



GEORGIA  
ARTS  
NETWORK

## 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.