

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.

Tell Your Story

Now it's your turn. The most effective advocacy comes from clarity - clarity about who you are, what you need, and how your work connects to the broader goals of your municipality. Preparation is what makes this feel natural in the moment. By taking time to write things down, you and your team can sharpen your mission, vision, values, and goals, and build a shared language you can return to across meetings, presentations, and campaigns.

The two exercises below are designed to help you articulate your story, frame your challenges, and generate a concise, compelling pitch. They can be completed directly on this webpage, and once you're done, you can email your responses to yourself or your team by clicking the button at the bottom. Use these prompts to experiment, refine, and practice. The more grounded you are in your own narrative, the more confidently and authentically you can advocate for your work and your community.

Writing Prompts

Use this guide to help shape a compelling narrative about your organization, its challenges, and the support you need. Whether you're preparing a presentation, a grant report, or a funding pitch to Council, this framework helps align your story with local priorities.

Step 1: Talk About Yourself

Your Organization

What is your mission?
How long have you been active in the community?
What's the scale and range of your programming?
How are you funded (public, private, earned revenue, etc.)?

Challenge

What issue or challenge are you currently facing?
How is it affecting your organization, your team, your audiences, or your ability to deliver programs?

Choice(s)

*What choice(s) have you had to make/are you wrestling with because of the challenge(s) you're facing?
How could these choices affect your ability to fulfill your mission?*

Outcome

*What has happened so far as a result of the situation?
What have you learned?
What might you do differently next time?*

Ask

What exactly are you requesting from the municipality? (Time? Money? Visibility? A vote?)

How much do you need, by when, and for how long?

If you receive this support, what will change, and for whom?

Are other partners or governments involved in your broader request? How does the municipal ask fit into the overall picture?

Step 2: Give Context

Community Context

Are others in your community facing a similar challenge?

Who are the key stakeholders and partners?

How many people are affected, and where in the community are they located?

What are their demographics (age groups, income levels, neighbourhoods)?

What broader impact is the issue having?

Urgency

What could happen if this issue isn't addressed?
What's at risk for your organization, your community, or the city?
What can we do now to prevent negative outcomes?

Alignment with Government Priorities

How does your issue connect with municipal priorities?
Is it mentioned in your municipality's cultural policy, strategic plan, or another civic framework?
How can you tie your ask to what Council already says it values?

Pitch Generator

Once you have fleshed out your story and connected it to advocacy priorities, pull it all together into one short, compelling paragraph: your core advocacy message.

Use this section to create a brief narrative you can deliver in 30-60 seconds: at a meeting, in a presentation, or when submitting a written brief. Aim for clarity, connection, and a specific ask.

Your pitch should include:

- Who you are
- What the challenge is
- Who is affected
- What you are asking for
- How this aligns with local priorities
- What will change if your ask is granted

Example format:

"We're [organization name], a [brief description of what you do] serving [who you serve] in [municipality/region]. Due to [the challenge], we're facing [consequence]. Without action, [potential outcome]. We are asking [name of government body] to [clear ask], which would allow us to [intended impact]. This aligns directly with [specific municipal priority], and would benefit not just us, but [community-level impact]."