer streets, human rights and better mental health are approachable and relatable. Using academic language can be isolating or even patronizing to audiences.



## Getting attention

There are so many causes to rally behind, today's society has a myriad of challenges and issues we are striving to solve. While it is not a competition, because after all, human rights causes are intersecting causes; as yourself how can you and your advocacy efforts stand out?

**TIP #2** Hook your advocacy message to a timely event, if you can and it makes sense, you can tie your cause's message to a current event. For example, if the media is talking about rising inflation- you can highlight how the demographic in your group (visual artists, performers, etc.) are impacted by this economic crisis.

**TIP #3** Bring stats and stories into your message. By sharing real-time or real-life examples of what you are advocating for will allow audience members to connect and understand your messaging in an authentic and powerful way. Statistics can do the very same by showing your audience in data and facts the truth of your advocacy story.

**TIP #4** Be provocative. Taking on creative license in your advocacy messaging is a great tool to apply to garner more audience and media attention. Using visual symbols, catch phrases, spectacle elements to capture people's imaginations and attention can be very effective in a protest atmosphere or online.

**TIP #5** Be concise. We are all inundated with images and stories all day. Think about your key messages and be at the ready with those if you are faced with media or audience questions.



## Care for yourself

Make sure you are caring as much for yourself as you do your cause. This work is hard and burnout is all too common in the world of advocacy.

**TIP #6** Allow yourself some check-out time. If you are starting to feel overwhelmed or ostracized by your advocacy work, give yourself a break from social media or a couple of days or weeks to fully disconnect from the work itself.

When we model self-care in our work, we leave space and make it an example for others to do the same.



## Be your authentic self

Authenticity is the key to success. When working in and with the public, especially in advocacy work, there is a temptation to create an exaggerated narrative at times. But if you are continuously grounding your messaging in reality and lived experiences, audiences will gravitate toward this honesty and openness as being trustworthy and relatable.



## The world needs more advocates

Big or small, advocacy is a lot of work and it isn't easy. Reaching policy makers, government bodies- it takes careful consideration to make this work create real change. As creatives, there is so much you can bring to causes you care about.

**TIP #7** You can leverage your creative skills to have an impact on organizations, collectives or groups that share your advocacy efforts, always keeping messaging in mind, leading with authenticity, care for yourselves as you dive into this courageous world of change-making.

### Resource link

**Wisdom2Action:** <https://www.wisdom2action.org/>