

ASTC Principles for Public Policy and Advocacy Efforts

With a broad mission to provide a collective voice to the science center and science museum field, ASTC engages in a wide variety of advocacy activities—including working directly with government agencies and policymakers; supporting our members’ advocacy and community organizing efforts at the local, regional, state, and national levels; partnering with other organizations and associations on shared priorities; and collaborating with other networks on international advocacy efforts. This living document, which will be updated in tandem with ASTC’s current listening and strategic-planning processes, sets forth draft core principles—with examples of specific efforts—that guide ASTC’s existing and emerging advocacy efforts, and notes that for some complex policy topics, ASTC staff will consult closely with ASTC’s Board of Directors, Public Policy Committee, and affected members.

Priority Areas for ASTC’s Direct Advocacy Efforts

ASTC will directly:

1. Advocate to maintain or expand existing public programs and policies that directly support informal science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning and engagement, especially those that support the work of science centers/museums and other ASTC members. These efforts may include:
 - *Working directly with the U.S. Congress and U.S. Federal science mission agencies*—such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and others—to advocate for programs that routinely provide support to science centers.
 - *Catalyzing and coordinating ASTC members to advocate* for continued support or expansion of current programs, at the national, state, regional, and local level, by building relationships with local policymakers, sharing data and stories about impact and outcomes, and promoting the value that science centers bring to their communities.
2. Work with policymakers to develop new U.S. Federal programs and policies that support the work of science centers/museums and other ASTC members to increase positive impact on their communities, especially through effective roles in regional educational ecosystems, support for regional innovation and economic growth, and participation in community problem solving. These policy- and program-development efforts may include:
 - *Advocating for the role of informal education* in the overall education landscape; working to ensure that informal educational institutions like science centers are eligible to seek and receive education and workforce skills development funding from government agencies at every level as new programs are developed;
 - *Supporting the creation of new informal education, outreach, and engagement programs*—in which ASTC members would be eligible to participate—and policies, within U.S. Federal agencies, focused on advancing a wide range of U.S. national policy priorities, from interdisciplinary research initiatives, to social justice and equity, to global security, to sustainability and community resilience, to economic growth, and beyond.

ASTC Principles for Public Policy and Advocacy Efforts

Supporting Local Advocacy and Community Organizing by Our Members and Their Stakeholders

3. Build tools and facilitate programs to bolster the advocacy at the local level by the leadership, boards, staff, partners, and audiences of our member organizations. This may include:
 - *Creating shared messages, data, insights, trends, tools, and collateral that help make the case for the value and impact of science centers in their local communities, throughout their region, and collectively on a national and global scale.*
 - *Developing the capacity of ASTC members' staff, trustees, and community partners — through customizable toolkits, sharing best practices, facilitating member-to-member exchange of successful models for new state/local funding, and collaborating with partners—to more frequently engage in advocacy, more effectively work with government agencies at all levels, and better organize their communities for action supporting informal science learning.*

Supporting Partner-Led Advocacy Efforts and Collaborating with Other Networks

ASTC will support partner initiatives and efforts to:

4. Broadly support U.S. Federal investments and policies that advance scientific research, technology development, and innovation, as well as general education funding and programs designed to address systemic gaps in equity and access to opportunity. These advocacy partnerships may include:
 - Supporting robust funding for science and technology research across government agencies alongside partners such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), American Geophysical Union (AGU), Research!America, American Chemical Society (ACS), and others.
 - Advocating for education funding and programs, and specifically for flexible innovation funds for education programs, alongside partners such as the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and the Afterschool Alliance/Afterschool STEM Hub, among others.
 - Being a voice of support for efforts and policies that provide all individuals with access to opportunity to learn, develop new skills, thrive in the workforce, and solve difficult challenges in their community and across our planet.
5. Collaborate with other networks to support investments and policies that advance science centers, museums, and cultural organizations, such as by:
 - Creating tools to help science centers and museums around the world make the case for increased support among the general public, funders, and policymakers and share the positive community impact of science centers in terms of educational outcomes, regional innovation, and community problem-solving, through compelling and effective public communications, social media, and targeted stakeholder outreach, with national and local

ASTC Principles for Public Policy and Advocacy Efforts

networks of museums, with international regional science-center networks such as Ecsite, RedPOP, NAMES, SAASTAC, ASPAC, and national networks such as ASDC, CASC, and AMMCCyT, and supported by field-wide data and illustrative examples from members.

- Advocating for U.S. Federal funding and programs that support the broader museum and cultural-organization community, at agencies such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF), with the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the Association of Children's Museums (ACM), the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the Association of Science Museum Directors (ASMD), the Association of Public Gardens, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), and others.
- Creating shared tools to help museum leaders and staff organize their communities for municipal, county, and state-level funding for museums, cultural organizations, and informal learning, with regional museum networks across the United States.

Areas Requiring Close Consultation with the ASTC Board of Directors and Public Policy Committee

While the vast majority of ASTC's advocacy efforts will take the form of proactive work by ASTC staff, with strategic guidance from ASTC Board of Directors and Public Policy Committee (PPC), there will be times that ASTC staff will choose to seek direct input from the PPC and affirmative approval from the Board of Directors (or the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Board) for any action described above or any policy/political stance regarding which ASTC staff is uncertain about what position to take or is uncomfortable taking, to specifically include any time that ASTC is put in a position that calls for directly criticizing a public official by name. Where appropriate, ASTC will also consult with members directly impacted by a given policy stance, where there is a specific regional aspect of a policy issue.