

POLICY CHANGE 101

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy activities help elevate awareness of your organization's mission, and educate members of the private and public sectors about the collective importance of the arts sector in our region. Advocacy generates public support for a cause or seeks to influence opinion about a broad public policy issue or specific cause.

What To Know

- There are no IRS prohibitions against advocacy. Only lobbying is regulated by the IRS.
- Advocacy is a constitutionally guaranteed right under the 1st Amendment that allows people to “peacefully assemble and petition government for redress of grievances”
- Advocacy is not only a right, but a responsibility

What Does Advocacy Look Like?

- Research, information gathering
- Building relationships, collaborating, coalitions, associations
- Public messaging, op-eds, letters to the editor
- Hosting public forums
- Encouraging, either in-person or in writing, legislative support or opposition to broad public policy issues
- Endorsing a policy position on broad public policy issues
- Speaking to your friends and colleagues about a policy issue that matters to you

Definition: Broad Public Policy Issues

A broad public policy issue is a cause, campaign, or movement that is not related to a specific piece of legislation. For example: “arts education,” or “pay equity.”

Why Do It?

- Helps you promote your organization's mission
- Advocacy is inextricably linked to the functioning of a democracy
- Other sectors are advocating for what they need, the arts sector should feel empowered to do the same
- Advocacy can and DOES make a difference
- It's easy to do!

Other Forms of Advocacy

Government Relations

The broadest form of public sector engagement that can take place at federal, state and local levels. Primarily focused on long-term relationship building with elected officials and civil servants.

Lobbying

And IRS form of advocacy that seeks to influence public officials (directly or indirectly) on a *specific* piece of legislation. Nonprofits can legally engage in limited amounts of lobbying, but federal and state regulations require nonprofits to report their lobbying activities annually. Nonprofits considering participating in lobbying should engage with an experienced firm or consultant to learn about the types of lobbying and IRS reporting procedures.