

WYOMING ARTS ALLIANCE

together we are stronger



Arts Advocacy Toolkit

Wyoming Arts Alliance

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Organization Information

Vision:

Wyoming Arts Alliance (WyAA) is dedicated to being the state's leading voice supporting the arts and arts education.

Mission:

The mission of the Wyoming Arts Alliance (WyAA) is to advance a creative and culturally vibrant state.

The Wyoming Arts Alliance is a nonpartisan, statewide nonprofit 501C (3) organization dedicated to improving the climate for arts and culture throughout the state. WyAA strives to represent citizens in all regions of the state. Because public funding – and particularly state arts funding – has played an important role in building Wyoming's cultural infrastructure, the Wyoming Arts Alliance focuses much of its attention on the preservation and expansion of state arts support.

To accomplish its overarching goal of strengthening the arts throughout the state, WyAA engages in the following activities:

- Provides statewide leadership in advocating for the arts to enhance the quality of life
- Coordinates the services of a lobbyist in the Wyoming Legislature to proactively advocate for the interests of the statewide arts community
- Informs and mobilizes citizens around developments related to legislative arts initiatives
- Provides a regular stream of information about the arts and about happenings in the arts statewide. Our VoterVoice system is designed to give you the most up to date information on state and federal issues. (Please be sure to register under the Action Center on wyomingarts.org)
- Coordinates non-partisan advocacy efforts with other arts interests in the state
- Actively pursues wide grassroots support for arts advocacy programs
- Engages and persuades members of the arts community to become more involved in arts advocacy

The Wyoming Arts Alliance has one part-time paid staff person. WyAA's working Board is composed of people who are passionate about the arts and committed to making a difference in how the arts are supported throughout the state. Feel free to contact any Wyoming Arts Alliance Board Member to learn more.

Advocacy: An Introduction

What is advocacy?

Advocacy means pleading a case, presenting information and persuading others to support your cause.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is an activity involving communication with a legislator or other public official to influence their support of your position on specific legislation. Lobbying also includes appeals to an organization's members urging them to contact legislators . . . or communications to influence legislation through an attempt to affect public opinion.

Why do it?

Advocacy creates a social climate enabling the arts to play a greater role in the daily lives of Wyoming citizens.

Why is it important?

Advocacy is important because advocates make things happen. Without assertive advocacy, state funding for the arts can become stagnant. Lobbying is an essential part of citizenship. If you don't do it, others will decide the fate of the arts in Wyoming for you.

A statewide program of advocacy that demonstrates grassroots support for state arts funding sends a powerful message to policy makers at the state level that the people of Wyoming value arts and culture in their communities. Through advocacy, citizens can communicate their support for using tax dollars to fund the arts and cultural organizations that enrich their lives and the lives of their children.

Finally, business, foundation, civic, and community leaders will be more inclined to provide private funding sources in support of the arts if that support is advocated by a strong citizen voice.

Focus for advocacy

State Level: The Governor of Wyoming, members of the House and Senate

- Know who your state representative is
- Know who your state senator is

Federal Level: Two senators and one at-large Representative

(find out at wyomingarts.org – Action Center)

Who are the advocates?

You are – every person in the state of Wyoming who values arts and culture is a potential advocate.

People directly involved with the arts make especially good advocates because of their high motivation level.

Levels of advocacy

- **Arts advocacy organizations:** Wyoming Arts Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that facilitates statewide advocacy programs.

- **Advocacy activists:** Advocacy activists learn the issues, understand both sides of the argument and articulate the arts support position whenever and wherever possible. These people are the Wyoming Arts Alliance legislative liaisons who build positive relationships with elected officials. These advocacy activists lobby legislators in support of the arts and cultural issues. WyAA has a goal of identifying and developing at least one advocacy activist in every legislative district across the state. Using messaging developed by WyAA, these advocacy leaders communicate a consistent and coherent message that public funding for the arts is essential to quality of life of every Wyoming citizen.

- **Proactive advocates:** These activists proactively communicate their support for the arts with their state legislators and the governor on a regular basis. They provide a constant stream of correspondence that keeps the message of supporting the arts ever present in state leaders' minds. Proactive advocates are in it for the long haul – continually building relationships with officials.

- **Reactive advocates:** Reactive advocates answer the call to action when a crisis arises. For example, many people responded when the legislature was debating the Fine and Performing Arts standards in the Hathaway Success Curriculum. This group comprises the largest number of advocates. Involvement at this level often lays the foundation for and provides a springboard for more concerted participation in advocacy.

Becoming an advocate

Effective advocacy requires a commitment of time and energy. Take the next step from observer to participant and become engaged in the advocacy process for change. Join the growing network of Wyoming arts Alliance supporters!

- Learn who your legislators are and let them know how much you support funding for the arts and culture in Wyoming
- Communicate on a regular basis with your legislators
- Build relationships of trust and credibility with your elected officials
- Don't rely on someone else to take action – you are the key to success

- Let Wyoming's U.S. Senators and Representative know your views on funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and your support of arts and culture at the federal level

Team up with Wyoming Arts Alliance – together we are a strong unified voice supporting arts and culture. The responsibility lies with each and every one of us – there is no one else.

Write the letter; send the email; mail the invite; make the call; or schedule the visit with your elected official.

Lastly, register to vote if you are not already registered. Voting is part of your civic responsibility as a U.S. citizen, so take every opportunity to do so. As an advocate, encourage others to do likewise. Many arts supporters currently do not vote, so an opportunity exists for improvement in this area.

Working with Elected Officials

Advocacy is a process of communicating and building relationships with legislators. Lobbying elected officials is an ongoing process of building trust between elected officials and constituents. The more your officials trust you, the greater your credibility with them, and therefore, the greater impact your advocacy messages will have.

Start building the relationship with your political representatives before a crisis develops. Be proactive rather than reactive. Contact your elected officials when they do something you like as well as something you dislike.

Whether you are meeting with your legislators in your local community, at the State Capitol, or talking with them on the phone, here are a few important tips to remember:

- Establish a mailing list, telephone numbers and email addresses of all your elected officials
- Get to know your legislators before you need to ask for something. Learn their interests, politics and background. Start to build a relationship by inviting them to your events
- Remember that your issue is not the only one in front of your legislators. They may not be familiar with arts and culture issues. Your task is to educate them on arts and cultural issues and to explain the value of the arts to your life and to the community as a whole
- Target your message. Use data to help your officials better understand how their decisions on arts issues affect the citizens in their district. Wyoming Arts Alliance provides various value messages on wyomingarts.org – Action Center.
- Anytime you meet or speak with a legislator, leave them with a clear message of what needs to happen next to improve the condition of arts and culture in the community. You could request they vote for or against a specific bill, or to introduce legislation to address a certain problem.

- Include the Governor's office in your advocacy efforts. Veto power makes the Governor a key player
- Present your position in a concise manner to show how your issue will help in the legislators' district and use data as much as possible.
- Address your legislator's concerns directly; try to anticipate questions and be prepared to answer them. Present a one-page fact sheet on your position.
- Follow up a visit or a vote with a phone call or a thank you note.

Outline for Legislative Meetings

Opening

I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you today to discuss the impact of the arts in your district and the importance of (the creative economy or arts in education). Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.

Tell your personal story

- Brief description of what you and your organization does
- Overall number of jobs at your organization including paid and volunteer positions
- Impact of the current economic situation on your organization
- If your organization received a grant, please elaborate
 - What are those dollars used for
 - How do those dollars support jobs and/or youth education

The arts in Wyoming

- In 2016, the Wyoming Arts Council gave out over more than \$890,000 in grants
- For every \$1 of WAC grant funding, local communities and their residents invest another \$35 in arts programming (tickets, donations, purchases, etc.)
- As of 2015, total creative occupations in Wyoming represent 8,741 jobs
- Non-profit revenues generated in Wyoming is \$65.4 million

*(*Data for these talking points are provided by the Creative Vitality Suite.)*

The ask

- Thank you again for meeting with me today. I ask for your continued support for the arts and arts education in Wyoming.