

Advocacy Activity Summary

Express Yourself, Inc (EY) and Boston Children's Chorus (BCC) utilized the Hunt Collaborative Advocacy (Hunt) award to support outreach activities around organization specific and collaborative programming, incorporating several strategies and activities identified from prior ArtWorks advocacy-themed coalition workshops. As coalition members, both EY and BCC have routinely integrated advocacy initiatives into their organization long-term goals that are consistent with the Hunt coalition. The Hunt grant provided EY and BCC with an opportunity to elevate their on-going public advocacy with a joint outreach strategy implemented in conjunction with the culminating youth-centered production of EY's *Here and Now!* at Boston's Citi Performing Arts Center Wang Theatre on May 19, 2011 in front of an audience of 2400 supporters, funders, local executive and legislative officials and community and family members. The organizations met to develop strategies for the overall project and the outreach goals. Artistic Directors met to organize this joint collaboration. Youth worked as a collaborative group for 2-4 sessions, and individually with their respective directors, creating a "flash mob" piece that surprised and delighted audience members. The opportunity to increase EY and BCC public visibility through this performance was invaluable.



David Hauser, Executive Director, Boston Children's Chorus; Paula Conrad, EY Co-director; Josiah A Spaulding, Pres and CEO Cit Performing Arts Center Wang Theatre; Anita Blackaby, Executive Director, the House of the Seven Gables

1. Comment on your advocacy, including:

a. Youth, donor, board member, and other supporter involvement; and

EY and BCC worked separately and jointly with organization Board of Directors and Advisory Board members, with current program collaborators and with committed public officials with whom we had existing relationships to engage in outreach to identify other public officials to encourage their attendance at the event and support for youth and arts programming. EY and BCC staff members worked jointly to prepare outreach materials and to coordinate the outreach effort. This joint enterprise served to underscore the benefit of these types of collaborations with regard to youth and the arts. EY and BCC youth were very important aspects of outreach as ambassadors for the beneficial impact of the arts on youth. Each participating youth was given "business cards" containing event information and were encouraged to personalize invitations. Youth were encouraged to invite any public officials that they may have relationships with through school and/or other support services. Because both of the EY and BCC youth constituencies are drawn from many diverse cities and towns, this youth outreach had a larger scale outreach impact. Major donors from both organizations attended the *Here and Now!* pre-performance cocktail party to which public officials were also invited. Every effort was made to recognize those officials in attendance and to optimize networking opportunities with EY and BCC donor, Board members and program supporters.

b. Outcomes (if in progress or completed).

The advocacy strategies contemplated by this grant will incorporate the Hunt's established goals: 1. Increased public funding for youth arts; 2. Increase politicians' greater awareness of our organization's individual programs; and 3. Mobilize a broader constituency about policy issues. The contemplated outreach strategy to significant stakeholders and public officials is designed to demonstrate the importance of art and music as being compelling catalysts for sustaining positive change for youth and critical need to fund such initiatives. Specifically-

- Funding allowed BCC and EY to succinctly frame issues and effectively deliver the message with the development of an organizational comprehensive strategy highlighting both organization's programming success to help make the case for continued and new sources of funding;
- Outreach efforts further solidified support base of legislators aligned to both EY and BCC missions and through these provided additional contacts to target for continued financial and programmatic support for youth and arts programming.
- Both EY and BCC have incorporated outreach to state and local public officials as a critical action step for all planned activities. example of current strategy: successful targeted outreach to key legislative and other public officials for attendance at the MCC and MAP State House events and to organization-specific events (i.e. EY's Endicott College November 10, 2011 Express Yourself Here and Now! exhibition and cocktail party and BCC's Advocacy Event, A Walking Tour of South End Arts Organizations.

2. What does success of your advocacy activity look like to you/your organization?

Success is measured by the feedback that we received from those public officials who endorse the mission of EY and BCC and similar organizations serving youth.

3. What do you imagine will be the broader impact or ripple effect if you achieve your highest possibilities for your advocacy activity?

Repeated attendance at exhibition events is a public endorsement of the efficacy of our programs. Overall, from the perspective of coalition member, to the extent that there is increased awareness and development of a common language to address issues with public officials then there is a broader impact.

4. What surprised you most?

The willingness of officials to be engaged. While we did not get the numbers of legislators at the exhibition, we did get personal feedback and opportunities for further educational briefings. Public officials at the governmental administrative level were willing partners in increasing the awareness to policy makers (legislative and executive branches) of the importance of youth and arts program funding and getting that message directly to them.

Hunt Alternatives Fund

Public Strategy: 2010 Encouraging Collective Advocacy Grant Report

Submitted on behalf of Express Yourself, Inc. and Boston Children's Chorus

December, 2011

Page 3 of 3

5. What advice would you give to a colleague based on your experience?

Think outside of the box in developing alliances to create opportunities to engage policy makers. Take advantage of opportunities to educate and personalize the contact and the information provided to them. Give them reasons to support the objectives. Include tailored visuals that would engage the potential supporter.

6. What advice would you give Hunt Alternatives Fund for implementing future advocacy grants?

Would suggest a synopsis of proposed activities be provided to all other members if appropriate so that connections can potentially be made by coalition members during the planning and implementation phases of the grant. There may be outreach activities or opportunities for sharing of best practices that would enhance the outcomes of the proposed grant.

Thank you for continued support and your efforts in mobilizing the public and public officials as to the importance of public support for arts organizations.

Paula Conrad, Co-Executive Director
Express Yourself, Inc.

David Hauser, Executive Director
Boston Children's Chorus