



Arts Advocacy Policy Brief

August 2026



Established 1996: A **comprehensive lobbying organization** for the arts, culture and creative industries, working to influence equitable and just systems change through public policy and public investment. www.caartsadvocates.org



Established 2007: Champions arts and culture as essential to vibrant CA communities through **statewide programming, services, and advocacy networks** that foster public awareness and generate resources to cultivate a thriving cultural sector and creative industries. www.caforthearts.org



What We Do



- **Field Galvanizing Programs**

- Arts, Culture, and Creativity Month (April)
 - CA Arts & Culture Summit
 - Arts Advocacy Day at the Capitol
- Arts and Health Initiative
- Topical webinars and panel discussions

- **Advocacy Capacity Building**

- Grassroots Artists Advocacy Program
- Regional Advocacy Infrastructure Network
- Regional Conversations
- Trainings & Toolkits

- **Advocacy Leadership**

- Campaigns for state funding & policies
- Support for local issues - CA Jobs First
- Coalition building & Issue-area work groups
- Regional Program Manager
- Captains Program

- **Discourse Driving Communications**

- Newsletters & Action Alerts
- Media Campaigns
- Casemaking Resources
- Research & Analysis



2024 Field Survey Findings



Policy Priorities

- #1** Increase funding to artists and cultural organizations through the CAC
- #2** Diversify and increase sources of state funding for the arts through cross-sector initiatives
- #3** Increase access to affordable housing and/or work spaces
- #4** Develop social safety net programs for the self-employed

INDIVIDUALS (1,076)

ORGANIZATIONS (607)

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

Lobbying = Direct Influence

Refers specifically to efforts that attempt to **directly influence legislation** or **endorse a specific candidate**.

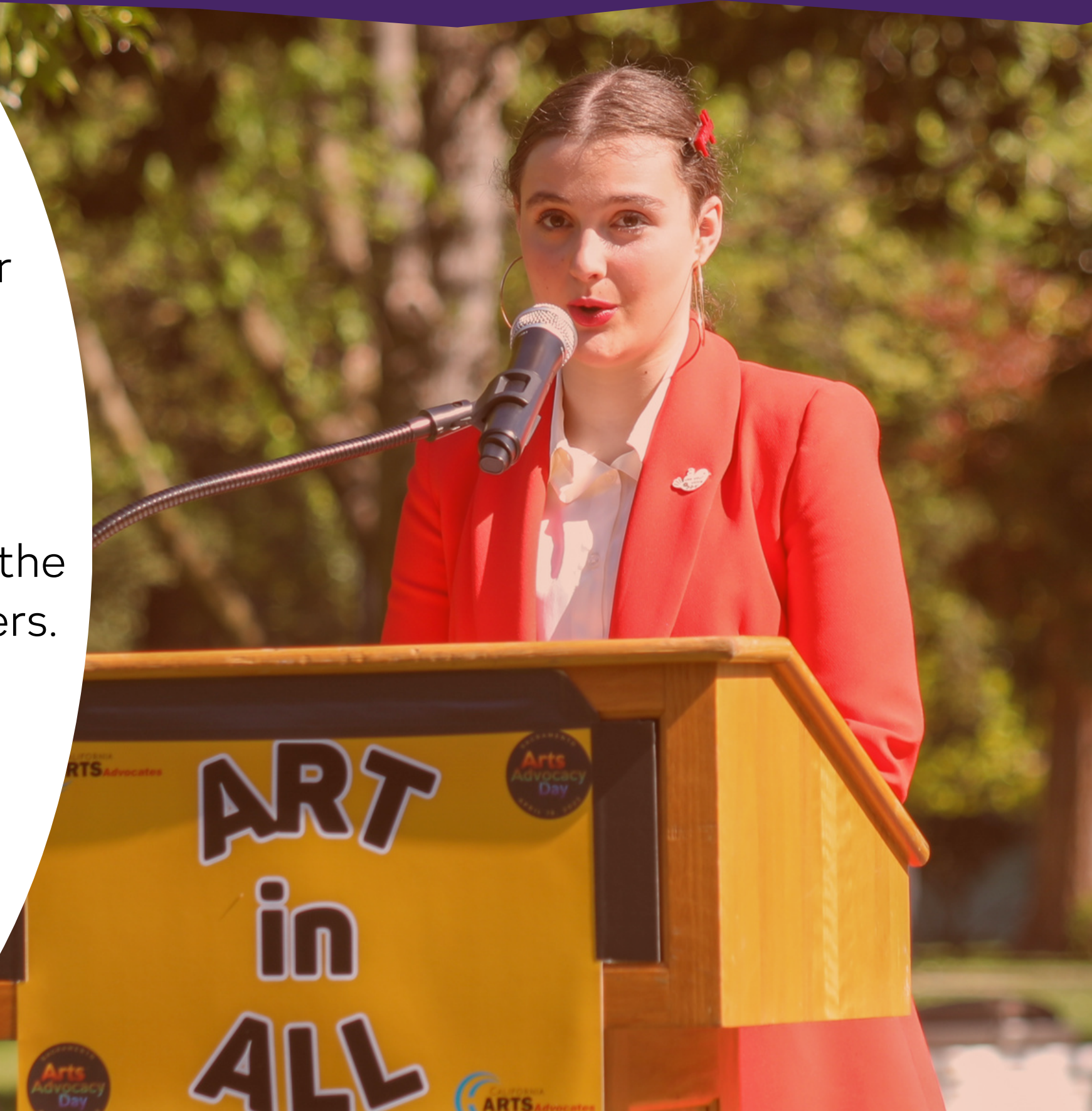
California regulates paid lobbying activities - purely volunteer efforts are not considered lobbying

Advocacy = Educate

The **active support of an idea or cause**, expressed through **strategies and methods that educate in order to influence** the opinions and decisions of public, influencers or decision makers.

Advocacy can include:

- Public will building and information campaigns
- Issue identification, research, and analysis
- Campaigns requesting an action to take
- Building a relationships with your elected officials, government agencies, decisionmakers



Policy Framework



Equity

- Equitable access to arts and culture for all people and all parts of the state
- Fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.
- Arts as a tool for social change

Sustainability

- Thriving wages, equitable creative employment opportunities, and social protections
- Improving regulations that impact creative industries and nonprofit arts organizations.
- Support for creator's rights, business loans & technical assistance

Investment

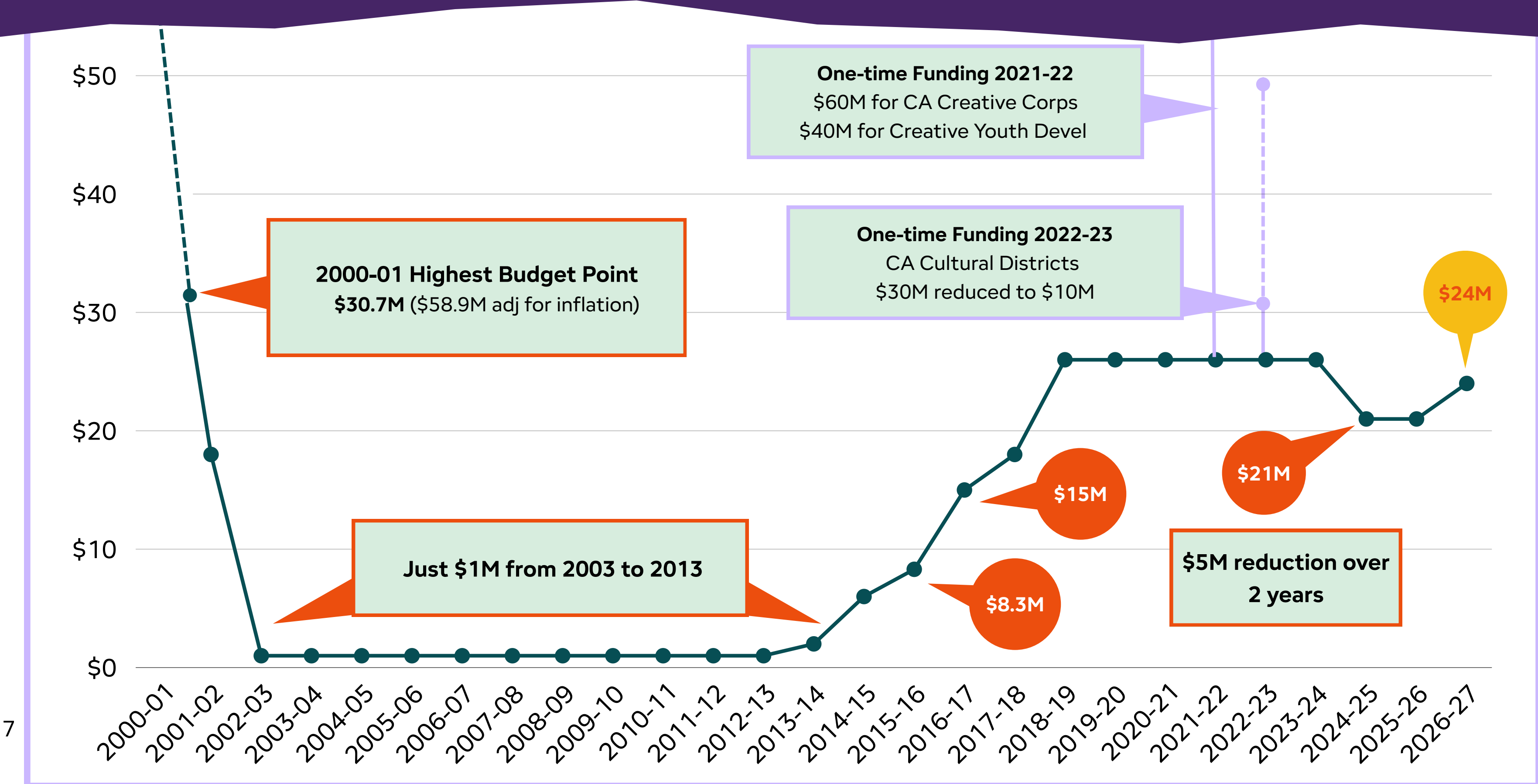
- Sustained and increased investment in arts, culture and creativity prioritizing underinvested communities
- Recognize arts and culture in all community and economic development solutions
- Resources for public art and cultural placekeeping

Lobbying Activities

- Bill Tracking & Analysis
- Sponsoring & "running bills"
- Taking positions on legislation
- "Agenda-setting" with the administration, lawmakers, state agencies, committee staff, etc

CA Investment Not Matching Impact

California Arts Council State General Fund Allocation (in millions)



State Policy Wins



2019 - 2020

- April established as CA's Arts, Culture and Creativity Month + First Arts Advocacy Day

2020 - 2021

- Reopening Guidelines for Live Events
- CA declared artists as "essential" and the state's "Second Responders" - CA SCR40

2021 - 2022

- Passed SB 628 (Allen) - CA Creative Workforce Act
- Led advocacy to ensure CAC expedite release of \$12M

2022 - 2023

- Prop 28 passes - annual \$1B to arts education
- Equitable Payroll Fund (SB 1116) program passed
- \$25m to Arts in Parks + \$30m to Cultural Districts

2023 - 2024

- \$1m for CA Creative Economy Strategic Plan
- Passed AB 812 (Boerner) - Artists Affordable Housing
- \$11.6 m for SB 1116 - Equitable Payroll Fund

2024 - 2025

- 58% of arts funding cut - won back 75%

2025 - 2026

- Saved funding for the PAEPF in final budget
- Passed SB 456 (Ashby) - Mural Bill

2026 - 2027

- \$12m for PAEPF
- Passed ASCR 204 - Arts & Behavioral Health

What's Next...

Current Legislation - end of 2 year cycle

- AB 2319 (Schultz) California Post-Production Tax Credit
- SB 1240 (McNerney) Office of Nonprofit Empowerment (ONE)
- SB 865 (Ashby) Music Festivals
- AB 1720 (Haney) CA Fans First Ticketing Bill
- AB 1349 (Bryant) Consumer protection: ticket sellers
- AB 2504 (Bauer) Digital Democracy- the Future of Creative Industries Pilot

Election Engagement Toolkit - September

Governor's "California is The Creative State" Platform

Setting the State Agenda

- Right-Size CA Arts Funding
- Creative Economy Infrastructure
- Arts & Health 'Next Level' Policy
- Arts Worker Supports
- Housing Solutions

Supporting and Mobilizing YOU

- Get involved in mid-term elections
- Establish relationships now
- Stay connected

Save the Dates -April 28-30, 2027

- Arts Advocacy Day at the Capitol
- CA Arts & Culture Summit

Stay Connected!



caforthearts.org



[@caforthearts](https://www.instagram.com/caforthearts)



[CA for the Arts](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ca-for-the-arts)



[California for the Arts](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniafortheArts)



[@CAfortheArts](https://twitter.com/CAfortheArts)



[CA for the Arts](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaforthearts)

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Arts Advocates
CA
For The Arts

Advocacy 101

BIKE
MAY USE
FULL LANE



Effective Advocacy

Clear Advocacy Strategy

Issue Identification + Solution

Strategy has targeted change, audience & tactics

Effective Storytelling - Casemaking

Use data and personal impact

Who do you serve? What are your impacts?

You are the expert on the community's experience

Relationship Building

Research priorities and connection to the arts

Establish positive communication channel

Sustain connection - engage year round

Offer Solutions

Articulate your current challenges

Detail possible opportunities

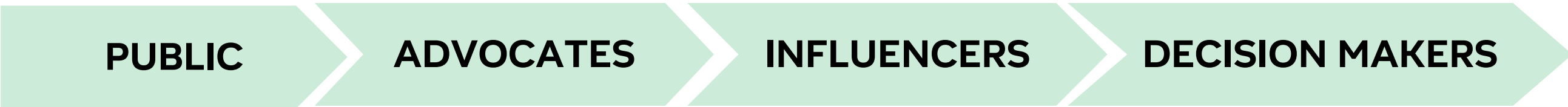
Make a specific ask or offer to partner

Continuum of Influence

Adapted from Animating Democracy "Continuum of Impact"



WHO?



Advocacy Strategy Steps



WHO?

PUBLIC

ADVOCATES

INFLUENCERS

DECISION MAKERS

CASEMAKING

Messaging Frameworks

Economic Impact

Revenue/Spending
Data
Jobs, Workforce

Health & Wellbeing

Mental Health
Physical Health
Personal Growth

Social Impact

Positive Change
Justice, Equity
Social Cohesion

Placemaking - Placekeeping

Character, Anchor
Attraction, Tourism
Civic Pride, Community Connector



Who to Build Relationships With

- **Community Members**
- **Local Elected Representatives**
Mayor, City Council Members, County Board of Supervisors, School Board members - and staff!
- **Local Leaders**
Local arts agency, arts commissioners, Economic Development groups, Community Foundations, philanthropists, funders
- **State Legislators and Administration**
Assembly Members and State Senators - and staff! State Agencies
- **Federal Representatives**
Your Congressperson and Senator

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The Answer is YOU!

You are the Expert

Your work is a source of
civic pride and connection

You make a difference



You are proactive

You can be their ally

You are a partner in their success

You are a guide and touchstone

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Ways to Engage

- Invite to your events
- Attend their events
- Letters or Emails
- Attend public meetings
- Make public comment
- One-on-one meetings
- Small group meetings
- Candidate forums



Tips for Effective Lawmaker Meetings

PREPARING



RESEARCH LAWMAKERS

Do your homework - visit their website & socials - what's important to them? Are they on any key committees?



DEVELOP YOUR CASEMAKING

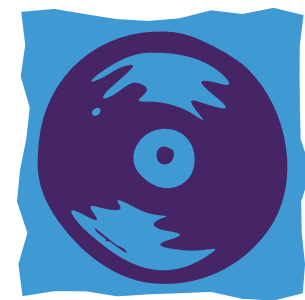
Use data and personal stories. Who do you serve? What is your impact story? Check out AFTA's [Arts Impact Explorer](#)



ORGANIZE TALKING POINTS

Go into a meeting with a plan and conversation structure. Engage their connection to the arts. Have an action they can take.

NEXT LEVEL



BUILD RELATIONSHIP

Create a connection. Be on Time. Have a "thank you." Demonstrate a collaborative spirit and a willingness to partner.



SUSTAIN CONNECTION

Engage year round. Share your achievements, Invite them to your events. Send thank yous. Try not to only reach out with a problem.



YOU ARE THE ANSWER!

You are the expert. You have insights they need. Your work is a source of civic pride and connection. You make a difference.

What Can Effective Advocacy Look Like?

- You've built a **positive relationship** and **communication channel** with your representative.
- You've **educated them on the value and positive impacts** of artists, culture bearers, cultural organizations or creative workers and businesses.
- You've **educated them on issues** affecting the creative sector in their district.
- You've **shifted their position**. This might look like shifting their awareness, how they talk about the issues, their attitude towards the arts, their promise to take action on our behalf, or their taking the lead on a policy change. All positive shifts are a success.
- You've **presented them with an action to take**.
- You've **created an arts champion**. Your representative endorses or takes the lead on advocating for a policy change.

