

Advocacy Checklist

To help your efforts in building stronger relationships with legislators and other officials and funding decision makers, we've developed an Advocacy Checklist with tips and guidance that can bring more visibility to your organization's programs and initiatives.

If you have questions or would like more information or assistance, please contact Dana Barcellos-Allen, CT Humanities communications manager, at dbarcellos-allen@cthumanities.org or 860.937-6648.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is defined as the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or proposal. For non-profit organizations, it involves building support for the organization with decision-makers that can include legislative officials, funders, and other influencers (such as community organizations and media).

Building Relationships

The single most important way to advocate for your organization is to build relationships with legislators and their staff – and continuing to nurture that relationship. Use the following guidance to make your advocacy effective and efficient.

Background Prep

✓ **RESEARCH:**

- Find out who your legislators are** for your organization's geographic area. [Click here](#) to access a searchable directory of the Connecticut General Assembly and Congressional Districts (click the [Districts by Town button](#) to see information for all towns in CT).
- Learn more about your legislators** – what committees do they serve on? What issues are they passionate about? What have they supported in the past?

✓ **CONTACT LISTS:**

- Create a list of your legislators' **social media handles** (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, X, Threads, etc.) so that you can tag them with your updates, in photos, etc.
- Create contact lists** with email addresses, phone numbers, and mailing addresses for your legislators, their offices, and their key staff (for example, their scheduler, their communications staffer).
- Add legislator emails to your email marketing list** so that they can receive organization news.
- Post-elections, update your contact lists.** If a new legislator is elected, send them a congratulations note along with information about your organization and an offer to meet.

In-Person Opportunities

- ✓ **EVENTS:** Your events and programs are an excellent opportunity for legislators to learn more about your organization.
- Inviting legislators to an event** not only gives you the opportunity to highlight your impact, but it increases the visibility of the legislator as well, which benefits them.
 - Offer your legislators a speaking role** at your event. If they agree, be sure to include that in your event publicity materials so that the public and the media know they are coming.
 - Get photos/videos of legislators** at your event to share on social media, in post-event emails and publications, on the web, and more. Be sure to **tag legislators in your social media posts.**

- After the event, **send a thank-you note** to the legislator and provide their office with **copies of photos or news clips** for them to share.
- ✓ **MEETINGS:** Reach out to legislators' offices to set up meetings BUT make sure that the meeting is worth their time and yours.
 - Go into a meeting **prepared with specifics** on what you are doing and what you need.
 - You can **invite them to tour** your organization, **meet with you and board members** to discuss organization plans and needs, or **attend a program** to meet people your organization benefits.
 - Ask for an introduction** by your board members, donors, or other partners if they already have a connection with a legislator.
 - Always have a **short, concise communications piece** about your organization to give to legislators.
 - Post-meeting, **send a personalized thank-you letter** to the legislator.

Communications

- ✓ **DIRECT MAIL:** When mailing out organization newsletters, annual reports, and other publications, **send a copy to your legislators**. Consider sending a short, handwritten note as well from organization leadership, noting any specific support that the legislator has provided.
 - Thank legislators and officials in your annual report.
- ✓ **NEWS RELEASES/PRESS CONFERENCES:**
 - Ensure your media list is updated. You can use this [media directory link](#) to find contacts in your area.
 - In your news releases about grants, be sure to **note gratitude** to the legislators/officials for their support.
 - If pertinent, give legislators the opportunity to **provide a quote** within the release. Plan for extra time to allow for approvals.
 - Give legislators a **speaking role** at event/press conference.
 - Ask legislator if they would like to be **part of media interviews**.
 - Bring legislators into **group photos**.
- ✓ **EMAILS:**
 - Send your enews** to legislators.
 - When pertinent, **mention legislators in your emails** and hyperlink to their website.
 - Ask legislators' staff to **share news about your organization's events or programs** in their emails to their constituents (provide them with a very short description and link).
- ✓ **SOCIAL MEDIA:**
 - Follow your legislators on your organization's social media accounts, and like/comment/share when their posts are pertinent to your organization.
 - Tag legislators in your social media posts (they love to be associated with good news).
 - Thank legislators on social media about grant funding or other support.
 - Share photos/videos of legislators on social media.

Online Resources

- ✓ [Sample grant press release](#)
- ✓ [Sample thank you letter for state legislators/officials](#)
- ✓ [Sample thank you letter for federal legislators/officials](#)
- ✓ [Find your legislators](#)
- ✓ [Media locator](#)