



Advocacy 101

The Cultural Advocacy Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, advocacy organization. We do our work primarily in Salem, advocating for policies and funding that will create a thriving environment for art, heritage, history and the humanities across Oregon.

We believe that when it comes to politics we are most effective when we are unified. We are strongest when we work together. If you are looking for ways to help shape public policy to support a vibrant cultural community, you've come to the right place. We are the Cultural Advocacy Coalition—and we are here to help you make a difference.

ADVOCACY 101

Nonprofit professionals:

This is your new mantra: My non-profit organization has the right and the responsibility to participate in the legislative process (subject to legal regulations).

501(c)3 nonprofits CANNOT:

- Endorse or oppose candidates for public office.
- Collect or distribute funds for political campaigns.
- Use your facilities for political fundraising (you can rent facilities to candidates at the market rate).
- Engage in legislative activities past a “certain limit” (the IRS has a lobbying limit for organizations; call your tax accountant for more information).

501(c)3 nonprofits CAN (and should):

- Schedule four to six opportunities to connect with policy makers each year. This allows you to get to know your legislators personally and it allows them to get to know you—and your organization.
- Participate in and arrange meetings with legislators to learn their views on issues.
- Educate elected officials on issues of concern to the arts, culture, heritage and humanities community.
- Join your legislators’ newsletter lists and add them to yours.
- When your organization receives a grant from the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Cultural Trust, County Cultural Coalition, Oregon Heritage Commission, Historic Preservation Office or Oregon Humanities write a thank you note to your legislators.
- Invite your legislators for a tour of your facility. Educate them about what you do and how your community benefits.

Individuals CAN (and should):

Individuals committed to arts and culture: here’s how you can advocate, regardless of title.

- Give money, attend events and fully participate in any and all campaign and lobby activities personally.
- Personally offer your endorsement of candidates for public office.
- Give funds to political campaigns.
- Join your legislators’ email newsletter lists.
- Get to know your state senator and state representative by attending their community meetings.
- Join the CAC—we need you in our Coalition!

Protecting the Oregon Cultural Trust

The Cultural Advocacy Coalition needs your help to protect the tax credit that fuels gifts to the Oregon Cultural Trust. The Oregon Cultural Trust’s tax credit will **EXPIRE AUTOMATICALLY** if we do not stand together to defend it.

Background Information

- The tax credit that encourages individual and corporate gifts to the Oregon Cultural Trust will expire in 2014, unless legislators VOTE to renew the credit.
- The tax credit costs the state General Fund \$3.3 million a year (or in legislator terms, \$6.7 million a biennium).
- Oregon’s General Fund/Lottery budget is about \$15 billion a biennium.
- The tax credit renewal will likely be referred to a policy committee, then the Joint Committee on Tax Credits.

Here’s how you can help.

DEVELOP an Impact Story!

An “impact story” details the impact of an Oregon Cultural Trust grant on your organization and community. The impact stories should include four elements:

Picture | Narrative | Local Connection | Data

As you develop your impact stories—share them with the Cultural Advocacy Coalition! As you meet with legislators, identify yourself as a Coalition member and tell us who you have met with.

Just remember, the tax credit that fuels gifts to the Cultural Trust will expire if we do nothing. Legislators don’t have to actively oppose the tax credit, they just have to do nothing and the tax credit disappears—and the Trust’s impact is diminished.

Take the time to act. Together we will protect the Oregon Cultural Trust and advocate for a thriving environment for art, heritage, history and the humanities across Oregon.





Tips & Reminders

Communicating with State Legislators

It is easier than you may think to connect with your duly elected representatives in Salem. Legislators listen to their constituents and it makes a difference when you connect with legislators personally. As an engaged constituent, your message can impact your legislator's vote in Salem.

Tips for Letters or Emails

Use the correct address and salutation. If sending mail, your envelope should be addressed to The Honorable (full name) and with the salutation Dear Senator (name), or Dear Representative (name).

Type or write legibly. Be sure to include your complete contact information and return address.

State your position in the first sentence (or subject line in an e-mail). Keep your message simple and straightforward.

Be succinct and remember to make your points relevant, memorable and factual.

Use your own words—and stationery. Personal letters, rather than form letters, show a personal investment on the part of the writer in the issue and outcome.

Keep it local. Be specific in the way you tie the issue to the legislator's district. If you are writing about a specific piece of legislation, list the bill number in the subject line.

Know your facts and be polite. You are an expert on your organization and the only person who can represent your views. Be completely factual and unfailingly polite in any interactions with policy makers.

Be timely. Contact your legislator while there is time to consider and act on your request.

Say thank you. If you receive a grant from any state supported entity, write your legislator and thank them for their support. In your note, detail how much your organization received as a grant and how the grant will impact the community. If the grant was from the Oregon Cultural Trust, encourage the legislator to support renewal of the tax credit that supports the Trust when it is up for review in 2013.

Be patient. If you do not get the vote you had hoped for, be patient and polite. The issue may come up again or there may be other issues that develop with new opportunities for collaboration with a legislator who was not supportive in the past.

Phoning It In

Know what you want to say and be brief. Use your time wisely and get your main points covered as close to the beginning of the conversation as possible. If you are advocating for specific legislation, refer to the bill by number.

Leave your contact information.

Follow-up. If a legislator asks you a question that you cannot answer, commit to get back to him or her and then follow up. You do not need to have all the answers at your fingertips, but you do need to respond to requests for information quickly.

Say thank you. Follow up your phone call with a brief note of thanks for the conversation, a summary of your position, and additional information that may have been requested.

Meeting with Legislators

Call ahead for an appointment. Explain the purpose of your visit. If the meeting is during a legislative session, plan for no more than 15 minutes of his or her time. If you need more time than this, plan ahead for your meeting to take place in district, during the interim. If your legislator is unable to meet with you personally during session, accept an appointment with the aide handling the issue.

Arrive on time. Be articulate. The meeting should be brief and concise. If you are with a group of people to discuss a single issue, plan to designate one spokesperson.

Be prepared and direct. Ask legislators if they support your issue. His or her answer will help determine your future advocacy efforts. If you are advocating for specific legislation, refer to the bill by number. You should know where the bill is in the process and be prepared to answer questions related to the legislation.

Write a thank you letter promptly after your meeting. If the legislator supported your issue, reiterate any commitments that were made and thank them for their support. If the legislator was noncommittal or opposed to your issue reiterate your key points and encourage them to support your request.