



Missouri Citizens for the Arts

Arts Advocacy Tool Kit

advocate (ad' va kat) *To speak in favor of: recommend. – n. A person who argues for a cause:*

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If you believe the arts are important for everyone, you can make a difference by becoming an arts advocate. With this Tool Kit, any individual can learn how to effectively advocate for arts funding, arts education, and other arts issues in Missouri.

Getting Involved in Arts Advocacy:

Important considerations when starting to advocate

Making Arts Advocacy a Habit:

Regular and ongoing advocacy activities

Communicating with Elected Officials:

What to do and what not to do

Election Year Activities:

Missouri State election cycles and election season activities

Candidate Forums:

Instructions and sample questions

Voter Registration Drive

How to hold a drive at your facility or at your events

Contact Info for Elected Officials:

Links to contact various elected officials

Advocacy Links

Advocacy Calendar:

Month by month cycle of advocacy activities

Get Involved in Arts Advocacy

Individuals and organizations have the right - in fact, the duty - to participate in the legislative process. Independent Sector, a national leadership forum "working to encourage giving, volunteering, not-for-profit initiative, and citizen action," says there are three primary reasons why it's necessary to lobby for issues, which are important to you.

- **First**, government affects every aspect of our lives
- **Second**, in a democracy, government responds to the wishes of the people
- **Third**, if you don't lobby, remember someone else with a different viewpoint or cause will

Before you begin, however, consider the following:

Do's and Don'ts of Advocacy

Your non-profit 501(c) (3) organization CAN:

- **Educate** elected officials on issues of concern in the arts community
- **Arrange meetings** with elected officials to learn their views on the arts
- **Invite elected** officials to meetings of the organization to talk about the arts
- **Send literature** on arts issues to elected officials

Your non-profit 501(c) (3) organization CANNOT:

- **Endorse** or oppose candidates for public office
- **Collect** or distribute funds for political campaigns
- **Give** candidates your mailing lists
- **Donate** use of your facilities for political fundraising

As an Individual American Citizen you CAN:

- **Contribute** money to candidates of your choice
- **Invite your friends** to an arts fund-raiser/coffee party for a candidate at your home
- **Volunteer** to work on a candidate's campaign

You CANNOT:

- **Participate in these campaign activities as an employee** of your organization. It is okay to educate legislators about the arts as part of your workday, but it is NOT okay to help their election efforts during your workday.

***You can obtain more information on lobbying from
CHARITY LOBBYING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST (CLPI)***

Make Advocacy a Habit

With a very manageable amount of effort, you and others in your organization can make a difference for arts and culture in Missouri.

As a General Rule You Should:

- **Put elected officials** on your mailing list, PR list and VIP list
- **Send press releases** to your local media when you receive a government grant
- **Write a thank-you note** to the appropriate elected officials when you receive a government grant
- **Inform your constituency** that your event or facility was made possible in part through public funds and encourage them, audiences, patrons, volunteers, students, etc., to send thank-you letters to elected officials
- **Write appropriate elected officials** when, due to a lack of available funds, you do not receive a grant or receive a grant that is much lower than requested. Request that they increase public investment in arts and culture so that projects like yours can be funded in the future. **STAY POSITIVE**, but let them know what you would have been able to do for your community had you received the funds.

Once a Month Invite an Elected Official to Do One of the Following:

- **Tour your facility** and educate them about your programs and how they benefit the community.
- **Speak about** the legislative process or other government processes at a meeting of your board of directors or membership.
- **Speak** at dedications, community celebrations, etc. Don't forget the press releases. Take photos and display them.
- **Attend celebratory gatherings** including opening nights, and any pre or post publicity events of shows, previews, openings, exhibits or displays.
- **Perform a walk-on role** for a performance of a holiday show.
- **Meet with a group of constituents** in her/his district office to talk about the arts and or arts education.
- **Display artwork** of local artists in his or her office. Volunteer to find artwork to loan them for their office in Jefferson City during the session.

Be an Active Participant in Missouri Citizens for the Arts (www.mo4arts.org)

- **Inform MCA of exciting new advocacy activities** so we share them with other advocates.
- **Sign up for the MCA Action Alert** list and take action when contacted.
- **Appoint an "Advocacy Point Person"** for your organization or school who will take responsibility for keeping board and staff informed on political activity affecting the arts.
- **Report the name** and contact information of your Advocacy Point Person to MCA
- **Become a dues paying member** of Missouri Citizens for the Arts (MCA) to support both the grassroots advocacy activities and the direct lobbying efforts of the organization. The sole support for these efforts is membership dues.

Advocacy is an ongoing activity. Every election brings new elected officials with new agendas. Arts advocates must continue to educate and inform.

Communicating with Elected Officials

Writing, calling and meeting are all effective means of getting your message across to your legislators. Legislators are impressed when they receive just five "hits" on one topic because most people don't bother to take the time to tell them what they think. Legislators are even more impressed when the messages come from the people who live in their own voting district. Your message can change the way they vote.

Delivering the Message

- **Writing** reminds your elected officials that their decisions have a direct impact on you, their constituent. Postal service, e-mail, and faxing are alternative ways of delivering letters to your legislators; the same rules of etiquette and clarity apply.
- **Calling** is a very effective way to contact elected officials when you must get your message across quickly.
- **Meetings** with elected officials are a key element in your advocacy efforts. Legislators and other elected officials have busy schedules so it is important to get your message across quickly. Remember legislators often have more time to meet with constituents when the legislature is not in session and they are in their home districts.

When Writing Elected Officials

DO:

- **Use the correct** address and salutation, e.g., Dear Senator (name), or Dear Representative (name), or Dear Governor (name).
- **Type or write your letter clearly.** If your letter is not easy to read, it could be discarded. Be sure to include your return address in the letter or e-mail.
- **State your position** in the first sentence (or subject line on an e-mail). Keep your message focused.
- **Be brief**, but include enough information to explain why you are writing.
- **Use your own words** and stationery. Legislators feel that personal letters, rather than form letters, show greater personal commitment on the part of the writer, and therefore carry greater weight.
- **Be specific.** If possible, give an example of how the issue affects your district.
- **Know your facts.** It is important to be accurate and honest in your letter. You can seriously hurt your credibility by offering inaccurate or misleading information. If you can, find out how your legislators voted on this issue or similar issues in the past.
- **Be timely.** Contact your legislator while there is time for him/her to consider and act on your request. Respond quickly to MCA's Action Alerts.
- **Be persistent.** Do not be satisfied with responding letters that give a status report on the bill, promise to "keep your views in mind," or otherwise skirt the issue. Without being rude, write back and ask for a more specific response.
- **Say thank you.** Everyone appreciates a pat on the back. If, however, your legislator did not support your position, let him/her know that you are aware of that, and explain why you think he/she should have decided differently. It might make a difference next time.

Communicating with Elected Officials (Continued)

DON'T:

- **Use a negative**, condescending, threatening or intimidating tone. You will only alienate your legislator and cause bad feelings that may hurt your case.

When Calling Elected Officials

DO:

- **Ask to speak** with the aide handling your issue. The aides have the legislator's ear, and are often very knowledgeable about the details of your issue. Be sure to take down the name of the aide with whom you spoke in case you need to contact the legislator again. You will also have the name of another person to thank.
- **Know what you want to say** and BE BRIEF. Use your time wisely and get your main points covered as close to the beginning of the conversation as possible.
- **Leave your name**, address and telephone number. This will enable the aide to get back to you with information on the legislator's position. Let him/her know that you want a reply.
- **Follow up** your phone call with a brief note of thanks for the conversation, a concise summary of your position, and additional information if it has been requested.

DON'T:

- **Bluff.** If the legislator or aide asks you a question that you cannot answer, say that you will get back to him/her and then do the appropriate follow up.
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When Meeting With Elected Officials

DO:

- **Call first** for an appointment. Explain the purpose of your visit.
- **Be respectfully** tenacious and do not get discouraged. Legislators have a lot of things competing for their time. Set up a meeting with your legislator at his or her legislative office. If your legislator is unable to meet with you, schedule an appointment with the aide handling the issue.
- **Arrive** on time.
- **Be articulate.** The meeting should be brief and concise. If you are with a group of people, you may want to designate one spokesperson.
- **Be direct** by asking at the end of the meeting, "Will you support my cause?" His or her answer will help determine your future advocacy efforts.
- **Write a thank-you** letter promptly after your meeting.

DON'T:

- **Drop in** or show up unannounced.
- **Assail** those individuals or organizations that oppose your issue. Attacking a legislator can only hinder your efforts.

Election Year Advocacy

- **State & National Elections in Even-Numbered Years:** There are 34 Legislative Districts in Missouri, each having one Senator who holds the position for four years. There are 163 Representatives in Missouri who hold positions for two years. Statewide officials such as Governor, Secretary of State, etc. serve for four years and are on the ballot in the same year as the President. Missouri's nine members of Congress, who serve two year terms, are on the ballot in even-year elections. US Senators serve for six years and are on the even-year ballots.
- **Local Elections Years:** In St. Joseph the City Council is elected every 4 years. Buchanan County Commissioners serve 4 year terms. The Eastern and Western Commissioners election cycle are the same as the Presidential cycle. The Presiding Commissioner election cycle follows two years later.
- **Campaign Season** is a great time to get acquainted with candidates and let them know who you are, why you care about the arts and what the arts do for your community. This is a time when candidates are working to build relationships with constituents. Once they take office elected officials are very busy and it is more difficult to start a relationship, especially for the legislature and members of congress who are in Jefferson City and Washington DC respectively for a good portion of the year. But, if you've done your work during election season and when they are at home in the district, you can draw on your existing relationship to ask for support on specific issues.

Election Season Activities: As an organization

- **Attend any and all** candidate forums, town meetings, etc. armed with questions relating to the arts and/or arts education.
- **Work with other arts** or education advocates to organize a candidate forum.
- **Invite candidates** to speak at a meeting of arts advocates, ensure you get out a crowd.
- **Hold voter** registrations at your events!

Election Season Activities: As an individual

- **Get involved** in candidates' campaigns.
- **Contribute** financially to the candidates of your choice.
- **Hold a fund-raiser** for an arts/education-friendly candidate.
- **Be sure to register and VOTE!!!**

Candidate Forums

Arts Advocates attending candidate forums and asking questions about arts and culture serve several important functions, including:

- **Informing future elected** officials that members of their own communities care about the arts and arts education.
- **Educating politicians** about arts and cultural issues.
- **Helping Arts Advocates decide** which candidates to support.

When asking a question at a candidates' forum:

- **Identify** yourself briefly: "I am [your name] and I am the [director of--on the board of-a supporter of] [organization name].
- **Explain the issue** you want to address, again be brief.
- **Clearly and concisely** ask your question. If you want more than a yes or no answer, phrase the question appropriately.

Sample Questions:

Issue: The State invests money in arts and culture through funding to the Missouri Arts Council, enabling MAC and its partners to leverage private, federal, and other public funds to increase accesses to arts and culture, provide positive activities for youth, attract tourists, contribute to local economies and contribute to the quality of life through arts and cultural initiatives.

Question: *Do you believe this is a wise investment of public funds? Why or why not?*

Issue: In many communities the arts are being used as effective tools for addressing key issues of our time, such as revitalizing downtowns, providing positive activities for youth, attracting tourists, and retaining a strong workforce.

Question: *Do you think it is appropriate to invest public funds to integrate the arts into addressing key community issues? Do you know of any examples in your own community where the arts have been or could be used in this manner?*

Issue: Learning in the arts helps students develop problem solving and reasoning skills, hone communication ability, expand creativity and work cooperatively, all of which are important abilities for young people as they prepare for their futures, including jobs in the new economy.

Question: *What is your assessment of the state of arts education in your local schools?*

Issue: Including the arts as a part of basic education as one of the content areas that will be taught and where learning will be assessed.

Question: *Do you feel the arts should be considered a part of a complete education for all Missouri students? If so, what will you do to make sure the arts are retained as a priority in the state's education systems?*

Voter Registration Drives

Arts organizations have many opportunities to register people to vote, including before performances, as they enter exhibitions, and as they participate in many kinds of public activities. In fact, the Voter Registration Act of 1993 encourages "all nongovernmental entities" to participate in voter registration.

Although the organizations exempt from tax under section 501(c) (3) of the tax code must strictly comply with the ban on electioneering, they are permitted to engage in a variety of nonpartisan voter education and voter participation projects. Such projects may include public education, advocacy on controversial policy issues, and efforts designed to increase voting by disadvantaged or excluded groups in society.

Easy Steps to Set Up a Voter Registration Drive

- Make an organizational decision or policy that your group endorses voter registration as part of your routine services offered to your community.
- Contact the Office of the Secretary of State to obtain mail-in voter registration forms.
- Appoint a staff person or interested volunteer as the coordinator for voter registration activities. This person should ensure that the organization has an adequate supply of state mail-in voter registration forms at all times, and organize a registration table in the lobby where people may fill in these forms.
- Get the message out to subscribers/audiences through articles in newsletters, program announcements, display posters, fliers, etc. in the lobby offering to register people to vote.
- Always offer to help people complete the voter registration form. Check to be sure that the application is properly filled out, and offer to mail it to the appropriate elections office. Maintain a record of how many people register to vote through your organization.

Contact Info for Elected Officials

Missouri State Senate Information

<http://www.senate.mo.gov/>

Missouri State Legislature

<http://www.house.mo.gov/>

Missouri State Governor

<http://governor.mo.gov/>

US House of Representatives

<http://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep>

US Senate

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=MO

Advocacy Links

National Organizations

- **AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS** www.artsusa.org
The national organization that strives to make arts more accessible to every adult and child in America. The AFTA site contains an Arts Advocacy Page.
- **CHARITY LOBBYING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST** www.clpi.org
CLPI is dedicated to educating charities about the important and appropriate role lobbying can play in achieving their missions. Available from the site is their publication *The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide* www.clpi.org/toc.html
- **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES** www.nasaa-arts.org
NASAA is the membership organization of the nation's state and jurisdictional arts agencies.
- **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS** <http://arts.endow.gov>
The mission of the NEA is to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in the United States, and to broaden public access to the arts. Since 1965, the NEA has awarded more than 111,000 grants to support thousands of projects.
- **OMB Watch** www.ombwatch.org
Hosts an online resource to support capacity building for nonprofit advocacy by collecting the best practices of seasoned advocates and engaging newcomers with a wide range updated topics and tools.

State Organization

- **MISSOURI CITIZENS FOR THE ARTS** <http://www.mo4arts.org/>
A non-partisan, state-wide, grass roots organization that advocates to secure stable financial support for the arts to benefit Missouri and its citizens.

Missouri State Voter Information

- **Missouri Secretary of State: Election/Voting/Voter Registration and Information”**
http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/s_default.asp?id=voting
- **Missouri Legislative Action Center**
<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/state/main/?state=MO&view=myofficials#>
At this site you can look up your elected officials by address or zip code

State of Missouri

- **MISSOURI ARTS COUNCIL** www.missouriartscouncil.org/
- **GOVERNOR** <http://governor.mo.gov/>
- **STATE LEGISLATURE** <http://www.house.mo.gov/>
- **SECRETARY OF STATE** <http://www.sos.mo.gov>
- **MISSOURI STATE HOME PAGE** <http://www.mo.gov/>

Advocacy Calendar

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS & DATES WHAT YOU CAN DO

November

GENERAL ELECTION (1st Tuesday in November)

- VOTE!!
- Send congratulations to winners reinforcing the value of the arts in your community
- Add newly elected officials to your mailing lists
- Sign up for MCA ACTION ALERTS and stay Informed
- Make plans to attend the Advocacy Workshop in your region

December

- Invite legislators to coffee parties, performances and local events
- Visit your legislators in district offices
- Encourage your friends, staff, board, volunteers to sign up for MCA Action Alerts

January

LEGISLATURE CONVENES

MCA begins reviewing legislation

Governor presents the budget recommendations during his State of the State address

- Make plans to attend Citizens Day for the Arts
- Recruit as many arts advocates as you can to join you at Citizens Day
- Prepare materials to be delivered to Legislators on Citizens Day

February

Legislative Session Continues

House reviews and makes budget recommendations

CITIZENS DAY FOR THE ARTS in JEFFERSON CITY (check website for date)

ACTION ALERTS as appropriate

- ATTEND CITIZENS DAY IN JEFF CITY
- Encourage others to attend Citizens Day
- If unable to attend, write or contact legislators
- Write your Representative and request his/her support for arts council funding
- Read MCA's Action Alerts and respond to requests for action
- Pass MCA's Action Alerts on to your friends and colleagues
- Join MCA

March

Legislative Session Continues

Senate Reviews budget and takes testimony from departments

ACTION ALERTS when appropriate

- Respond to MCA Action Alerts
- Follow up with your Representative on your letter to support the arts council funding
- Respond to Action Alerts about National Advocacy Issues
- Americans for the Arts National Arts Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C.
- If unable to attend, write or contact legislators

April

Legislative Session Continues

ACTION ALERTS when appropriate

Senate makes final budget recommendations

Conference Committee convenes (5 House members & 5 Senate members)

- Join MCA

May

Legislative Session Continues

House & Senate adopt Conference Committee recommendations

Budget due to Governor by first Friday in May

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENDS SECOND WEEK IN MAY

- Send thank-you letters to legislators
- Send letter to the Governor to support the Legislature's budget recommendations

June

State Legislature in Recess

Governor signs or vetoes budget

End of State Fiscal Year

- Invite legislators to coffee parties, performances and local events
- Attend Missouri Citizens' for the Arts Annual Meeting

July

State Legislature in Recess

- Join MCA or renew your membership!
- Encourage others to join MCA so our voice becomes stronger
- Visit your Legislators in district offices
- Continue to invite legislators to your performances, art openings, festivals, etc.
- Attend candidate forums or coordinate visits over coffee to discuss arts issues

August

State Legislature in Recess

- As individuals, become involved in the local election process
- Follow up with Legislators on the value arts council funding with information on your programs and services
- Join MCA

September

State Legislature in Recess

Missouri Arts Council submits budget request to the Department of Economic Development.

- Continue personal involvement in election process
- Attend candidate forums, etc.
- Invite Elected Officials to performances, art openings, festivals, etc.

October

- Continue involvement in election process
- Join MCA
- Make plans to attend the Advocacy Workshop in your region