

LOCAL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



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Welcome to the OC Local Advocacy Toolkit

Advocacy is essential for the long-term health and vibrancy of Canadian orchestras. Whether you are seeking funding, building community connections, or ensuring your musicians and members are part of important conversations, strategic advocacy activity ensures that decision-makers see your orchestra as relevant, resilient, and impactful.

Decisions made at the municipal level about funding, cultural priorities, zoning, infrastructure, and more, can directly shape your ability to share your music with your community. By developing strong relationships with local decision-makers, you can help ensure that your orchestra's voice is part of the conversation from the start.

Lesson 5: In Person

Quick tips and 3 steps to make the most of face-to-face time

In-person meetings remain one of the most effective ways to build trust, communicate impact, and advance your goals, provided you prepare well, stay focused, and follow through. The tips and steps below offer a clear roadmap for what to do before, during, and after a meeting so you can show up confidently, stay aligned with your objectives, and strengthen long-term relationships.

Quick Tips

- Be warm and friendly throughout
- Stay on point
- Thou shalt not read the script
- Listen. Tune into body language.
- Ask for something. Offer something.
- Connect your ask with local priorities.
- Connect your ask with something that matters to the person you're meeting with.
- Storytelling can be tremendously helpful. But keep it tight.
- Stick to the duration you'd agreed upon. Don't expect to stretch.
- Ask if you can take a selfie and share it to social media.
- Follow-up with support staff.
- Invest for the long term: it's rare to get the answer you are looking for as a result of a single meeting.

Before the Meeting

- Be clear on what you're asking for. (Funding? Support? A vote? A policy change?)

- Practice making your “ask” in 30 seconds.
- Have a short elevator pitch ready about your organization and impact. (See “Worksheet” section to develop your elevator pitch.)
- Confirm the meeting details: Who’s attending? Where? How long?

During the Meeting

- Stick to your key messages.
- Take a breath; it’s a conversation, not a performance.
- Really listen.
- Respond thoughtfully to questions. If you don’t have answers, say so (and offer to find them).
- Confirm any next steps or follow-ups.
- Leave time for questions and dialogue.

After the Meeting

- Send a thank you note or email.
- Forward any promised documents or follow-up to Councillors (and/or staff, if applicable).
- Keep both Councillors and their staff in the loop. Updates matter.
- Invite them to upcoming events (and be a gracious host).
- Avoid putting them in a tricky spot at public events.
- Create a welcoming, non-partisan space.
- Keep the conversation going. Don’t hesitate to stay in touch or ask questions later on.