Tips/Tools for Meeting with Public Officials
(Content adapted from Arts For LA’s “Advocacy Toolkit” and Maryland Citizens for the Arts’ “Advocacy 101,” available on their websites.)

Sample Agenda for Meeting with Public Official:

1. Introductions
2. Thank them for past support
3. Update on what your organization is doing
4. Feedback from decision maker on your organization’s work
5. Context for current campaign [if relevant]
6. Request for support/commitment
7. Learn about decision maker – ask about their current priorities
8. Reinforce commitment
9. Thank them again
10. Follow-up plan - send a thank-you note, invite them to an event, etc

Lobbying Goals:
• Convince the target to support your position (short term)
• Build access and credibility (long term)
• Educate the target about your issue and your group (short & long term)

Lobbying Tools:
• Provide information – document the problem, proposals for a solution, info on what different groups are doing.
• Gather information – what else they are hearing, competing priorities, opposition
• Provide “hero” opportunities – give them a chance to be a leader on the issue.

Advocacy Meeting Do's

Do be courteous and friendly, to a fault.
Do say 'Thank You' whenever the opportunity arises.
Do know the issues thoroughly and be familiar with all sides of an issue.
Do be a good listener. You will have a better chance to address any objections to arts funding if you know why your elected official is opposed.
Do humanize your message. Include anecdotal stories about how programs and public dollars impact real people.
Do send personalized invitations to them for performances, exhibits, special events, and receptions. If they attend, acknowledge their presence publicly and thank them for their support.
Do get to know elected officials' staff members and keep them informed. Invite staff to events as well.
Do help build local and statewide coalitions with other cultural, civic, educational and business institutions.
Do enlist legislators you know are supportive of the arts to lobby their colleagues to come over to your position.

Advocacy Meeting Don't's

Don't preach or lecture.
Don't use a negative or intimidating tone.
Don't expect your meeting with your legislator to be long, especially when the General Assembly is in session. Maximize your time by whittling down your presentation to include an opening statement, a few supporting details, a closing summary, and a request.
Don't bluff. If you don't know an answer, say so, and call back with the correct information at the next opportunity.
Don't accept a general answer to your request. In a positive manner, request the official's specific views on the issue in question.
Don't wait until the last minute to contact your elected official about an issue before the legislature.
Don't forget to enjoy your visit! Use your enthusiasm, smiles, and eye contact to keep your legislators engaged.

Visit gaartsnetwork.org for further advocacy and arts resources