

# Arts Education Navigator

Mobilizing Support



Sponsored by Vans Custom Culture

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## Making Change for Arts Education

Through a partnership with Vans Custom Culture, Americans for the Arts has designed a series of e-books to help educators, advocates, students, and organizations alike navigate the field of arts education as we work together to ensure that the arts are valued in our country as an important part of all students' lives.

Vans Custom Culture has provided critical resources to support the development and launch of this e-book series as part of the *Arts Education Navigator*, which provides advocates with the tools and data they need to effectively support arts education in their communities.

This e-book series covers multiple topics, such as the benefits of arts education, what quality arts education looks like, and how to effectively make the case that the arts should be an integral part of a well-rounded education.

*Mobilizing Support* is meant for folks who want to take their support for arts education up a notch, to become full-fledged advocates. Our last e-book, *Making the Case*, focused on what individuals could do with advocacy. Now, *Mobilizing Support* shows you how your organization can get involved and multiply that support!

Much of *Mobilizing Support* is based on a previous Americans for the Arts publication called *Making Advocacy a Habit*, which was published in 1997 and not particular to arts education. This e-book has updated content and has provided examples particular to arts education. See our source page for the full citation and link to *Making Advocacy a Habit*.

While the *Mobilizing Support* e-book focuses on organized advocacy for arts education, check out our entire [Navigator series](#) for more tips and tools for how to effectively support arts education. Together, these e-books can help you create lasting change for arts education in your school and community.

Let's get started!



# Standing Together

In previous e-books, you've learned what the issues are for arts education, who to influence, and how to craft a message. Now that you're an expert, you can share these tools with others and offer your support in their training.

**Becoming A Community Leader**

**Arts Education Advocacy Tools & Resources**



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. -Margaret Mead

# Becoming A Community Leader

Throughout this e-book series, we've covered ways that individuals can support the arts as a part of a complete education for all students. This final e-book in the series is designed for community organizations who want to find ways to keep the arts in public schools. While we'll discuss ways that *organizations* can support arts education, the principles discussed here can apply to groups or individuals that serve as board members, volunteers, or supporters of a group or organization. This book is all about how groups of individuals can collectively take action. We'll cover the nuts and bolts of advocacy, everything from different advocacy strategies to ways to mobilize others in support of your cause.

Advocacy  
is the most  
effective tool  
nonprofits and  
foundations can  
use to advance  
their mission  
and serve their  
communities.

-Alliance for Justice

If you've found your way to this final e-book, then it's safe to say that you've learned from *Getting Started* and *Facts & Figures* how to understand the issues, find someone to influence, and make your case. In *Making the Case*, you learned that it has become critical that we take time out to advocate on our own behalf at the local, state, and national levels. Now we need your help in getting others to do the same.

Who are those others that you can enlist? Well, if you've read through the three previous e-books, it might also be safe to say that you represent or are aligned with an organization that has wonderful educational programs—anything from student performances and workshops to artist residencies and hands-on family activities. If you can enlist the help of your colleagues, network, members, or supporters as advocates too, you can actually help increase the *impact* of your organization!

Many arts education programs, such as the ones at your organizations, have staff that are busy running programs and often do not feel that they have the time or expertise to advocate. *But programs aren't the same as policy.* So, even if your organization believes that all students deserve a complete, quality education that includes the arts, that is not the same as supporting policies that will enable all students to actually receive that quality education. We need to advocate on behalf of better local, state, and federal policy and funding in order to ensure the continued existence of our programs.

If you feel a little overwhelmed by that statement, don't feel alone. As you recall from ***Making the Case***, many people don't advocate for arts education because the fact is that they don't know how to or what to do.

## Top Reasons People Don't Contact Their Elected Officials

- 1 Don't know who their Elected Officials are.
- 2 Don't know what issue to write on.
- 3 Don't know what to say.
- 4 Think it will take too much time.
- 5 Don't think it will matter.

Since you have learned the basics of how to support arts education from the previous e-book, you can now educate your network and community on how to advocate for arts education too. You can educate everyone from parents, teachers, principals, and school boards that arts education needs to be included as part of the well-rounded education for all students. There is strength in numbers! Whether you do something simple, such as encouraging people to write their elected officials or signing an online petition, or do something more involved, such making a passionate presentation at a board meeting or participating in a state or national ***Arts Advocacy Day***, we need supporters like you to become community leaders and show others how easy it is to stand up for the cause of arts education.

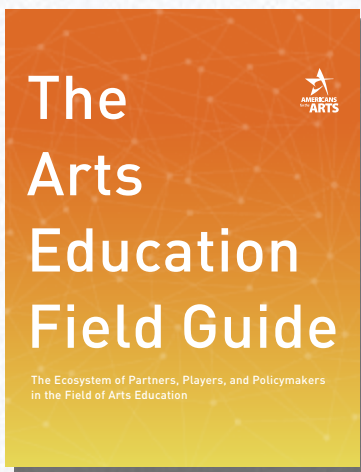
Through this e-book, we'll show you how you can share your knowledge, organize like-minded individuals, and become a community leader and champion for arts education.

Standing Together

# Arts Education Advocacy Tools & Resources

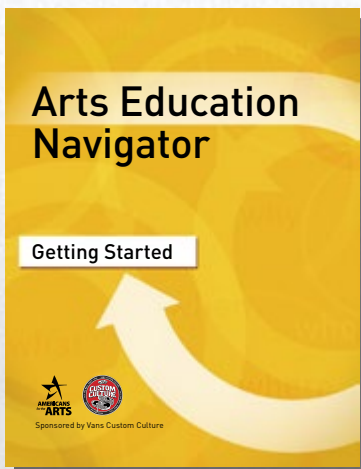
As an arts education supporter, we know you are looking for tools and resources to affect change in your community. The tools below can be used to develop strong local leadership; cultivate adequate resources; and strengthen connections and partnerships among schools, businesses, artists, and community leaders in support of arts education.

You can easily find and share all of these tools with your network via [Americans for the Arts' website](#).

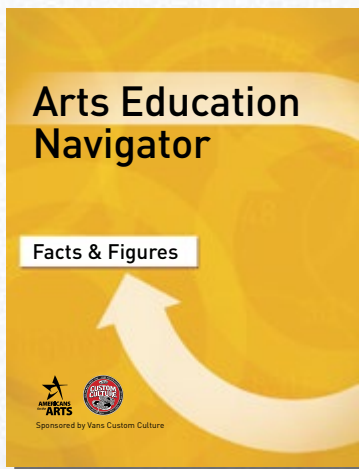


**The Arts Education Field Guide:** This handy reference book has one page devoted to each stakeholder in arts education and provides information about their motivations and connections in arts education, allowing you to build more effective relationships from the schoolhouse to the White House and from the living room to the boardroom.

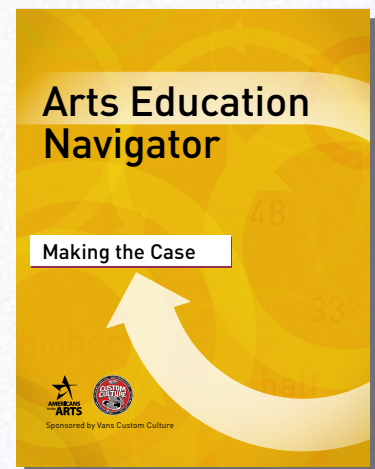
**The Arts Education Navigator's e-book Series:** This series of e-books is designed to help educators, students, and advocates alike navigate the complex field of arts education. This e-book series covers multiple topics, such as the benefits of arts education, what quality arts education looks like, and how to effectively make the case that the arts should be an integral part of a well-rounded education. Check out the other three e-books:



**Getting Started:** The who, what, where, when, why, and how of arts education.



**Facts & Figures:** This e-book highlights key data points on the benefits and decline of arts education.



**Making the Case:** This e-book will help advocates effectively convey the importance of arts education to any decision maker.



# sources

**ARTSblog:** Americans for the Arts' blog is the place to read about and add your voice to the hottest topics in our field. This widely read blog has contributors from across the country, and arts education continues to be the number one topic of interest.

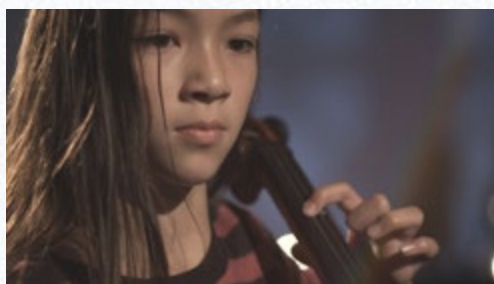


Image by Scott Cronan Photography

**Encourage Creativity: Teach the Arts:** These videos tell the real story behind the numbers and data. Let your audience hear directly from students whose lives have been transformed by the arts. While you can **watch and share** these videos with teachers, principals, superintendents, business leaders, community leaders, and policymakers, you can also dive

into our **Advocate Tools section** for ways to use these videos to encourage creativity in your school or community.

**Action Fund:** Join the movement of grassroots advocates, teachers, artists, and community members who voice their support of the arts and arts education in America, and let your voice be heard from your front steps to the steps of the Capitol.



**Keep the Arts in Public Schools:** Join thousands of concerned citizens who have mobilized through our Causes.com social media page. This is a community of people dedicated to supporting the arts as part of a well-rounded education for all students.



**“The Arts. Ask for More.”:** This public service advertising (PSA) campaign was designed to educate parents and citizens on why the arts are essential to a child's development and empower them to get more art into kids' lives, both in and out of school.

# Understanding Advoc

Sharing those tools is a great first step to becoming a community leader for arts education. The next step to organizing support for your cause is understanding the nuts and bolts of advocacy.

[What Is Advocacy?](#)

[What Is Lobbying?](#)

[What Isn't Lobbying?](#)

[What Are the Rules of Lobbying?](#)



# acy

Advocacy is looking to  
change policy, behavior,  
attitudes, and rules.

Understanding Advocacy

# What is Advocacy?

When we talk about “advocacy” there are actually a lot of different activities that fall along this spectrum. **Not all advocacy is lobbying, but lobbying is one form of advocacy.**

**Advocacy** /ad·vo·ca·cy/ *n.*

The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support.

**Education** /ed·u·ca·tion/ *n.*

The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge.

**Lobbying** /lob·by·ing/ *v.*

To try to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause.

Not all  
advocacy  
is lobbying,  
but lobbying  
is one form  
of advocacy.

So when we speak about advocacy, we’re talking about a broad definition of advocacy, which can include everything from educating to lobbying. In fact, a lot of types of activities fall under this. Much of the work that you do in grantwriting, marketing, public relations, and board work is very similar. At its essence, advocacy is largely a communications issue, or being a spokesperson for your organization and your field. However, for it to be advocacy, it is putting those skills from grantwriting, public relations, and marketing to use for a different end result than getting funding or getting higher attendance at a show. Advocacy is looking to change policy, behavior, attitudes, and rules.

## Advocacy Spectrum

### Education

Explaining a fact sheet to a decision maker.

### Research

Producing or disseminating data that makes your case.

### Coalition & Relationship Building

Hosting a community forum.

### Media Outreach & P.R.

Inviting leaders to a student performance or writing a letter to the editor.

### Organizing

Nonpartisan voter engagement.

### Lobbying

Requesting that a decision maker takes a particular stand on an issue via legislation.

Just to be clear: ALL of these activities just mentioned are perfectly legal and legitimate things that 501(c)(3) organizations can and should be involved in. And there are no limits for what individuals can be involved in!

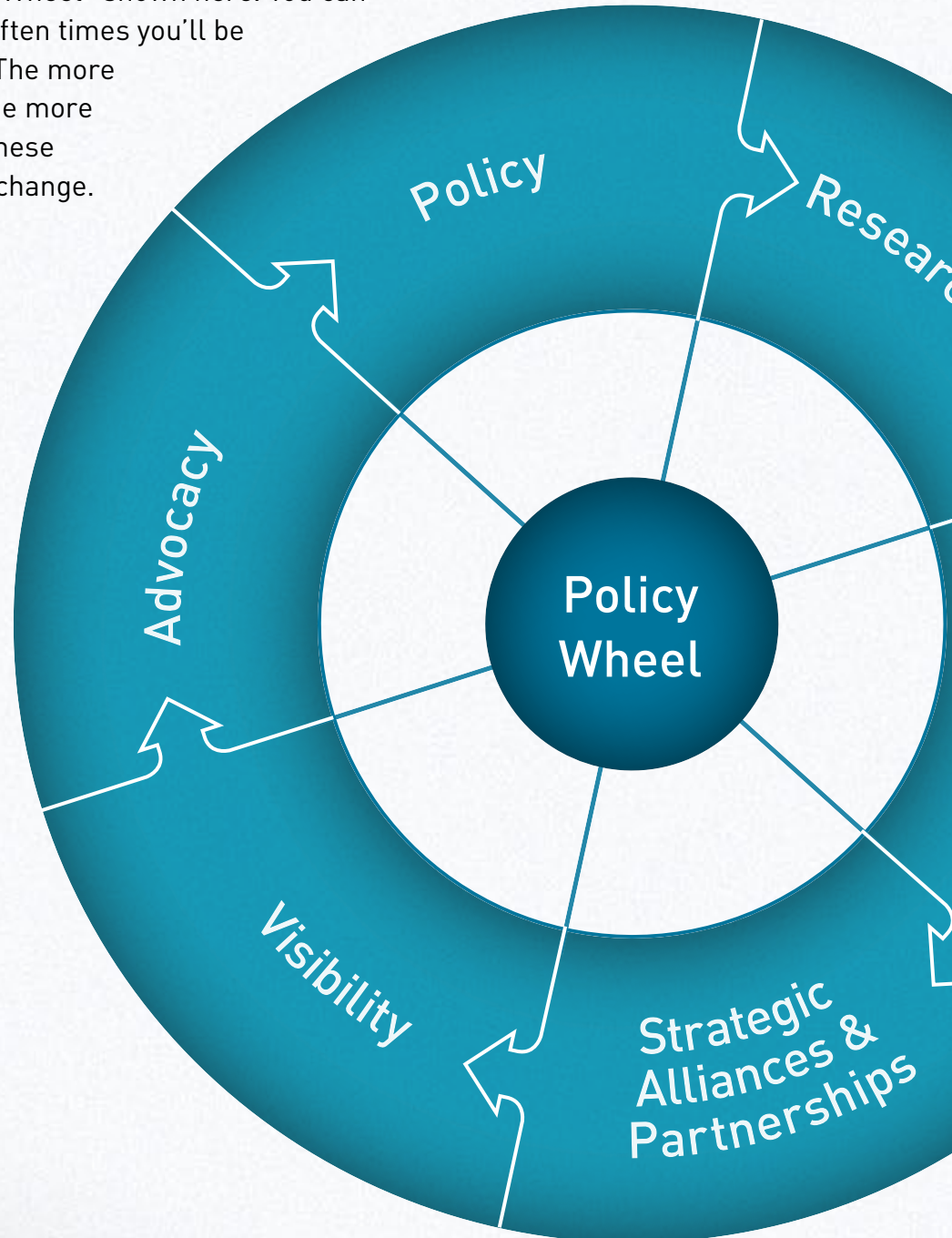
Advocacy (and even lobbying) shouldn't feel so confusing or political that we the people are not able to tell our elected officials what we believe in. As Abraham Lincoln said, our government is "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Although partisan politics give the impression that advocacy (especially lobbying) is a dirty word, most advocacy (including lobbying for that matter) can be conducted in a positive, non-partisan manner.

Understanding Advocacy

## Policy Wheel

In order to become an effective advocate, you will need to combine many of the advocacy tactics along the advocacy spectrum. Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch has developed what he calls the “Policy Wheel” shown here. You can enter at any point in the cycle, and often times you’ll be working on multiple areas at once. The more points you include in your efforts, the more effective you’ll be. Taken together, these approaches are what lead to policy change.

Taken together, these approaches are what lead to policy change.



While this cycle is effective at changing policy, this also works in almost any setting because it is the logical flow of how decisions are made. For example, take a teenager who wants to get the keys to his parents' car.

**Policy Objective: Getting the Keys to the Car**  
**Policy Wheel Steps Below**



<b>Policy</b>	He knows what his end goal is—getting the keys to the car.
<b>Research</b>	He might start by getting some facts on his side, like 77 percent of his friend's parents let them take the car on weekends.
<b>Professional Development</b>	He might search for some videos to see how other teens have asked their parents for keys to the car.
<b>Strategic Alliances</b>	He might enlist the help of an uncle or sibling to help make his case or help him brainstorm ways to make the case.
<b>Visibility</b>	In order to make his issue visible, he might tell a story at the dinner table about how his friends are able to be responsible and hold jobs because they get the keys to their parents' cars.
<b>Advocacy</b>	Finally, he will make his ask directly to his parents for the keys to their car.
<b>Policy</b>	We've come full circle if he gets what he asked for—the keys to the car.

## Understanding Advocacy

# What Is Lobbying?

Many nonprofits engage in lots of the activities along the advocacy spectrum but are hesitant or uncomfortable with lobbying. In this section, you'll learn lobbying 101 and its rules for nonprofits.

Lobbying is one way to influence policy change. It involves contacting elected officials in support of or against a specific piece of legislation. In order for your action to be lobbying (not some other form of advocacy), it must have these two key elements:

1. It must refer to specific legislation.
2. It must encourage action.

There are two forms of lobbying—**direct** and **indirect**.

Indirect is sometimes called **grassroots** lobbying.

According to **Independent Sector**, the national association for nonprofits, lobbying is any attempt to influence legislation by:

- » stating a position on specific legislation to legislators or other government employees who participate in the formulation of legislation (known as direct lobbying); or,
- » urging your members or the general public to contact their legislators with a position on specific legislation (a "call to action") (known as grassroots lobbying).

Here are two examples to illustrate these:

**Direct:** "Senator Smith, I urge you to vote yes for SB 123 in support of arts education."

**Grassroots:** "Friends, I urge you to contact Senator Smith and ask him to vote yes on SB 123. Contact him at [www.votervoice.net/ARTSUSA/address](http://www.votervoice.net/ARTSUSA/address)."

The examples above wouldn't be considered lobbying if they didn't encourage action or refer to the specific legislation with more generic language such as:

"Senator Smith, I urge you to support arts education."

– or –

"Friends, I urge you to let your leaders know you support arts education."

## This *is* lobbying:

Calling a state representative, encouraging him/her to vote for or against a specific piece of legislation.

Buying ad space in a local newspaper, voicing opposition to legislation.

Asking your members to contact their elected officials and vote a certain way on an issue.



# What Isn't Lobbying?

Just to help clarify even more, what isn't lobbying?

- » Nonpartisan analysis of research
- » Responding to a request for technical assistance from legislators
- » Self Defense
  - responding to proposed legislation that would hurt your organization's ability to function
- » General communications with legislature (examples below)
  - Support the arts as they add value to society
  - Support arts education as it diminishes the dropout rate
  - Kids with arts education score, on average, 100 points higher on their SATs
- » Advocacy for executive, administrative, or regulatory issues
- » Discussing issues with a cabinet level department, not Congress
  - Requesting enforcement of existing laws;
  - Advocating for or against executive orders; and
  - Speaking at a school board meeting

## This *isn't* lobbying:

Generally educating a public official on an issue.

E-mailing the Secretary of Education, encouraging him to support arts as a core subject in federal law.

Attending a school board meeting to voice concerns over budget cuts to the arts programs

The Alliance for Justice has [a great webpage](#) on Executive and Administrative Advocacy. Here's an excerpt. We've added bolded emphasis to highlight the relevant education pieces:

*Executive or Administrative Advocacy can be directed at administrative agencies (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency), executive officials (e.g., Governor, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, County Executive), and special purpose boards (e.g., housing authority, school board, park and planning board).*

***Under federal tax law, nonprofits and foundations can do as much advocacy on regulations and other administrative actions as they'd like.*** *As long as the purpose of these communications is not to influence legislation, the activity is not considered lobbying.*

*NOTE: This activity may be covered and disclosure required under federal or state lobby disclosure provisions.*

## Understanding Advocacy

# What Are the Rules of Lobbying?

So, you know what lobbying is, but now we'll cover some of the finer points on lobbying, such as types of activities that aren't allowed, limits on lobbying, and exceptions for different types of nonprofits. Be sure to **check state election laws and state tax laws**, especially on ballot measure activities to ensure that your organization is following lobbying rules.

## Activities that Are Not Allowed

Nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(3) status may engage in educational activities related to the electoral process. However, there are strict rules against political activity. Nonprofits may NOT participate or intervene in any political campaign in support of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office, such as giving a campaign contribution. This isn't lobbying—it's political activity and is absolutely forbidden for 501(c)(3) organizations.

## Lobbying Limits

Public charities are allowed to lobby, as long as it is an "insubstantial" amount of their budget and resources. This can be confusing to understand just how much is considered insubstantial. However, there is more clear direction from the IRS if your organization chooses to take the 501(h) election. This sounds confusing because the name 501(h) is so similar to 501(c)(3). But really the 501(h) election is just a form that nonprofits can complete. The form offers specific guidance on how much your organization can spend on lobbying activities. Here is a clear example from the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI). This example comes from a **webinar** CLPI produced in conjunction with Independent Sector:

### Nonprofits can spend the following amounts on **direct** lobbying:

20% of the first \$500,000 of annual expenditures;  
15% of the next \$500,000; 10% of the next \$500,000; and  
5% for every additional \$500,000 up to \$1 million a year

**Example: ABC charity, with annual expenditures of \$250,000:**  
20% of \$250,000 = \$50,000 an Overall Lobbying Limit

### Nonprofits can spend the following on **grassroots** lobbying:

25% of their total allowable lobbying expenditures

25% of \$50,000 = \$12,500

Grassroots Lobbying Total: \$12,500

Direct Lobbying Total: \$37,500

**All Lobbying Total: \$50,000**

Again, these expenditure limits and lobbying definitions only apply to 501(c)(3)s that take the (h) election. If not an (h) elector, lobbying cannot be a “substantial part” of your activities. “Substantial” is not defined by the IRS, so there are no set expenditure limits or definitions.

## Lobbying Exceptions

The lobbying rules mentioned above only apply to nonprofits with 501(c)(3) status. If you are an individual, lobbying on your own personal time and not on behalf of an organization, there are no lobbying limits. If you’re a private business, there are no lobbying limits. If you’re a publicly traded business, there are no lobbying limits.

Additionally, not all 501(c)(3)s are created equal. If you’re a private or community foundation, there are additional considerations. Independent Sector has a [webpage](#) with concise and clear guidance. Here is an excerpt:

*Private foundations are prohibited from participating or intervening in partisan political campaigns and from expressing views on specific legislation to legislators or issuing a “call to action” in communications about legislation with the general public unless the legislation regards matters which might affect the existence of the foundation, its powers and duties, its tax-exempt status, or the deduction of contributions to the foundation (also known as the “self-defense” exception).*

*Private foundations may*

- » *build relationships with elected officials;*
- » *share with them information about the foundation’s activities and grants;*
- » *provide technical assistance or advice to legislative body or committee in response to a written request;*
- » *make available nonpartisan analysis, study or research; and,*

*In general, private foundations may not earmark a grant to a nonprofit for lobbying. They may provide general support grants to organizations that lobby and they may provide grants for specific projects with a lobbying component, so long as their grant amount does not exceed the budgeted non-lobbying expenses for the project.*

If you are a 501(c)(3) that accepts funds from a foundation, there is no need to worry that your lobbying will jeopardize your grant. Educate your program officers on the rules of lobbying be sure to follow the rules!

As nonprofits that exist to create change in our society and protect the public trust, lobbying is an important piece of work in supporting our causes.

It may feel like there are too many rules about lobbying to make it worthwhile. But consider this quote from Independent Sector:

“All nonprofits have a vital role to play in our democracy. Nonprofits have every right to advocate on behalf of policies they believe in. For 501(c)(3) public charities that role includes lobbying. It is only when this advocacy deals with specific legislation that limits come into play.”

# Mobilizing Your Comm

In the next section, we'll flesh out these various advocacy tactics and possible ways to influence decision-makers at the federal, state, and local levels. Prepare yourself and your colleagues to take action together!

**Building Broad Support**

**Federal Leaders**

**State Leaders**

**Local Leaders**



# Community

You don't have to hold a position in order to be a leader. -Henry Ford

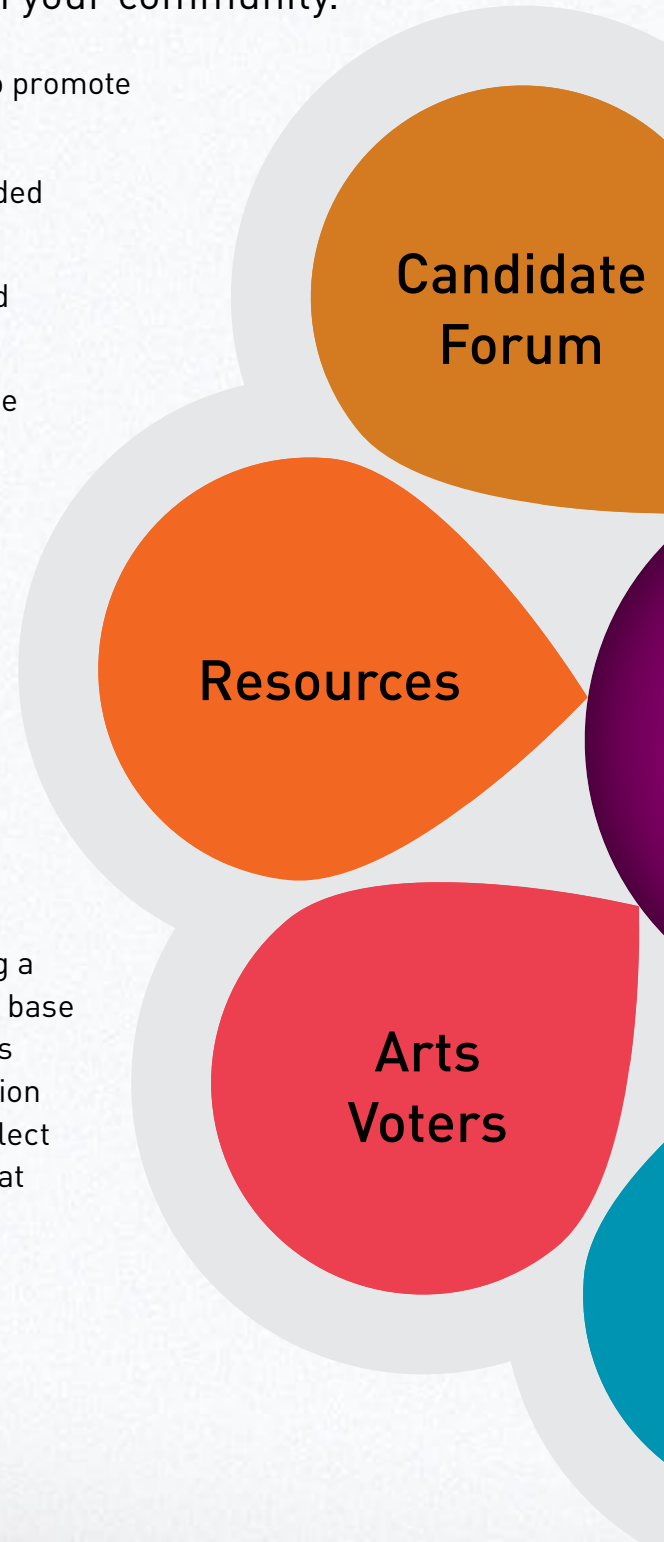
# Building Broad Support

With a solid understanding of advocacy (including lobbying) under your belt, you can begin to build a broad base of support and a widespread understanding of the value of arts education in your community.

You can motivate others to join in the efforts to promote arts education by:

- » Communicating the information that is needed to support the cause
- » Training others how to stay on message and be effective
- » Teaching about what the research shows the arts can do for students
- » Making others aware of this e-book series
- » Teaching others the vocabulary (especially the acronyms) and structure of the field using the Arts Education Field Guide
- » Showing others what they can do for the cause
- » Asking others what you can do for them

As you can see from this diagram, surrounding a decision maker requires that you have a broad base of support from many partners. Page 24 shows the various partners and players in the education policy pipeline. You can use that diagram to select partners, as well as select decision makers that you and your partners want to target.



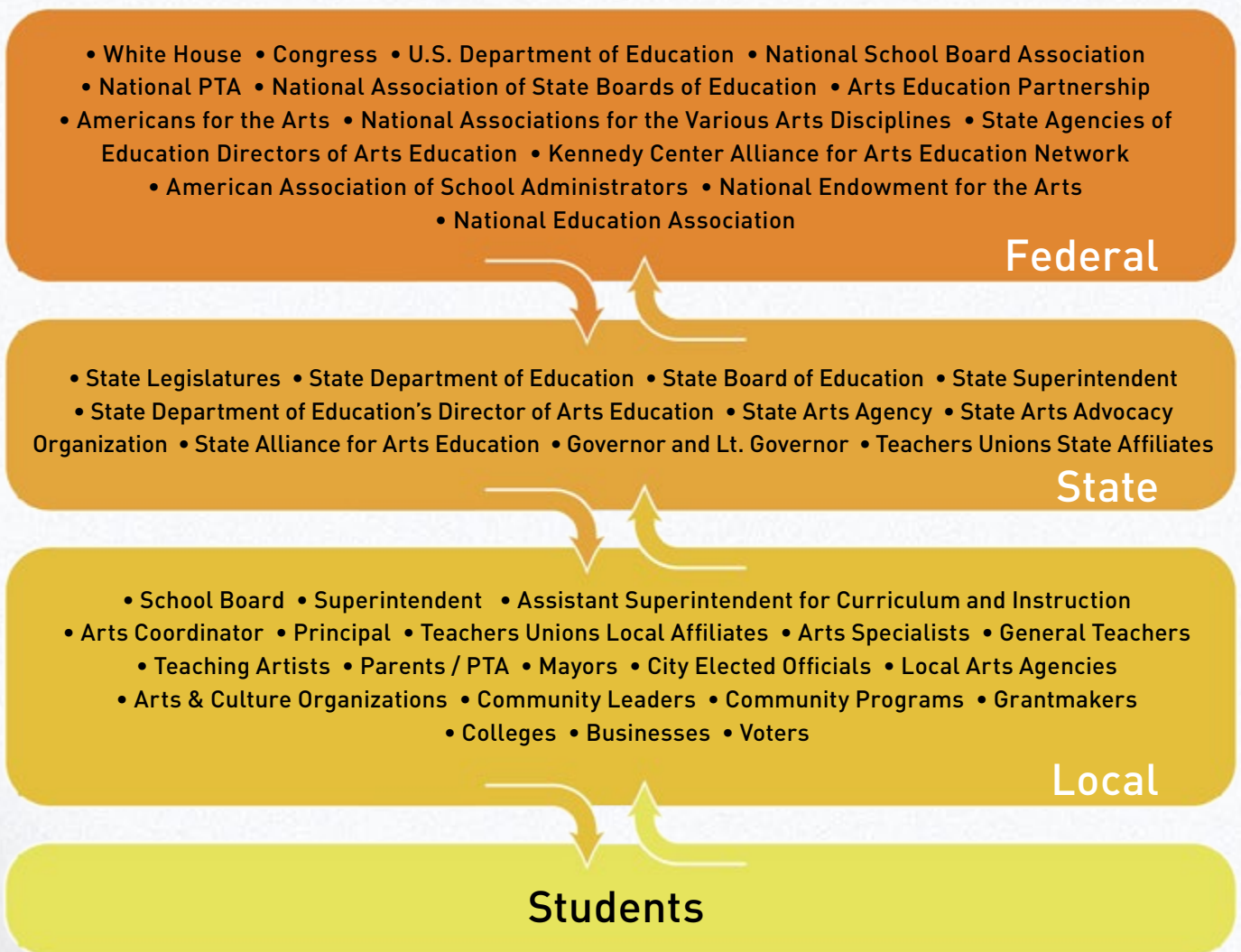


Working with others, you can come up with a strategy to surround decision-makers with points of influence to help get your desired outcome. The diagram here shows how key advocacy tactics can help you surround a leader with your message.

Mobilizing Your Community

## Tiers of Influence

The structure of our education system is often seen as a linear hierarchy, but each partner below has a different role and a different amount of influence. Your strongest ally is not always just one step above, below, or beside you.



In the next section, we’ll flesh out various advocacy tactics and possible ways to influence decision-makers at the federal, state, and local levels. Prepare yourself and your colleagues to take action together!



# Federal Leaders



The arts (dance, music, theater, media arts, and visual arts) are considered “core academic subjects” under federal law—the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This means that changes in federal education funding and policy affect opportunities for local arts programs and teachers.

Tell your elected officials how you feel! If they do not hear from you about this topic, they will assume it is not important. Use Americans for the Arts’ [eAdvocacy Center](#) to look up your elected officials. Two minutes—that’s all it takes to send a message saying that you support arts education.

## Asks for Federal Leaders

- » Retain ‘the arts’ as a core subject when re-authorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- » Require annual state reports on student access to core academic subjects, including the arts. Example: [NJ Arts Education Census Project](#)
- » Improve national data collection and research in arts education.
- » Reauthorize the Arts in Education program at the Department of Education.

For more information about each of these asks, check out Americans for the Arts’ congressional [handbook](#).

## What Can You Do at the Federal Level?

- » **Conduct an old-fashioned letter-writing campaign.** Arts leaders in one mid-sized city hand delivered, en masse and in wheel barrels, nearly 15,000 letters in support of the arts to a U.S. Senator’s district office. The media had been alerted to the event in advance and the arts community received notable coverage. The Senator held a key leadership position, but had not declared his position on the arts yet. Since that constituent-driven event, the Senator has been steadfast in his support of the arts.
- » **Send an e-mail to your elected officials.** E-mail is an efficient and effective way to advocate. According to Congressional Management Foundation, more than two-thirds of social media managers feel that [e-mail](#) and [social media](#) have made Senators and Representatives more responsive and accountable to their



## Federal Leaders

White House

Congress

U.S. Department of  
Education

National School Board  
Association

National PTA

National Association of  
State Boards of Education

Arts Education  
Partnership

Americans for the Arts

National Associations  
for the Various Arts  
Disciplines

State Agencies of  
Education Directors of  
Arts Education

Kennedy Center Alliance  
for Arts Education  
Network

American Association of  
School Administrators

National Endowment  
for the Arts

National Education  
Association

constituents. Quantity of e-mails will help your opinion be counted. Quality of e-mails (personalized stories, connections to the representative) will help your opinion be considered.

- » **Visit congressional representatives in their home district office.** Communities throughout the country have organized strategic meetings with their congressional members. Representatives from various facets of the community are also included in the meeting, including mayors, city/county council members, Chambers of Commerce, police chiefs, business owners, and political advisors.
- » **Organize a group to make a congressional visit at members' Washington, DC office.** Meetings can be organized in conjunction with a national event, such as Arts Advocacy Day, or separately.
- » **Make regular telephone calls to congressional members' district and Washington, DC offices occasionally.** Put yourself in the position of a resource for congressional staff members who work on cultural legislation issues.
- » **Invite members of congress and their staff to performances or to visit youth programs.** A local ballet company invited their U.S. Senator to a "behind-the-scenes" tour of the theater. The tour was then followed by a discussion about federal arts support.
- » **Invite your member of Congress to write a column in your newsletter or to be interviewed.** This offers some exposure through your publication to that member and builds a stronger advocate at the same time. Help that politician to become better informed about your work and more cognizant of your position by having to put together some thought for an article on the arts in your state/region.



» **Create candidate surveys-questionnaires on arts education.** Help keep the community informed as candidates campaign for your vote on any given election year. Visit Americans for the Arts' [eAdvocacy Center](#) for information about candidates running in every federal and state race.

If you are considering conducting an arts education survey-questionnaire campaign, keep in mind that all candidates must be asked to participate; those candidates in office and those that have not served in federal office. All responses must be published and unedited, make sure their responses are available for everyone to see online so the community knows who supports the arts when it is time to go to the ballot box. The organization must make no indication of preference.

For federal candidates, you could ask a survey question along the lines of, *“What specific federal education policies would you promote to ensure our children receive a well-rounded education with comprehensive arts education in their schools?”*

Here are some examples of federal candidate surveys to get you started:

- Americans for the Arts Action Fund: [Ask Your Candidate about the Arts](#)
- Download the [Congressional Arts Survey](#)
- Summary of the [arts positions of the 2012 presidential candidates](#)



# State Leaders

Increasingly, education decisions are made at the state level—standards, teacher evaluation, curriculum adoption, and more. The state also has 360 degree influence—the state interprets and implements federal law and programs. But it also influences access and funding at the local level. With so much happening at the state level, you cannot afford to bypass these leaders.

## Asks for State Leaders

- » Collect/publish statewide research on access to education in your state.
- » Hire a designated arts coordinator at the state's Department of Education.
- » Adopt the national arts standards released during the summer 2014.

## What Can You Do at the State Level?

- » **Organize a regional/local advocacy day.** In a small Midwestern city, a coalition of arts and culture activists organized a regional/local advocacy day to coincide with Arts Advocacy Day in Washington, DC. With the cooperation of the local public radio station, they organized a full day of coverage and celebration on the arts and culture. Following the radio station's regular live programming, they profiled regional and local artists and projects that have received federal funding (with an emphasis on current and future projects). For example, in the morning the normal classical music program was replaced with music performed by the local symphony, and in the evening during a two-hour opinion and commentary program they provided local opinion and commentary about the arts and culture. Throughout the day they encouraged their listeners to call their Representatives and Senators, always advocating for action rather than a particular position.
- » **Convene a meeting each year near the start of the legislative session.** Arts constituents can then discuss issues with key legislators in the state and in Congress.



- » **Have your mayor, city/county councils, governors, and state governments pass joint resolutions.** Several city councils, serving cities both large and small, have passed resolutions asking congress to fully support reauthorization and appropriations for the federal cultural agencies, emphasizing the economic impact of the arts industry. In one city, the resolution was introduced with a presentation by various individuals, including a local businessman, the Chair of the local arts agency, a representative from the Convention and Visitors Bureau, a Latino businesswoman, and a local high school student—each speaking from their perspective about how the arts and culture programs in their community effects them and their work. The City Council passed the resolution which then, in turn, authorized their lobbyists to press congress to support the arts and humanities.
- » **Participate in state legislative hearings.** During legislative budget hearings, cultural organizations can attend the hearings with visible signs urging support for the arts and humanities.
- » **Create candidate surveys-questionnaires on arts education.** See the previous federal leaders section for more information. **ArtsEd Washington**, an advocacy organization in Washington State has a great **example of statewide surveys** for school board candidates.

## State Leaders

State Legislatures

State Department of Education

State Board of Education

State Superintendent

State Department of Education's Director of Arts Education

State Arts Agency

State Arts Advocacy Organization

State Alliance for Arts Education

Governor and Lt. Governor

Teachers Unions  
State Affiliates



# Local Leaders

It may not feel like there is much you can do to change federal or state policy. However, decisions about arts education are most often made at the local level, and particularly by these three groups of leaders—school boards, superintendents, and/or principals. Set aside some time to talk to one of these leaders today!

Local leaders reflect local values. While federal and state policy might have designated the arts as a core academic subject, without local support, other priorities will trump your cause.

## Asks for Local Leaders

**Arts for All**, a county-wide initiative in Los Angeles, uses the five following measures to see if there is a sound infrastructure in place for arts education at the school district level:

- 1 Does your school district have an instructional leader in the arts, such as an arts coordinator?
- 2 Does your school district have a written arts education policy approved by the school board?
- 3 Does your school or district have a written plan for the arts program?
- 4 Does your district pay for arts teachers' salaries and instructional supplies, materials, and equipment?
- 5 What is the student to teacher ratio?

These five measures aren't the only thing you can ask about, though. Here is a handy one-pager with **15 Questions to Ask**.

For detailed indicators of success for each question, visit the **Americans for the Arts website**.



## What Can You Do at the Local Level?

- » **Contact the school district arts coordinator.** If you have a district arts coordinator, let them know of your interest and support. Establish a relationship with his/her office. They may have specific ideas on how you can help in your community.
- » **Join or support local arts education organizations.** Contact and join your local and state arts and arts education organizations as well to let them know of your interest and support. They may have specific ideas of how you can help in your community.
- » **Convene a town meeting.** In a large urban city, the local arts club held a town meeting for hundreds of local citizens to meet with their Senators and area Representatives and the city council members to discuss their position on funding for the arts and humanities.
- » **Write op-eds and letters to the editor in local and national newspapers.** In one urban city, the local arts council's executive director writes a monthly column about the arts.
- » **Have your cultural institution's board of directors pass a resolution.** Many cultural organizations' boards have passed strong policy resolutions to advocate for the preservation of our federal cultural agencies. Many organizations have sent copies of these resolutions with a list of the Board Members and their professional affiliations to their congressional delegation.
- » **Create a public service announcement.** Generate public service announcements to reinforce the message that tax money spent on the arts provides programs for the entire community. A dance company worked with a local TV station to develop and broadcast a public service announcement asking viewers to call their Representatives in support of continued arts support.

## Local Leaders

School Board  
 Superintendent  
 Assistant Superintendent  
 for Curriculum and  
 Instruction  
 Arts Coordinator  
 Principal  
 Teachers Unions  
 Local Affiliates  
 Arts Specialists  
 General Teachers  
 Teaching Artists  
 Parents / PTA  
 Mayors  
 City Elected Officials  
 Local Arts Agencies  
 Arts & Culture  
 Organizations  
 Community Leaders  
 Community Programs  
 Grantmakers  
 Colleges  
 Businesses  
 Voters

## Mobilizing Your Community



- » **Place print advertisements in local newspapers and cultural newsletters.** A local arts agency secured a full-page in their local paper to place an ad asking people to contact their elected officials on an issue. Arts organizations in some communities cooperatively develop ad slicks to place in their newsletters and printed programs with information about how to contact their elected officials about the importance of arts education.
- » **Start a sign-on petition drive or an online petition site (non-partisan preferably).** In a mid-sized city, the arts and humanities organizations gathered more than 1,000 signatures and addresses of constituents in less than two weeks. Names were collected after symphony performances and other cultural events. The petitions were hand-delivered to the Congressman himself.
- » **Present at a school board meeting.** School board meetings have a public comment period, with presentations often limited to two minutes each. Often you'll need to sign up beforehand with your name and address. You can usually find a sign up table at the entrance of the meeting room.

Here are some tips from [Arts for LA](#) on making public comments:

- Provide a printed copy of your remarks for public record.
- Begin your remarks by acknowledging the Board and thanking them for the opportunity to speak. If they have been good on our issue in the past, acknowledge and thank them for their leadership.
- Keep it short. You want to be as effective in your two minutes as possible.
- Practice your presentation beforehand so that you can focus on conveying your passion instead of just saying the words
- Tell your unique personal story. What is your perspective? Parent? Teacher? Student? Artist?
- End with a clear ask and make sure that it is solution-oriented and POSITIVE.
- Thank them again.





- » **Utilize social media to spread the word about an issue.** When the arts were threatened to be cut from a school district in Upper Darby, PA, activists took to **social media to garner attention**. This attracted support from actress Tina Fey, which raised the visibility of the issue. The NAMM Foundation has a **nice case study** about how they utilized social media. Additionally, when the arts were threatened in Los Angeles, local advocacy agency, Arts for LA, mobilized an e-mail campaign to school board members, enlisted the help of celebrities, and negotiated with the school board to keep the arts programs from being eliminated. **This blog** covers several of their strategies.
  
- » **Start a community arts advocacy team.** One way to engage the community is to create a community arts team comprised of business leaders, teachers, principals, school board members, superintendents, parents, students, arts organizations, and other stakeholders. Once you've assembled members of the community, it's time to discuss what you want to strive for, and to create a shared vision for arts education. Again, Arts for LA has many tips on **starting a community advocacy team**, as well as **recruiting leaders and volunteers** for the team.
  
- » **Create candidate surveys-questionnaires on arts education.** See the previous Federal Leaders section for more information. The **Center for Arts Education** in NYC has an excellent example of surveys used in the New York City mayoral race. **[www.nycartsed.com](http://www.nycartsed.com)**

# Conclusion

Your success depends on how decision-makers view you. Do they trust you, respect your opinion (not necessarily agree with it), value you as a person, and seek your advice? If so, then you're well on your way to success. It takes a village to educate a child. Everyone has a role they can play. Thank you for taking this first step in mobilizing support for arts education in your village.

[Three Simple Ways to Get Started](#)

[Ten Easy Steps to Develop Your Advocacy Habit](#)

[Top 15 Tips for Successful Advocacy](#)



Everyone loves a good list. So here are three. These reminders will help you continue to flex your advocacy muscles, grow as a community leader, and see increased support for arts education in your community.

## Conclusion

# Three Simple Ways to Get Started

Advocacy starts with education of your own supporters. Don't assume they know the value of the arts, or even that they know what you do.

Again, advocacy always starts with the message:

- » Provide data on the benefits of arts education and why it is fundamental, not extra, as well as data about the lack of equal access to arts education.
- » Provide stories—prepare stories about what your organization is doing to bring arts to children.
- » Provide the why—connect the dots for people. Show how education can drive funding from individuals, foundations, corporations, and the government, and can grow and sustain your organization over time.

The list here was prepared by Belinda Rawlins for a policy institute at the National Alliance for Media Art and Culture. For additional details about “Steps to Building a Distributed Arts Advocacy Network,” please see the full checklist in the appendix.

## 1

### Prepare Your Organization

- Study the legislative process
- Prepare your board of directors
- Connect advocacy with your mission
- Create a who's who list
- Look for allies
- Know your decision makers
- Take stock of your human resources
- Assess your capacity to take action
- Develop a policy agenda

## 2

Begin to involve the whole of your organization in your advocacy efforts. Appoint somebody to be the point person (staff member, volunteer, board member—somebody has to be in charge of the effort).

Then work to develop a policy agenda. Identify a few key changes in laws or education policies that will benefit both your cause and your organization. Once you've identified this clear goal, you can use the list below to prepare your organization, to become a voice for your cause, and to increase and sustain your advocacy efforts.

## Become A Voice for Your Cause

- Build public policy presence
- Become a source of reliable information
- Build relationships with policymakers
- Become a vehicle of democracy for your community, constituents, and volunteers

# 3

## Increase and Sustain Advocacy

- Know the staff
- Call, write, visit
- Build relationships with media
- Provide opportunities for policymakers
- Educate the public and your members on your issue
- Initiate grassroots support
- Testify
- Demonstrate your organization's effectiveness and values
- Cover all bases
- Share information and be inclusive in decision-making
- Give credit when credit is due

## 10

## Easy Steps to Develop Your Advocacy Habit

Adapted from Americans for the Arts Monograph *Making Advocacy a Habit*.

- 1 Be informed.** Get information on the issues (even the name and number of the legislation). Join your state arts advocacy group or national service organizations to become informed about the issues.
- 2 Find out who your representatives are at the federal, state, and local levels.** Maintain records on each of your legislators with background materials, copies of all correspondence sent and received, newspaper clippings, and more. Create a contact log so you can document your progress with them.
- 3 Put your legislators on your mailing lists; ask to be put on theirs.** Mutual awareness of what each other cares about is essential to building a strong relationship.
- 4 Share your success stories.** Ask them to distribute brochures about your program at their office. Most legislative offices have information on happenings in their district. Let them be active in helping to promote you.
- 5 Send a poster or photograph for their office.** Visual reminders help reinforce their awareness of you—especially if the picture is of them at one of your events. (Always check with the office manager first because there may be legal limitations and ethics issues involved in accepting gifts.)
- 6 Openly credit your public funding sources.** Placards in the lobby, credit lines in programs, press releases in newspapers are all tools that take little time to create, but make an enormous impact.
- 7 Say thank you—a lot!** If you don't have time to write, make a call. Never let them forget you are out there.
- 8 Create visibility for your legislator.** Explore creative options for your legislator to get positive exposure in his/her district through your venue.
- 9 Act regularly and promptly.** Don't wait for someone else to take care of the issues. Make a commitment to do what you are able to do, no matter how small it may seem. Start believing that a single voice can make a difference.
- 10 Activate.** Find others to join you in delivering your message. A business owner makes a meaningful case about arts and economic development. A school principal brings additional credibility to the case for arts in the schools. Make advocacy part of everyone's job description (board, staff, volunteers), because everyone has a role to play.

# 15

## Tips for Successful Advocacy

- 1** Advocacy must be part of daily mission.
- 2** Being successful depends on a unified message, purpose and strategy.
- 3** Seek to establish coalitions.
- 4** Politics is fluid; change constant. Be ready for it!
- 5** Establish a strategy plan.
- 6** Get to know your education decision makers.
- 7** Understand how your activities contribute to the greater good.
- 8** Treat your allies and opponents with friendly respect.
- 9** Work hard for your political friends.
- 10** Be honest.
- 11** Politicians respond to voters. Target voters for your advocacy.
- 12** Strive for clarity and brevity in all your communications.
- 13** Understand the key decision maker's political position and how your issue might be difficult to adopt or maintain.
- 14** Meeting with key decision maker's senior staff is often just as good or better than meeting with the principle.
- 15** Always make "the ask"—let people know what you want or what you want them to do.

## Appendix

# Steps to Building a Distributed Arts Advocacy Network

Created by Belinda Rawlins for the policy institute at the National Alliance for Media Art and Culture.

## Step 1: Prepare your organization for Public Policy

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
1a	<b>Review the law.</b> Learn the Legal opportunities and limits of nonprofit participation in the public policy process. Lobbying is legal. Supporting candidates for office is not.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1b	<b>Prepare your Board of Directors.</b> Discuss the potential benefits of a board committee on public policy with your Chairperson and query board members to determine their interest in helping build your organization's public policy capacity.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1c	<b>Review The Relationships Between Your Organization and Government.</b> Meet with your executive director and board chair to develop a comprehensive list of the ways government, at all levels, affects your organization's ability to meet its mission.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1d	<b>Connect public policy with governance.</b> Develop an agenda of items for discussion and decision at your next board meeting. Aim to inform your board how public policies affect those you serve and your organization's ability to provide services. Be sure to discuss the findings of your research on how government policies.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1e	<b>Develop a public policy agenda.</b> Identify several members of your board to work with you on public policy matters and meet to identify the two or three most important long term changes in laws and/or regulations that would benefit your cause and organizational capacity. Have a clear number one priority so you will be able to maintain focus. Write them down. Next to them, describe in a few sentences, if these changes occurred, how those you serve would benefit		<input type="checkbox"/>	



## Step 1: Prepare your organization for Public Policy (Cont'd)

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
1f	<b>Study the legislative process.</b> Become at least somewhat familiar with the process by which a bill becomes a law and how rules and regulations are written.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1g	<b>Create a who's who list.</b> Make a list of the government officials, including elected representatives, judges and agency staff that make policy decisions about issues identified in your policy agenda. Build a master list of persons (including contact information) who are in positions of influence with regard to your programs and services.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1h	<b>Take a stock of your human resources.</b> Make a list of key members who work, volunteer or are served by your organization, including members who would be willing to contact their elected officials on behalf of your cause.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1i	<b>Diversity helps.</b> Invite and encourage your constituents and other stakeholders to participate in your public policy work. Multiple perspectives will strengthen the process and outcomes of your efforts.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1j	<b>Develop useful data.</b> Develop a local success story that demonstrates the good work of your organization. If your program was made possible because of certain laws and/or funding from government, include such information in your story. Make the connection between government action and a positive.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1k	<b>Look for allies.</b> Make a list of other nonprofits in your region that provide similar services. Contact them to find out if they work on similar public policy matters. If so, find out if they participate in any coalitions and how you can get information about joining.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Appendix

## Step 1: Prepare your organization for Public Policy (Cont'd)

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
1l	<b>Know your policymakers.</b> Research the interests of your elected officials to find out if they have professional or personal ties to your cause.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1m	<b>Brief your Attorney(s) and your accountant(s).</b> Brief your counsels on your new public policy work. Provide information about the laws governing lobbying and voter education to make sure they understand the legal opportunities for public policy engagement.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
1n	<b>Assess your capacity to take action.</b> Review your organization's decision-making structure to make sure that you can act quickly enough to keep pace with the legislative process. Designate a board committer and/or staff person to make key legislation related decisions as the need arises.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Step 2: Become a Voice for your Cause and a Vehicle for Citizen Participation

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
2a	<b>Build a Public Policy Presence.</b> Attend a coalition meeting of another organization working on a similar public policy issues to send a strong signal that your organization cares about the issue.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2b	<b>Become a source reliable information.</b> Create a packet of information about your organization including its mission and services and your public policy agenda along with a letter to each of the key elected officials and government agency staff who decisions affect your cause. Send the packets with a note that you will follow up to schedule an informational meeting to discuss their position with regard to your public policy priorities.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Step 2: Become a Voice for your Cause and a Vehicle for Citizen Participation (Cont'd)

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
2c	<b>Begin Building relationships with policymakers.</b> Each month, make time to meet with one of your elected officials or a key agency staff person to inform them of the policies your organization supports and to learn how your organization may work cooperatively with them to achieve your public policy goals. Ask one of your board members to attend the meeting with you.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
2d	<b>Become a vehicle of democracy for your community, constituents and volunteers.</b> Invite volunteers and constituents to meet with you to discuss your organization's public policy agenda and to learn how they may contribute to your decision-making and promote it with policy makers. Meet with them and enlist their support for future meetings with elected officials and grassroots lobbying efforts.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Step 3: Increase and Sustain Your Advocacy

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
3a	<b>Know the Staff.</b> Find out which staff person works on your issue and get to know that person. Send staff your information packet. Meet with them as appropriate. On occasion, invite them to speak to your members.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3b	<b>Use the telephone.</b> Make telephone calls to your elected officials about pending legislation, regulations, or other priority public policy matters to describe how a change in law would affect your programs and constituents. Urge your members and volunteers to do likewise by mail or broadcast fax.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Appendix

## Step 3: Increase and Sustain Your Advocacy (Cont'd)

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
3c	<b>Write a letter.</b> Be sure to include how your members, community and those you serve would be affected by a proposed change in the law. Send a copy to the legislator's staff and to the chair of your public policy committee.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3d	<b>Initiate grassroots support.</b> Write an action alert to your volunteers, donors, members and constituents urging them to contact their elected representatives about policies and pending legislation affecting your cause. Remember to thank those supporters who do contact their legislators in response to your request.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3e	<b>Testify.</b> Find out when the appropriate committees in your state legislature are holding hearings on subjects related to your mission and ask for permission to provide testimony in person. Remember to include your testimony, data about the impact of your services along with your recommendation for action on the public policy issue.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3f	<b>Demonstrate your organization's effectiveness and values.</b> Provide a one-hour tour of your programs for one of your elected officials. Be sure to have a board member on site to show their support.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3g	<b>Cover all the bases.</b> Contact local, state or federal government agency staffs that you work with to let them know how pending legislation or regulations will affect your ability to deliver your programs. Write a similar letter to your Governor.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3h	<b>Share information and be inclusive in decision-making.</b> Convene a small meeting of your key board members, constituents and volunteers with one of your elected officials to explain how pending public policy may affect your constituents and community.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3i	<b>Give credit when credit is due.</b> Write a letter of congratulations to one or more of the elected officials when they act in a helpful way to your cause. Remember to thank all those who volunteered time and money to help your public policy efforts		<input type="checkbox"/>	

### Step 3: Increase and Sustain Your Advocacy (Cont'd)

No.	Step	Goal Date	Completed	Notes
3j	<b>Provide leadership opportunities.</b> Host a speaking opportunity to provide an opportunity for an elected official to articulate his or her support for your cause and position on important legislation. You may also want to delegate the tasks of developing an analysis, organizing constituents and/or others served by your organization, to a volunteer who has demonstrated reliability and leadership in public policy work.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3k	<b>Inform the media.</b> Write a letter to the editor of your local or regional newspaper about how a pending public policy issue would affect your cause.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3l	<b>Build relationships with the media.</b> Meet the writer who covers the beat most closely related to the work of your organization. Also meet with a member of the editorial board of your local paper to pitch a story idea about community needs that your organization confronts through its public policy work.		<input type="checkbox"/>	
3m	<b>Inform and educate your publics.</b> Write an article for your next newsletter about a public policy issue and how it may affect your cause. Be sure to let your readership know how they can be supportive and receive more information.		<input type="checkbox"/>	

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## About Vans Custom Culture



For more than 45 years, Vans has evolved beyond a surf and skate shop to draw influence from Southern California youth culture as diverse as it is progressive. Incorporating elements from art, music, and street culture, with deep roots in action sports heritage, Vans today offers a full range of footwear, timeless apparel, and accessories around the world.

In 2010, youth brand Vans developed the Vans Custom Culture Art Competition to encourage high school students across the United States to embrace their creativity and inspire a new generation of youth culture. Vans Custom Culture is committed to investing in the arts as an integral part of all students' education.

The Vans Custom Culture competition offers students a fresh perspective on art and an outlet for self expression through the synthesizing of design, fashion, and function during this unique contest and multimedia exhibit.

[www.vans.com/customculture](http://www.vans.com/customculture)

## About Americans for the Arts



Founded in 1960, Americans for the Arts is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education. From offices in Washington, DC and New York City, we provide a rich array of programs and services that meet the needs of more than 150,000 organizations and individuals who cultivate, promote, sustain, and support the arts in America.

Americans for the Arts envisions a country where every child has access to—and takes part in—high quality and lifelong learning experiences in the arts, both in school and in the community. We believe that learning in the arts enables every individual to develop the critical thinking, collaborative, and creative skills necessary to succeed in today's ever-changing world.

Through advocacy, research, partnerships, and professional development, Americans for the Arts strives to provide and secure more resources and support for arts education.

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