



## Advocacy Toolkit

# Arts Advocacy

## Section 1: Introduction to Arts Advocacy

Advocacy is pleading or arguing in support of something such as a cause or policy, presenting information, and persuading others to support the cause. Advocacy is also a process by which members of the public work together to educate, inform, and raise awareness of a particular issue. Advocacy encompasses a broad range of activities (including research, public education, lobbying, and voter education) that can influence public policy.

The purpose of advocacy is to take action to bring about change, whether accomplished through raising public awareness, increasing support, or influencing policy for a certain issue. Advocacy can be for local, state or national issues or policies, or for increased funding.

**Arts advocacy is the process of supporting and promoting the arts broadly and specifically.** Its goal is to influence and inform the general public and policy and key decision makers about issues that threaten and/or provide opportunities for growth and stability of the arts. Arts advocates speak up about issues that are important and talk about the arts with people whose support and influence can help the cause.

## Why Advocate for the Arts?

Advocacy makes things happen and enables the arts to play a greater role in the daily lives of the people of the Commonwealth. As arts supporters we can raise our voices to impact decisions that are being made by policy makers at every level. If we don't advocate for the arts, who will?

Advocacy that demonstrates grassroots support for arts funding and issues sends a powerful message to leaders and policy makers that the people of Kentucky value the arts and creativity. Through advocacy, people can communicate their support for using tax dollars to fund the arts and creative organizations, programs and activities that enrich their lives and the lives of their children. Business, foundation, civic, and community leaders will be more inclined to support the arts if that support is advocated by a strong citizen voice.

A united voice using data that prove the value of the arts and stories that tell the benefit of the arts has power. Without advocacy to make leaders and policy makers aware of the strong support the arts have within the community, public funding and support for the arts will not flourish and will perhaps diminish.

## **Who Can Advocate?**

Everyone can advocate.

Individuals, businesses, and organizations including artists, teachers, staff, board members, volunteers, audiences, and anyone who values the arts and arts education make especially good arts advocates because of their interest in and support for the arts. Members of the arts community and participants in art services and programs have the expertise needed to make the case for public arts funding. Their first-hand knowledge of the arts and their impact in the community are important components of any advocacy campaign seeking the support of legislators.

Your interest in the arts makes you an ideal grassroots advocate to convey to elected officials how essential the arts and arts education are to your community. Without your help, local leaders and policy makers may not realize that the arts create jobs, support local economies, engage children in school, and enhance tourism.

## **Becoming an Arts Advocate**

It may seem daunting to think of yourself as an advocate but if you appreciate and support the arts it's likely you're already an arts advocate by sharing your interest in and experiences with the arts with others.

Advocacy is ongoing—365 days a year and not just when there's an emergency call to action. You can advocate for the arts by:

- staying up to date with Kentuckians for the Arts
- being informed about the benefits and impacts of the arts;
- educating decision makers using reliable information and explaining the issues;
- being willing to reach out regarding important issues concerning the arts; and
- building relationships with your local leaders and elected officials. Let your elected officials know you are able to act as a resource for them if they have questions about the arts community.

## The Difference Between Advocating and Lobbying

Lobbying is one kind of advocacy. Lobbying is citizen action at any level of government attempting to influence members on legislation; making positive changes to laws that affect us and the causes we serve. Lobbying also includes appeals to an organization's members urging them to contact legislators and communications to influence legislation through an attempt to affect public opinion.

Not all advocacy is lobbying but all lobbying is advocacy. While the line between advocacy and lobbying may seem thin at first, these examples provided by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies demonstrate the difference.

- *Making general arguments about the importance of public support for the arts is advocacy; asking a legislator to vote for an increase in public arts funding in an appropriations bill is lobbying.*
- *Informing legislators about the role of the arts in education is advocacy; requesting a legislator's support for legislation that would mandate arts education in the school curriculum is lobbying.*
- *Explaining to a legislator about the value of encouraging artists' gifts of their work to a museum is advocacy; urging a legislator to support a bill to allow artists a full value charitable deduction or the donation of their work is lobbying.*

## Individual Versus Organizational Activities

Individuals and organizations can both advocate and lobby. As an individual your voice is unlimited. You can lobby directly to your legislators without barriers or limits. You can endorse candidates for office. For-profit businesses can do the same.

What about nonprofit organizations? Many arts organizations are (501)(c)(3) status—that is, they have applied for and obtained tax-exempt status.

Organizations can both advocate and lobby with no limits on advocacy. For non-profits lobbying is allowed as long as it is not a “substantial part” of their activities. (Note: The law does not provide a definition of “substantial.”) Sending an email that educates on the impact that budget cuts or increases to the arts will have on your organization is fine—actions that educate can happen all of the time.

Actions such as voicing an opinion on a particular legislative bill or funding levels or issuing a “call to action” is lobbying, and non-profit organizations should reserve direct and grassroots lobbying actions for those key moments such as veto overrides or drastic budget cuts. Nonprofits are not allowed to endorse political candidates.

*The chart on the following page from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies delineates some of the finer points between various types of activities for non-profit organizations.*

<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>ADVOCACY</b>	<b>LOBBYING</b>	<b>ELECTION-EERING</b>
Increasing <b>public understanding</b> about the arts	Expressing support for the arts as an important <b>policy issue</b>	Encouraging <b>votes on pending legislation</b>	Endorsing <b>political candidates</b> for elected office
<i>No limits for nonprofits if activities are nonpartisan</i>	<i>No limits for nonprofits if activities are nonpartisan</i>	<i>Permitted for nonprofits within expenditure limits set by the IRS</i>	<i>Prohibited for 501(c)(3) nonprofits.</i>

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies - 2021