**EQUITABLE ADVOCACY INCLUDING ARTISTS IN INCLUSIVE POLICY**

Local Arts Agencies can pursue equitable advocacy practices promoting fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement in the systems, protocols, practices, and policies that treat everyone fairly, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some artists.

When a community sees the arts and artists as contributing to the well-being of all residents, the local policies are likely to treat them with respect and fairness. Rather than excluding artists from work benefits and policies like business support, livable wages, and healthcare, people in places that value artists advocate for their inclusion, leading to a better community for all.

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**What’s the Challenge?**

- Artists face barriers due to societal undervaluing of art, in general, and as a professional career path
- Policies that could offer work support or pay livable wages often exclude those in the creative economy
- Healthcare and employment instability are significant concerns for artists
- Artists worry about how they will support themselves in retirement
- Limited arts agency support and funding landscapes also pose difficulties, particularly for rural or under-resourced communities
- Some local arts agencies face advocacy obstacles from city procurement and other policy
- Relationships between artists and agencies are sometimes strained by perceived extractive policy and lack of relevant data

“[There are barriers to] our ability to pay individuals. The city systems are only set up to pay large business corporations. They still can’t pay individuals electronically. They have tried to pilot this multiple times to pay via electronic transfer then the city shut down the process. This was detrimental to our relationship building.”

— Local Arts Agency
**What Can We Do? Solutions to Try**

**Consider Changing Local Practice**

- Develop **communications strategies** that address cultural devaluing of the arts and artists.
- Partner with artists to better understand economic, funding, and other disparities. Berkshire/Columbia Counties developed a Pay Equity report in 2023 to better understand compensation inequity in the arts and culture sector.
- Provide equitable advocacy training and organize community opportunities for policy input, like Arts Missoula’s digital Advocacy Corner.
- Provide advocacy guidance by teaching the public and local artists about policy issues regarding equity for artists and others. The Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange convened the Municipal Arts Alliance around cultural belonging policy.
- Conduct artist consultations to determine how best to respond to these disparities.

The City of Albuquerque launched the **Tipping Points for Creatives initiative** in 2019 to connect creatives to resources and services. Through this initiative they took a three-pronged approach, supporting the ecosystem with financial investments to partnering organizations, providing resources to artists directly and launching a public awareness campaign. The campaign is focused on a local and national campaign to raise the visibility of artists, artisans, and makers in the area.

**Advocate for Local Policy**

- Promote policy for living wages, security for aging artists, and affordable healthcare insurance.
- Expand funding support, particularly in rural and under-resourced places.
- Advocate for artist’s contributions to be valued and promote spending on individuals. Creating artists registries, like the Choctaw Nation's, can support this type of advocacy.
- Support anti-displacement laws and fair compensation.

Advocacy doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It doesn’t exist only in Washington, D.C., and it isn’t limited to one time of year. Advocacy happens every day, in every community, across this country—and it takes all of us. Americans for the Arts has renewed its year-long advocacy program to facilitate congressional engagement with local arts agencies and artists. You can take action with us here.

For more information about Americans for the Arts’ Supporting Individual Artists Field Research Project and findings, please read the full report or reach out to services@artsusa.org.