

# ADVOCACY HUB



 Regional Arts &  
Culture Council

## What can I do Today?

Looking for something you can do right now to impact arts and culture and arts education in your community? Start with simple, proactive advocacy actions.

### WHAT CAN I DO TODAY AS AN ARTS ADVOCATE?

#### STRATEGIES FOR PROACTIVE ADVOCACY

*(Adapted from article by Camille Schenkkan of Arts for LA )*

In **reactive advocacy**, an issue arises, organizations like the Regional Arts & Culture Council go into high gear, the community mobilizes, and a decision is made that either resolves or aggravates the concern. In this model, we're essentially waiting for the shoe to fall so we can take action.

However, **proactive advocacy** is more difficult. It's about creating relationships with decision-makers (city council members, school boards, etc.), and increasing public value for arts & arts education *before* a crisis. The strategy behind proactive advocacy is to share the incredible power of arts and culture— its economic, educational, therapeutic, community-building power— with not only elected and appointed officials, but also the millions of people who don't already consider themselves to be arts advocates.

This is not as simple as clicking "send" on an Action Alert. It is, however, something individuals and organizations can do at any time, and will have a more lasting impact than reactive advocacy.

A list of suggestions is provided below, in no particular order:

#### *INTRODUCE YOURSELF/YOUR ORGANIZATION TO THE PEOPLE WHO REPRESENT YOU*

If you're not sure who represents you and/or your organization in city council, school board, state assembly, etc., visit [www.oregonlegislature.gov/](http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/) and enter your address.

To public officials and their staff, artists and arts organizations have invaluable resources. We have deep roots in our communities. We often have flexible meeting or presentation space. We have networks of civically involved people who follow us via

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email, social media and at our events. These resources are incredibly important to those who represent our constituencies. For example, many officials now have regular newsletters with community events, and they're constantly looking for new content. They hold many meetings, and might be happy to learn that you have a large room that they could use. Officials (and deputies!) are always looking for opportunities to connect with constituents in a positive setting, so inviting them to present an award, welcome a group of donors, or participate in a celebration of your organization's work.

Call your elected official's office and ask to speak to the arts and culture liaison or whoever handles community relations. Sometimes this person's direct contact information is listed on the official's website. Once you get him or her on the phone, briefly describe your work in the community and mention resources and opportunities. Even if they're not able to participate in a specific event, you're introducing yourself as a valuable community partner and cultivating a relationship with the staff member most likely to bring issues involving arts & culture to the official's attention. Maintain the relationship with this deputy via email and phone calls, and keep the opportunities coming!

When the moment comes for reactive advocacy, you can go to them as a partner (and an equal) to make your case. It puts you, your organization and your cause at an infinitely greater advantage. Position yourself as an ally and a resource, and your voice becomes stronger.

*Understanding the arts landscape in Oregon. LEARN YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH AND USE IT OUTSIDE OF THE CHOIR*

We now have qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating the power of arts and arts education and its relationship to 21st century skill sets, the local economy and quality of life. That's great—if we can share that data with people who aren't already convinced.

Check out some of the sites and PDFs below and focus on what you find fascinating. Learn a few facts and think about where you might be able to share them:

- [artlook\(r\)oregon](#)— a free, and accessible data based platform managed by RACC in partnership with Parliament Chicago and the Kennedy Center's Any Given Child Program. This platform utilizes data as a means to gauge access and equity in arts and culture programing in our community. It is also a connector for arts organizations, schools, community members to arts and cultural programing available in the region.

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artlook(ri)oregon is currently in the tri-county area with nearly 300 participating arts organizations. (current for 2023)

- [Oregon Alliance for Arts Education](#). The OAAE is an Oregon statewide non-profit organization providing a unified voice for arts education, the arts and learning.
- [Oregon Department of Education: The Arts – Standards](#). Oregon adopted new Arts standards in September 2015. Based on the National Core Arts Standards, they contain standards for five discrete disciplines, a glossary for each discipline and supporting materials for the standards.
- RACC conducted an arts education survey in the Spring of 2022. [Here is a link](#) to our summary and action plan.
- [The Otis Report on the Creative Economy](#). This annual report measures the economic impact of the creative sector in Los Angeles and Orange County. My favorite fact: the creative sector comprises about 1 million direct & indirect jobs in the region— about one in six.
- [WESTAF](#) weaves technology, diverse thought leadership, and innovation to energize, network, and fund public sector arts agencies and communities. WestAF is based in Denver, CO.
- Our RACC one pagers- enable you to understand the programs quickly and effectively to be able to advocate for arts and culture in your community. The Advocacy Best Practices one-sheet provides basic information about advocacy vs. lobbying, making the case, and how to connect with policymakers.
- [Americans for the Arts](#) has a huge [Research](#) section if you're looking for a specific topic.

You can also look at your own organization's impact on the community and keep that information handy.

## GREAT PLACES TO GET THE WORD OUT:

- Dinner parties & happy hours. When people hear I work with a local theatre, they often say something like "I didn't think there was any theatre in the tri-county area." So I get to say, "Actually, there's an amazing theatre community with lots of interesting new work. There are surprisingly many small theatres here in our area. Tickets can be really affordable, too— [Arts for All](#) provides access to arts and culture events. [Go here](#) to find a local arts organization that has a performance or event you wish to attend. You must show your Oregon Trail card when you purchase your ticket or another form of proof that meets the criteria for the program.
- Outside of our region we all need to become publicists for the vibrant, diverse cultural life of the tri-county area. On a plane? Visiting relatives? "It's a great place for arts and culture. There are actually more than three thousand arts and cultural organizations in the county."

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- Parent groups. Getting other parents invested in arts education may be just a matter of sharing the facts about its benefits. RACC is also happy to work with you if you'd like to present to your PTA or School Site Council on the value of arts education. Contact us at [artsedu@racc.org](mailto:artsedu@racc.org) for more information. Go to our website and check out our current [arts education](#) opportunities.
- Social media provides an excellent (and free) opportunity to share information with your diverse personal network. I love watching an infographic or new report zoom around Facebook. Be sure to tag your posts. Invite others in.
- Can you use your space? Your lobby, gallery, performance space or website. This is especially clever, as it not only serves an advocacy purpose but also reminds audience of the artists and their stories.

## PUT LOCAL ELECTIONS IN YOUR CALENDAR AND READ UP ON THE CANDIDATES

***Voter turnout in Multnomah County has not always matched with our federal elections. In 2024, local, state and federal elections will be in alignment. This will increase voter participation and how you can use your voice to support arts and culture at the ballot box. Locally elected officials have a tremendous impact on policy, quality of life and allocation of public resources. RACC surveys candidates on their views on arts & culture before fall and spring elections to help you learn more before heading to the polls. Whether or not we've done a survey, you can find out about candidates' views on the issues you care about by attending a forum or doing quick Google research.***

- [Ballotpedia](#) – Oregon Voters Guide
- [Vote411](#) – Oregon. Upcoming Election Dates & Registration Deadlines. Some elections on the site are local and do not apply for all Oregon voters.
- [League of Women Voters of Portland](#)
- [State of Oregon](#) – all things related to voting in the State of Oregon
- [Next Up](#) -Through civic engagement, community building, and issue advocacy, we want young people to see, feel, and know that our collective political power can transform our communities. Next community builders. Next political leaders. Next movement organizers.(from the Next Up website).
- [Participatory Budgeting](#) (PBOregon)-a nonprofit organization that advocates for grassroots democracy where people decide how money should be spent in our community from the public budget. Participatory Budgeting is worldwide.
- [Rock the Vote](#) – an oldie but goodie. Lists local, state, and national dates and provides voter registration information and residency requirements.

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## SIGN UP FOR ACTION ALERTS

This isn't strictly proactive advocacy, but it will make sure you hear about new issues as soon as possible. Advocacy campaigns work best when they go viral, so the Regional Arts & Culture Council and other arts advocacy organizations count on organizations and individuals to spread the word quickly and widely when the moment arises. Good places to start:

- RACC's newsletter and Information [sign up](#)
- [Americans for the Arts](#)
- [Cultural Coalition of Oregon](#)

### CONTACT RACC

*We try to move quickly, but sometimes there are advocacy alerts we haven't posted, issues we know are coming up within a specific community, or an elected official who might need a reminder that her constituents care deeply about arts and culture. We try to keep track of 'active advocates' in council & school districts countywide and contact them first when we're looking for something specific, such as a small delegation to visit their city councilmember. Call or email [advocacy@racc.org](mailto:advocacy@racc.org) to introduce yourself and we'll make sure you're receiving the information relevant to your interests and community.*

You know more about what's happening in your community, so if there's something we should be aware of and you don't see it on our site... let us know. Thank you!

## INVEST IN ARTS ADVOCACY

If the list above doesn't seem feasible or you want to do more, consider a contribution to organizations engaged in affecting cultural policy and/or supporting arts and arts education in California:

- Buy the [Celebrate Oregon!](#) License plate. Proceeds from the Celebrate Oregon! license plate support promotion of the cultural tax credit, Oregon's unique tool for funding culture statewide.
- [Donate to RACC.](#)
- Support your local arts and culture organizations- make a donation
- Be a patron of the arts- go to events, performances, literary readings, music shows, youth in arts and culture, museums, cultural organizations...
- Join [Americans for the Arts](#).

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- Support arts education- volunteer in schools, support arts educators

*(RACC acknowledges much of this Advocacy Tool Kit and information is inspired from Arts for LA)*

## ***Team Members to Contact***

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