

ADVOCACY 101

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WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS

Advocacy can bring attention to legislative gaps,
address needed reforms, preserve nonprofit
resources, and more



ADVOCACY vs. LOBBYING

ADVOCACY

Advocacy encompasses a wide range of activities designed to influence public opinion and policy.

LOBBYING

Lobbying is a specific form of advocacy that attempts to influence a specific legislation.

ADVOCACY

Grassroots organizing

Writing op-eds or sharing personal stories

Educating the public or elected officials about an issue

Coalition building

LOBBYING

Meeting with a legislator to ask for a yes/no vote on a bill

Writing a letter that urges support or opposition to legislation

Submitting testimony that recommends a legislative outcome

ADVOCACY AND TIMING

ADVOCACY AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

LOCAL

Municipal governments, school boards, county commissions

Faster decisions, fewer people

Easier to access

STATE

Governors, state agencies, legislators

High volume, time bound

FEDERAL

President, Congress, federal agencies

Slow processes, national visibility

Staff-driven, long-term work

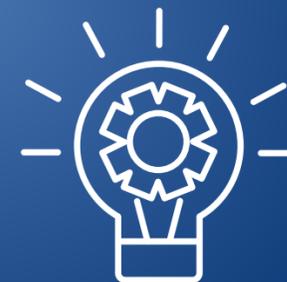


WHY ADVOCATE EARLY?



Decision-making follows fixed cycles

Whether it's budgets, policies, or ordinances, important decisions happen on a timeline.



You need time to educate and build trust

Advocacy is not just about making an ask—it's about building a relationship.



Funding and policy windows don't stay open

Opportunities for investment and change are often limited and competitive.

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

Build Authentic Relationships

Connect with decision-makers, staff, and allies before you need something.

Relationships are the foundation of advocacy.

Use What You Know

Share lived experience, community stories, and relevant data. You are the expert on your issue—own your perspective.

Listen & Learn

Understand what matters to your audience—their priorities, pressures, and values.

Listening shows respect and helps you tailor your message.

Be Consistent & Follow Up

Advocacy is a process, not a one-time event. Keep showing up—even when the answer is “not yet.”



KEYS TO STAYING EFFECTIVE

Don't Burn Bridges

Today's "no" might be tomorrow's "yes."
Leave the door open for future collaboration.

Don't Get Confrontational or Personal

Disagreement is okay—disrespect is not.
Keep it professional, even when it's frustrating.

Don't Overwhelm with Jargon or Data

Keep it simple and clear.
Focus on key facts and real stories.

Don't overlook the staff

Staff are key partners—build relationships with
them too.



GETTING STARTED WITH ADVOCACY

Find Your Issue

What matters to you or your organization?
Define the problem and how it impacts your community.

Connect with Others

Join statewide or local coalitions.
Reach out to similar organizations doing related work.
Attend community meetings or advocacy trainings.

Set Clear Goals

Identify the specific results you want to achieve.
Understand who can help make it happen.

Learn the Basics

Understand how your local, state, or federal government works.
Use tools like bill trackers, advocacy toolkits, and elected official directories.
Follow relevant social media accounts, newsletters, or policy blogs.



**“YOU HAVE TO BE STRATEGIC AND
INTENTIONAL. HOPE IS NOT A PLAN.”
STACEY ABRAMS**

GOALS

A goal is the end result you want to achieve. Its broad, long-term, and provides direction.

Goals = The big *Picture*

TACTICS

Tactics are the specific strategies you take to reach your goal. They are short term, adaptable, and action oriented.

Tactics = The *Actions* to get there

ADVOCACY = THE LONG GAME

Advocacy isn't instant—it takes time, strategy, and relationships.

Different advocacy goals = different timelines.

Start building relationships with legislators well before you make an ask.

Long-term trust = long-term impact.

TRAINING

SCENARIO

A nonprofit organization launches a social media campaign to raise awareness about the rising cost of prescription drugs. The campaign shares stories from individuals affected by high prices, provides data and infographics, and encourages the public to learn more and contact their elected officials to voice their concerns.



SCENARIO

A representative from the same nonprofit meets with a state legislator to discuss Senate Bill 123, which proposes a cap on prescription drug prices. During the meeting, they ask the legislator to vote in favor of the bill.



SCENARIO

A nonprofit organization is working to improve mental health support for youth in their community.

As part of their work, they:

Meet with local school board members to talk about gaps in mental health staffing

Launch a public awareness campaign on social media

Create a proposal to add licensed mental health counselors in every high school

Speak at a school district budget hearing

Collect and share local data on student wait times for counseling

Partner with teachers and principals to support the effort





THANK YOU



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