

LAN ADVOCACY

The Latino Arts Network of California (LAN) was born out of a chain of cultural centers that linked the state. LAN is dedicated to strengthening and deepening the cooperative relationship among California's Latino artists, arts organizations and the communities we serve.



Latino Arts Network Advocacy Toolkit

Advocacy in general is what your organization does to promote and present itself to the public, supporting a case for continued operation and the role of your group in the vitality of your community. Advocacy here is specifically about communicating with your elected officials and decision makers, and promoting not only your organization but also the well-being and support of Latino Arts and Culture in the State of California.

To many, even those who are supportive, the arts are not as vital as other needs and are often overlooked as a priority for funding. Nothing could be further from the truth! We have proven the arts are a good investment.



The LAN CVI Advocacy Toolkit was supported in part by the California Arts Council. Additional support provided by Members of the Latino Arts Network of California.

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- ▶ The arts generate revenue
- ▶ The arts improve education
- ▶ The arts deter crime and juvenile delinquency
- ▶ The arts foster communication and tolerance
- ▶ The arts reflect the ideals and principles on which this country was founded

In our state, the population has shifted to the point where Latinos are becoming a majority despite lacking the commensurate representation and having equal access to many of the benefits of a democratic system. There are a number of reasons and an endless discussion as to why and how to change this scenario, but they often don't include the cultural presence or the role arts and culture plays in the daily life of our communities and citizens. Try to imagine your town without arts. It's impossible isn't it?

So it is up to us. And it may seem a task too large to take on by ourselves, but together, we can not only support the national effort to elevate the public value of the arts and culture, we can do so in our state and in our communities, confirming the wisdom as old mankind, creativity is essential to the quality of the life of a human. We are the vanguard of creativity in our community, reflecting our culture, presenting our arts as a contribution to the larger society and the American landscape; we should be the ones advocating this vision. Our model is not European based, nor elitist, it is much more based on recognizing that arts is important to all people in a community, is accessible through common practice, and has value in utility as well as beauty or aesthetics.

The actual work is simple:

- 1) Know what the facts are
- 2) Define the issues; simplify the message
- 3) Convey the message to our core stakeholders, the audiences we

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We have to educate and inform ourselves as to what the decision process is, and how to get our message heard at the right time by the right people. That is advocacy.

The hallways in the capitols of Sacramento and Washington D.C. are littered with lobbyists and persons representing special interests, and they spend millions of dollars advocating on behalf of their parties concern. We cannot begin to duplicate that effort, but we can parallel it through unity, strategy, and consistency.

We are not ever going to be the engine that roars, we are the squeaky wheels that must be attended to over time.

We have the Internet and each other. The goal of this site is to build a town hall for our common ground, to share information and teach each other about the issues. And we have something new that had not been a factor before, a majority of population for which we advocate, on behalf of ourselves, the rest of the population, and the future, our children.

And we have the capacity to deliver our message in two languages, Spanish and English. This is where Advocacy overlaps with Communication. Here, we define communication as what we do to support our own endeavors. Advocacy does that too, but with emphasis on the greater good, for everybody including non-voters, the uncounted and the young.

► The perception that a 501c3 cannot advocate is rubbish, we are not excepted from the same rights as any other lobbyist.

To lobby is to invest up to 20% of time and money for a cause, and most of us don't have that. We can promote the arts, voice our opinion, call for action and unity, and attempt to influence our elected officials to see our side, as well as communicate with the general public. We have to be transparent, document our work, and be honest. Getting support for the arts is our goal.

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To get started, we will begin posting data, using powerful sites like the Pew Hispanic Center, empowering our case for Latino arts and culture, developing the message using the information, and with focus upon what is the state of things in the state capital.

Pew Hispanic Center

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/>

We will help lead our community to identify the message we want to send out to the public. PLEASE fill out the LAN CVI Surveys; we can make a stronger case as we continue to hear from our field and respond to a mandate of voices.

Artists: <http://tinyurl.com/ArtistLANSurvey>

Arts Patrons: <http://tinyurl.com/ArtPatronSurvey>

Art Organizations: <http://tinyurl.com/OrgLANSurvey>

Email info@latinoarts.net and join the LAN email list and we will inform you of legislation and action that speaks to our cause. We know that the arts and culture in our community is not separate from all other aspects of our daily lives. Education and the arts are much more related than separate. So are health, the environment and so on. Social issues such as immigration and combating anti-Latino hate are causes which unify our common interests, and we are part of the solution as well as part of the voice and creative presence of the largest growing population in California.

For YOU to get started, identify yourselves to your elected officials. Send them your mission and materials, tell them you want to be informed, dialog with them, and let them know what you need.

Ultimately, government is reactive, not proactive, and usually reacts with money. Our issues certainly include a fair piece of that pie even in austere times, but it is not the only thing we want. We want to be counted, considered, consulted and included in the decisions that will determine the way we live in this state and for generations to come. So we must insure this by mentoring the electorate to expect to hear from us and then to make sure that we do.

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- ▶ You can identify your statewide elected officials by visiting these websites.

CA Districts & Legislative Search

http://www.legislature.ca.gov/legislators_and_districts/districts/districts.html

CA Legislature <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>

CA Latino Legislative Caucus <http://www2.legislature.ca.gov/latinocaucus/>

- ▶ You can do the same for federal levels by visiting these websites:

US House of Representatives <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>

US Congress <http://congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt>

- ▶ For local representatives, consult similar links to local government in the city or county where you reside.

Invite them to everything you do, keep them abreast of your activity, get to know their staffs, they are likely the ones you will have the most contact with, particularly at the local level. Keep them in your mind and do what it takes to have them thinking about you as well. The goal of advocacy is not to become an adversary but an ally to the decision makers, to work within the democratic process as it was intended. A good relationship with elected officials is the ongoing goal so come the time there is a debate on funding the arts, or a disagreement on vision, we are already respectful, familiar and in a dialog.

The Latino Arts Network will support your need to learn the process by sending out messages that help you understand how the state works, the budget process in particular. And we will keep you posted on direct legislation that impacts the arts and culture. But if we are the source to you, you must become the source to your stakeholders, audiences and communities. There is an old adage that declares that it is possible for a small group of people to change the world, because history has taught us that all the major changes in the world started that way. We are interested in changing the state of things for arts and culture in the Latino community, and throughout California. Let's start here, together!

Latino Arts Network Resources

¡Art Si!

NALAC ~ National Association of Latino Arts & Culture

<http://www.naleo.org/>

NALEO

<http://www.naleo.org/>

NCLR ~ National Council of La Raza

<http://www.naleo.org/>

Pew Hispanic Center

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/>

**MALDEF ~ Mexican American Legal Defense & Education
Fund** <http://www.pewhispanic.org/>

LULAC ~ League of United Latin American Citizens

<http://lulac.org/>

CAC ~ California Arts Council

<http://www.cac.ca.gov>

Americans for the Arts ~ Arts Action Center

http://www.artsusa.org/get_involved/advocate.asp

California Arts Advocates

<http://www.californiaartsadvocates.org/>

California Lawyers for the Arts

<http://www.calawyersforthearts.org/Advocacy>

California Alliance for Arts Education

<http://www.artsed411.org/>

California Association of Bilingual Education

<http://www.bilingualeducation.org/>