



Arts for Colorado's Arts Advocacy Day

Advocacy: An Introduction

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is pleading a case, presenting information, and persuading others to support your cause.

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is an activity involving communication with a legislator or other public official to gain their support of your position on specific legislation. Lobbying also includes appeals to an organization's members urging them to contact their legislators, as well as communications to influence legislation through an attempt to affect public opinion.

Why Advocate for the Arts?

Advocacy for the arts creates a social climate in which the arts play a greater role in the daily lives of Colorado citizens.

Why is Advocacy Important?

Advocacy is important because advocates influence change. Without assertive advocacy, Colorado's funding for the arts would remain near the bottom for all 50 states. Lobbying is an essential part of citizenship and allows individuals to have a direct impact on the fate of the arts in our state. Having a statewide advocacy program that demonstrates grassroots support for state-funded arts programs sends a powerful message to state policymakers that the arts and culture are valued by Colorado communities. A cause supported by a strong citizen voice will also encourage business, foundation, civic, and community leaders to provide private funding sources in support of the arts.

Focus Points for Advocacy

At the state level, arts advocates should focus on the Governor of Colorado and members of the Colorado House and Senate. To succeed, advocates should contact their:

- State representative
- Senator
- U.S. senator
- U.S. congressional representative

Who are the advocates?

You are. Every person who values arts and culture is a potential advocate for the state of Colorado. Individuals involved in the arts make especially good advocates due to their knowledge and enthusiasm about the subject.



Who are Advocacy Activists?

Advocacy activists educate themselves on the issue, understand both sides of the argument, and articulate their support for the arts whenever possible. These people are Arts for Colorado's legislative liaisons who build positive relationships with their elected officials and lobby in support of arts and cultural issues. It is a goal for Arts for Colorado to identify at least one advocacy activist in every legislative district across the state to provide a consistent and coherent message that public funding for the arts is essential to Colorado citizens' quality of life.

Who are Proactive Advocates?

These activists proactively communicate their support for the arts with their state legislators and the Governor on a regular basis. They encourage state leaders to understand the value of supporting the arts with public funds and write letters to the editor and op-ed pieces.

Who are Reactive Advocates?

This group comprises of the largest number of advocates who often lay the foundation for more concerted participation in advocacy. They answer the call to action when a crisis, such as a cut in funding, arises. Often these advocates use blogging or social media as a platform to encourage supporting the arts.

Who are Potential Advocates?

This group includes individuals who have an interest in the arts but have not participated in any form of advocacy. The more opportunities proactive and reactive advocates provide, the greater chance potential advocates will get involved.

Becoming an Advocate

Effective advocacy requires a commitment of time and energy. Join the growing network of Arts for Colorado supporters!

- Communicate with your legislators on a regular basis and let them know you support funding for the arts and culture in Colorado.
- You have the power to make a change--do not rely on someone else to take action.
- Inform your congressional representative and Colorado senators Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet that you support funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.
- Become a member of Arts for Colorado or communicate our message of support for the arts by writing a letter, sending an email, making a call, or scheduling a visit with your legislator.
- Register to vote! Voting is a part of your civic responsibility as a citizen of the United States and gives you the opportunity to improve an issue or matter you support.

Working with Your Legislators (*Much of the information in this section comes from the Colorado Children's Campaign booklet "Child Advocacy is as Easy as 1, 2, 3" and "The Advocacy Project--Democracy in Action" by the Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation.*)



Lobbying state and national political leaders is an ongoing process of building trust between elected officials and constituents. By being a proactive advocate, you can build relationships with your political representatives before a crisis develops. Remember to contact your elected officials when they do something you like, not only when they do something you dislike.

When meeting with your legislators, remember these important tips:

- Gather the telephone numbers and email addresses of all your elected officials.
- Get to know your legislators' interests, politics, and background. Volunteer your time by helping them work on current issues before you make your ask.
- Educate your legislator on your issue of concern, as they might not be familiar with arts and culture. Legislators have many issues in front of them, so it is important that you inform them of the value arts and culture add to your life and community.
- Use data to help your legislator understand how their decisions on the arts affect the citizens in their district. Check the Arts for Colorado website for current talking points.
- Leave your legislator with a clear message of what needs to happen next in order to improve the condition of the arts and culture in the community. For example, request they vote for or against a specific bill or introduce legislation to address a certain problem.
- Include the Governor's office in your advocacy efforts. Veto powers make the Governor a key player.