Advocacy Basics
Advocacy is about communication, relationship building and storytelling. The more successful you are in each of these endeavors, the more successful your advocacy efforts are likely to be.

Communication
- Make sure that the legislator or legislative staffer that you are communicating with knows that you are a constituent.
- Be personable. Friendly, charming contacts will keep the lines of communication open and relaxed. Be polite and appreciative.
- Keep it simple and stick to one issue at a time. Long lists of issues can cause the most important issues to get lost in the crowd. Focus your legislators by prioritizing one or a few related issues.
- Try to get a commitment. Be direct about what action you feel is appropriate and try to get a commitment from the official as to what he/she will do.
- Always follow up with a thank you letter or email that reminds the legislator of your visit and restates your asks.

Relationship Building
- Develop relationships on all levels of government: local, state, and federal. Remember that federal legislation can affect state and local government, but no level of government is more important than another. Local government is a good place to get started in being a communicative citizen.
- Keep your legislators informed and up-to-date about your activities, accomplishments and events. Provide them with information, contacts, and referrals so they can find out more.
- Know your legislators. Find out all you can about their special interests and favorite causes. This information will help you tailor your presentation to legislators’ personal interests. Find out what committees legislators are on so that you can target the right official for your issue and know who can make or break a piece of legislation.
- Address legislators who are already supportive of arts and culture, as well as those who are not supportive. Keep them informed as issues change or legislation moves.
- Get to know legislative staff. The aides to an elected official are powerful influences on the official. They assemble and analyze the research and data that later forms the presentation of an issue to the legislator. A staff member on your side is a powerful ally. Keep in mind that legislative staff can change frequently, so be sure to stay current and offer to brief new staff about your
issues and concerns. Find out who on the legislator’s staff is responsible for arts and culture research and issues.

**Storytelling**

- Always provide accurate information when communicating with an elected official. Don’t be afraid to admit you don’t have the answer to a question; promise to research the answer and get back to them. Misinformation given hastily can be damaging.
- Personal experiences of a legislator’s constituents can be particularly useful in helping to make your case. Be sure to relay these stories to the legislators, provided contact information when possible. When making personal visits to legislative offices always try to bring at least one constituent with you so that they can tell the legislator their story first hand.