

Devising A 7-Step Advocacy Plan

Advocacy plans require different activities in different seasons – just as any careful plan would. And depending on the nature of your organization or goals, some special tasks may be required. Plus, there is some work -- e.g., with the media, on public budgets -- that is needed year-round. Depending on your goals, the time available for achieving your goals, and the size/resources/energy of those involved, it often helps to identify one or more activities to be carried out in each “season.” No matter what you propose, or where you schedule something on the Calendar, revisit often.

Q: What’s the **problem** your Advocacy Plan will address? _____
A problem is a cause for concern, a matter needing action.

But many problems are very broad, hard to organize around – e.g., poverty, child abuse. That’s why advocates quickly start thinking strategically.

STEP 1: Think Strategically.

- Re-Frame the Issue (a problem you can do something about, is winnable; a good “issue” includes a solution or partial solution)

- Determine one or two goals.

Long-term: _____; Short-term _____

- Sketch out draft timetable; name some key dates.
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STEP 2: Identify the level of decision-making (e.g., Federal, State, Local)

STEP 3: Identify who has the power to do what needs to be done.

STEP 4: Identify Constituents, Allies, and Opponents.

Who is directly affected?

Who else is/might be concerned?

Who might be opposed?

STEP 5: Identify your Strategy (the overall approach to reach your goals– e.g., legislative, community education, legal, administrative, budgetary).

STEP 6: Identify a few tactics (specific steps within your overall strategy).

STEP 7: IMAGINE A 3-SEASON CALENDAR.

E.g., if your goal involves winning a change in a state law or budget, consider -

→ PREP SEASON: Late Summer-Fall.

Task: Meet with your state legislators, e.g., over coffee.

Task: Identify legislative priorities for the next year

Task: Educate community members about the issue.

Task: Get your issue before candidates and voters – and the media.

- Co-sponsor candidate forums and raise questions about your issue;
- Write Letters-to-the-Editor; and call radio Call-in shows about your issues.
- Work with Voter Education efforts focused on your issues.
- I CAN DO** at least the following _____.

→ PRE-SESSION SEASON: From fall elections til State Session opens in Jan.

Task: Educate the winning candidates.

- Invite winning candidates to a “Site Visit” at your program or agency.

Task: Get your community ready for the upcoming sessions. E.g.:

- Sponsor an advocacy training.
- Make sure telephone, snail-mail, e-mail lists, are up to date; add new key contacts.
- Develop and/or strengthen your media contacts.
- Prepare a one page fact sheet about your key issue(s).
- Start planning a Lobby Day to occur during the Legislative Session.
- Review the Coalitions you belong to, and fill remaining gaps.
- I CAN DO** at least the following _____

→ SESSION SEASON: From January til Early Summer.

Task: Engage in Activity Related to the Legislature

- Respond to Legislative Alerts, activate Telephone/email Trees;
- Participate in lobby days, “Call-in” days by those too far from the Capitol,

Task: Do something related to the Media

- Respond to untruths, stereotypes, myths related to your priority issue(s).
- Promote stories that educate the public about your issues.
- Write and place OP/ED pieces on key issues, or help others to.
- Generate Letters-to-the-Editor on your highest priority issue.
- I CAN DO** at least the following _____

YEAR ROUND: keep up media contacts, track budgets, build relationships.