

Advocacy Best Practices

Advocacy is an ongoing practice that requires a cohesive, collective and consistent approach.

Building strong relationships with key policymakers (i.e. elected and appointed officials) has proven to be an effective practice in ensuring that issues are heard and addressed.

Public policy affects everyone. Therefore, it is crucial to inform elected and appointed officials about the key issues that affect not only the immediate geographical community, but also how those issues affect the health and vitality of our region at large.



Ground Rules:

- Build relationships before you ask for something. Think about what you can offer: Do you have meeting space? A local network of civically engaged citizens?
- Be respectful and professional at all times. You never know when you might have the opportunity to work together.
- When you do have a request, have a clear message that is limited to one page or a two-minute presentation.
- Define your idea, including who it will benefit, how much it will cost, and how it will happen.
- Do your homework: Understand both sides of the argument and be prepared to address both sides. Be aware of other non-arts issues in your district.
- If meeting in person, take no more than three people with you. Don't "storm the castle."
- Stay in touch. Keep elected officials and their staff advised about your progress and ongoing activities.
- Always send a thank-you note.

Five Places to Start

Given the high demands of our field, it's difficult to find the time to become an active arts advocate. Start here:

1. Sign up to receive Arts for LA and Americans for the Arts action alerts (ArtsforLA.org, AmericansfortheArts.org).
2. When prompted, take action.
3. Share information about action alerts via social networking sites, email and word-of-mouth.
4. Register with Dunn and Bradstreet (www.DnB.com) to make sure your arts & culture nonprofit or business is counted within your local economy & cultural ecology.
5. Consider becoming an organizational or individual member of Arts for LA to invest directly in local advocacy.

Remember :

Individuals make powerful advocates.

Advocacy is a continuous process.

Think of advocacy as long-term development.

Advocacy Vs. Lobbying

Advocacy is voicing support for an issue or cause, such as telling the public about the benefits of arts education. There are no limits to pure advocacy by nonprofits.

Lobbying (sometimes called "direct advocacy") refers to advocacy efforts intended to influence legislation, such as writing to City Council to oppose a bill that affects arts education. Nonprofits may engage in a limited amount of lobbying. Read the box below or visit the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, CLPI.org, for information.

Engaging in significant advocacy/lobbying activities? File a 501(h) provision with your taxes.

If your organization is spending more than 10% of its expenditures on direct advocacy/lobbying, you should file a 501(h) provision form. The current 501(h) provision allows nonprofit arts organizations to allocate expenditures of up to 20% of the first \$500,000 of their annual budget to direct advocacy and lobbying. If the organization exceeds \$500,000 in annual income, only 15% of the *next* \$500,000 can go to advocacy expenditures, and so on up to \$1 million. To engage the 501(h) provision an organization must complete the IRS Form 5768.

MAKING THE CASE

Economic Impact

Los Angeles County's creative industries generate nearly \$121 billion in sales/receipts, comprise about 1 million direct and indirect jobs (1 in 6 total) and are recognized as one of the largest business sectors in the region (2009 Otis Report on the Creative Economy).

Americans for the Arts' *Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts* reports offer a research-based approach to understanding the scope and importance of the arts within the nation's economy. The creative industries are a part of one of the fastest growing segments of the nation's economy. Nationally, the creative industries make up 4.3% of all businesses and 2.2% of all employees. In Los Angeles County alone, there are 36,075 arts-related businesses that employ 239,005 people.

Arts and Civic Engagement

According to the National Endowment report *The Arts and Civic Engagement*, Americans who participate in the arts are nearly twice as physically active as non-participants and attend sporting events at twice the rate of non-arts participants. Nearly half of all arts participants engage in community volunteer work, as opposed to the 20% volunteer rate for those who do not regularly participate in the arts.

Arts and Students

Young people who participate in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools, four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair, three times more likely to win an award for school attendance, participate in youth groups nearly four times as frequently, read for pleasure nearly twice as often, and perform community service more than four times as often. (Study by Stanford University and Carnegie Foundation For the Advancement of Teaching, 1998)

Things To Know

LA is home to over one hundred and fifty thousand independent artists, three thousand arts and cultural organizations, world-class art institutions and the nation's largest collection of small theaters.

The county of Los Angeles includes 88 cities, 80 school districts, 4,061 square miles and over 10 million residents-- the largest population of any county in the nation.

In 2006 the LA County Board of Supervisors increased its organizational grant program budget 100% from \$2,259,000 to \$4,518,000, making the LA County Arts Commission the largest public funder of the arts in LA County.

At just 3 cents per person, California now ranks 52nd in the nation in per-capita arts funding, counting Puerto Rico and Guam.

TALKING TO POLICYMAKERS

- Share ownership of good ideas and avoid speaking or acting out of self-interest.
- Get a policy in place before controversy arises. Our goal is for every elected or appointed official in Los Angeles County to have an arts/arts education policy.
- Speak the language: use data and concrete details whenever possible.
- It is our responsibility to keep decision-makers informed. Providing candidates or recently elected/appointed officials with information about local arts issues is a good start to an informed relationship.
- Reach out to field deputies/staff. They are often very accessible and happy to speak with advocates. Many elected officials have a specific Arts Deputy; find them by calling the official's main office.
- Be a squeaky wheel, not a gadfly (maintain credibility). Elected officials quickly learn to tune out those who only show up to yell at them.
- Stay focused on the specific issue. "We want the 2% allocation restored to this program" is more effective than "Arts are important."
- Small conversations can be a vehicle for sharing ideas that can grow.

Advocacy & Educating Decision Makers was created by Andrew Campbell in 2007. It was revised and designed by Arts for LA in 2007 and 2011.

Arts for LA is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit arts advocacy organization fostering a healthy environment in which arts and culture in the region may thrive and be accessible to all in Los Angeles.

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