

MUSIC FOR ALL Advocacy in Action

Application Guide

2026 Application Cycle



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About Advocacy in Action

The Advocacy in Action Awards highlight the benefits of a strong music program and show what your school or community is doing to provide access and opportunity for active music-making. The Awards also allow educators to showcase their own music programs that are sometimes overlooked or not fully understood by members of the public beyond the school community.

Being an Advocacy in Action Award Recipient is an exciting designation for students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members who believe in and support music education in schools. Award recipients are celebrated as leaders by sharing their successful initiatives for others to replicate.

The Advocacy in Action Archive is a collection of best practices that support music education in our schools. The Archive entries provide comprehensive project details about how to implement or replicate award-receiving programs so that others may experience the same successes. We hope that by sharing this free resource, we can inspire others to take action in their own programs and communities.

Application Guidelines

Eligibility

- Any United States scholastic music program (curricular or extracurricular), scholastic music booster organization, or external PK-12 arts organization is eligible to enter.
- All curricular and extracurricular scholastic music programs are eligible to submit entries. This includes band, choir, color guard, orchestra, general music, and any other type of scholastic music program.
- Programs serving any age level (elementary, middle, or high school) are eligible.
- Public, private, parochial, and charter schools are eligible.
- Any individual may submit an application (teacher, student, parent, etc.). All applications will require the signature of the program educator/instructor.
- Eligible entries must have been produced or implemented during the 2024-25 academic school year(s).
- Each entry must be completed in its entirety in order to be eligible for review.
- Each entry must be submitted by 11:59pm ET on Monday, August 18, 2025 in order to be eligible for review.

Fee

There is no entry fee. Our intent is to ensure this program is accessible to anyone who may be interested in applying.

Entries

- Each advocacy initiative will be considered one entry. One program can submit multiple entries in multiple categories; however, each entry requires a separate application.
- Supporting materials may be included with each entry. Applicants may submit up to 10 photos, documents, videos, and/or materials supporting their entry. Video materials must follow our video submission guidelines.
- Previous Advocacy in Action Award Recipient initiatives are not eligible to apply again with the same initiative. For example, the North H.S. Band cannot receive an Advocacy in Action Award for their Car Wash Fundraiser more than once.
- Programs MAY submit two different initiatives in the same category. For example, the North H.S. Band can fill out an application for their Car Wash Fundraiser and a second application for their 5k Fun Run Fundraiser and submit them both in the Innovative Fundraising category.
- Questions about which category your entry best fits? Email us at education@musicforall.org.

Selection Process

Entries will be reviewed by members of Music for All's Advocacy in Action Advisory Committee. There is no set number of how many awards may be granted in each category or in total.

Award Recipients

- All award recipients will be notified by email in early December 2025. Notification will be sent to the contact listed on the entry form.
- Honorees may be asked to submit additional information or be interviewed for Advocacy in Action promotional materials.
- 2026 Advocacy in Action award recipients will be publicly announced and showcased beginning in January 2026.
- Award recipients will be promoted as featured advocacy content throughout the 2026 Music for All National Festival, BOA Summer Camp, and Bands of America Championships.
- Award recipients will also be showcased at state and national music education events where Music for All has a presence.

Release & Usage

By submitting your entry to the Advocacy in Action Awards, you grant Music for All the right to use any submitted materials—including, but not limited to, photos and video—for editorial, analytical, promotional, or any other purposes without additional compensation or permission. In addition, you acknowledge that your entry and any corresponding materials are not returnable. The complete submission of an entry indicates acknowledgment and agreement to these terms.

Video Submission Guidelines

Video submissions and supporting video materials may be submitted in one of two ways. You may upload a link to a video hosted on an online platform such as YouTube or Vimeo, or videos may also be submitted as digital attachments. Video submissions should be limited to a 20-minute maximum length.

Things to Keep in Mind

Our outstanding collection of effective practices and initiatives is curated directly from information provided by award recipients during the application process. If selected as an award recipient, Music for All may publicly share your responses as written. Please consider this and the additional information below while working on and prior to submitting your application.

What AND How

Remember that only a portion of your Advocacy in Action application is focus on WHAT your advocacy initiative is. Most of the application is to explain HOW your initiative came to be. Think of it as a recipe; for others to replicate it, you need to provide them with an ingredient list as well as clear and detailed instructions on how to combine those ingredients to get the final product.

Context

When providing numbers or statistics, we encourage you to provide this information with context as needed and when possible.

Examples:

Without context: 45 students benefited from our advocacy initiative.

With context: 45 of the 60 students in the program, or 75%, benefited from our advocacy initiative.

Without context: We raised \$20,000 through our advocacy initiative.

With context: Our annual program budget is \$50,000. We raised \$20,000, or 40% of our annual program budget, through our advocacy initiative.

Details

When answering questions, please try to include as much detail as possible. Try to write the information as if you were giving someone else instructions on how to do it - think of your recipe!

Also, be sure to answer all parts of the question. Several application questions ask for both a “what” and a “how.”

Example:

What strategies did you use for marketing and promoting your advocacy initiative, and how did this positively impact your efforts?

Without detail: Parents and community members were invited to our event. We distributed more flyers this year, and event attendance increased greatly.

With detail: Our strategy was to have multiple touch points and reminders to our intended audience leading up to the event. When marketing to parents, students were sent home with a flyer to share with their families, information was included in the monthly school newsletter in the two months leading up to the event, and a final reminder email went out early the week of the event.

When marketing to community members, we promoted the event on our program and school social media accounts, posted flyers in restaurants and shops around town, and placed a small ad in the local newspaper.

It is clear that the multiple touch points to parents/families and the community had a positive impact as event attendance was approximately 450, which was an increase from approximately 325 attendees the year prior.

Avoid “I” Statements

Applications should avoid being written in first-person language whenever possible. This award is not intended to solely highlight the great work done by a teacher, booster, or administrator. The focus should be on the program as a whole. Avoid using specific names when referring to roles/job and use titles such as director/booster president/fundraising chairperson/student leader instead.

Example:

With “I” statements: When I took over this program, I wanted to focus more of our efforts on fundraising. I spent a lot of time working with Joe Smith, who is in charge of our fundraising committee, to brainstorm ways to revamp our fundraising efforts.

Without “I” statements: When program leaders decided they wanted to put more efforts behind fundraising, the first step was brainstorming among program directors and the head of the fundraising committee.

Supporting Materials

One of the most important things to consider during the submission process is the provision of supporting materials. Quality supporting materials are the best tool to help others successfully replicate your initiative in their own programs. While photos of your initiative is a greatly encouraged element to add to your application, don't forget the other materials that exist that helped in the planning and promoting of your initiative.

Examples:

- Stage rundowns
- Event timelines and schedules
- Event maps
- Volunteer sign up sheets
- Screenshots of social media posts
- Event flyers
- Email templates to parents or administrators
- Any materials used by students
- Event signage

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a limit to the number of entries I can submit?

No. You may submit as many entries to as many categories as you wish, but keep in mind that multiple entries each require a separate application.

Are we able to submit more than one application in a singular category?

Yes! If you have two great fundraising initiatives, share them both!

My entry might fit into more than one category. Can I submit it in both?

Please refrain from submitting the same entry into two different categories. Some advocacy initiatives can easily fall into two categories. You are welcome to reach out to Music for All for a recommendation, or pick the one you think your initiative best aligns with. If, during the evaluation process, evaluators feel your initiative best fits into another category, we will contact you!

I'm not the director or instructor of my school music program. Can I submit an entry for something our program does?

Yes! Anyone is eligible to submit an entry for the Advocacy in Action Awards (boosters, administrators, students, etc). We do ask, however, that anyone nominating their local music program verify their submission with the signature of their program's director/instructor.

Who evaluates the Advocacy in Action Awards applications?

Applications are reviewed by members of the Advocacy in Action Advisory Committee, which is made up of educators, administrators, community leaders, Music for All partners, and business leaders.

How are the Advocacy in Action Awards entries evaluated?

Each category will be assigned a panel of 3-5 evaluators.

When reviewing applications, evaluators consider whether another program could benefit from or be inspired by the initiative, if it relates to the spirit of other initiatives in the archive, if it deserving of national recognition, and the overall quality of the application.

Each and every music program that enters is unique; therefore, evaluation is based on the subjective opinion of the evaluators based on their experience and expertise in the profession and their knowledge of that category area.

For categories that require a link to be submitted, how long should the links remain active?

Even though you may be submitting your entries in spring or summer, entries will not be evaluated until the fall. Even after the judging takes place, there is work that must occur in order to prepare the materials for the Awards Presentation and online publishing. We ask that all links remain active through January of the next calendar year.

If you have further questions about the Advocacy in Action Awards, please contact Emily Timmons at emily.t@musicforall.org or (317)-218-4922.