

Communicating with Your Legislators: Guidelines and Sample Letter

Final Report Requirement

Every two years, the Washington State Legislature makes funding allocation decisions for all state agencies, including the Washington State Arts Commission. The Arts Commission uses state funds to support grants, and it is important that legislators know how grant funds are used in their communities, and what outcomes the funding supported.

For this reason, all ArtsWA grantees are required to submit a copy of at least one letter to a state senator or state representative as part of their final grant report. The purpose of these letters is to help elected officials understand the return on the state's investment in the arts and to understand the positive impact in their own communities. These are not "ask" letters.

Letter Writing Suggestions

- Keep your letters to one printed page. You are welcome to use the sample letter (on the reverse) as an example of how to format your letter, but be sure to use your own words.
- Communicate appreciation for the value of the state's support. If appropriate/accurate, thank legislators for their past support of the arts.
- Share a compelling story about how your work positively affects the community. Some prompts to consider:
 - What benefits are this funding bringing to your community that makes the investment worthwhile?
 - Who is the program or project serving?
 - What are the public benefits (such as providing access for underserved communities, engaging the community in positive ways, improving the economy).
- Consider including a quote from a participant.
- Invite your legislator(s) to observe your arts programming in action.

Timeline and related information

Legislative sessions begin in mid-January every year and run through late April or longer; budget-setting occurs in odd-numbered years. Communications with legislators may get the most attention before the session starts, or early in the session, before significant bill deadlines



occur. We encourage you to send us a copy of your letter at the time you send it, if you do so in advance of final report season.

Additional information and resources:

- Find your legislators: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>
- Washington State Arts Alliance: www.washingtonstateartsalliance.org
- ArtsEd Washington: www.artsedwashington.org

Sample Letter to Washington State Legislator

(Date)

(Organization Letterhead OR Name)

(Organization Address)

(City, State Zip)

The Honorable (Name of your State Senator or Representative)

(Address)

(City, State Zip)

Dear (Senator _____ or Representative _____):

As one of your constituents [only include if accurate for the letter-signer!] I am pleased to inform you of some valuable work happening in your district, thanks to state funding for the arts. Our (Name of Organization), received a matching grant of \$(Amount of Grant) from the Washington State Arts Commission to (to do WHAT – name the key grant-funded program).

This funding really makes a difference in our community... *add 1-2 concise sentences here to explain WHY IT MATTERS, such as*

- *What is the public benefit of the funded program?*
- *How did Arts Commission funding help attract other funds or other kinds of community support and engagement?*
- *What are the impacts on the local economy, or other measures of community health?*
- *[Keep it brief and easy to read!]*

[Optional – invitation to observe:]

We are very proud of all that our grant-funded program is doing for our community, and would like to invite you to see for yourself by observing one of our arts programs in action. (Name

specific event info, or indicate general options for observation opportunities.) To receive more information, please contact (Organization Contact Name) at (Include Phone and/or Email Address). On behalf of the artists and community members in our network, we extend our appreciation for the state's investment in our work.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Your Name)

(Your Title, Organization)