



Agency

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

PHILABUNDANCE

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INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

Each individual and organization that Philabundance reaches through our work has a unique perspective on anti-hunger work. Some of us are volunteers, some of us work on issues of food insecurity at the professional level, and some of us have personal histories that tie us to this work. What unites us is the idea that no one should have to go hungry. By channeling these different perspectives into effective advocacy, we can elevate the voices of the people we serve and work towards fair and equitable policies that end hunger in our community.

This toolkit is intended to serve as a resource to support agencies in their efforts to fight hunger by providing tools and tips about how to be an effective anti-hunger advocate. This is a long document and does not need to be read front-to-back. Most sections of the toolkit can stand on their own, so take a look through the table of contents and check out the pages that will be most useful to you and your agency.

If you have any questions or are interested in training opportunities for your agency, reach out to Philabundance at **215-330-0900**.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS TOOLKIT

THIS TOOLKIT IS DIVIDED INTO FIVE MAIN SECTIONS:

1. Overview

A general overview of advocacy, covering what “advocacy” means, why anti-hunger organizations should be involved in advocacy efforts, ways you can get involved, and information about elected officials.

2. Food Aid Legislation

A summary of the major pieces of food aid legislation at the national and state level.

3. Building Your Case

Information about building a strong advocacy case, focusing on combining story collection and data to create impactful arguments.

4. Strategies

Advocacy strategies, including ways to work with and talk to elected officials about advocacy issues, and ways to engage your organization's network in advocacy.

5. Designing Your Own Plan

A guide to thinking about how advocacy can fit within your organization, including how to draft an advocacy plan and questions to consider when designing your own advocacy plan.





ADVOCACY 101

ADVOCACY 101

WHAT IS ADVOCACY

“Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.”¹

In the most basic sense, advocacy is speaking up about something you believe in, in the hopes of improving a situation for yourself or others.



WHAT DOES ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

Organizing	Forming a coalition of people with similar interests and goals. Strength in numbers!
Voter Empowerment	Encouraging people to register to vote for the first time, keep their registration information up to date, and vote in every election.
Contacting a Representative	Calling, writing a letter to, emailing, or meeting your state representative in person to ask them to vote for or against a proposed bill.
Educating	Holding a class, community forum, or publishing a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.
Rallying	Organizing a demonstration or protest to bring public attention to an issue.
Training	Teaching others about how they can be effective advocates.
Showing up	Going to a town hall meeting and asking a question about hunger.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

There are so many different ways you can get involved and become an advocate. The examples listed above are just a few of the many ways you can be an advocate. This toolkit is meant to help you think through how you can get involved, and provide resources to help you along the way.

¹www.bolderadvocacy.org/resource/what-is-advocacy

ADVOCACY 101

FAST ADVOCACY

Not sure if you have enough time to be an advocate? Check out all of these ways you can get involved in under an hour!

FAST & EASY WAYS TO BE AN ADVOCATE

In 15 Seconds...	You could share an article or blog post about a current issue related to food insecurity to your friends and followers on social media.
In 30 Seconds...	You could sign up for Philabundance's advocacy mailing list at https://www.philabundance.org/advocate/#advo-alerts and start receiving action alerts.
In 1 Minute...	You could order voter registrations forms for your program waiting area.
In 3 Minutes...	You could call an elected official, share your view on a piece of legislation and ask them to vote for or against it.
In 5 Minutes...	You could invite an elected official to visit your program or attend an event while they are in district.
In 10 Minutes...	You could write an e-mail or a letter to an elected official, sharing why you care about a current issue, how it impacts your community, and what you would like them to do about it.
In 15 Minutes...	You could create a flyer or poster at your organization to inform visitors of current advocacy opportunities.
In 30 Minutes...	You could read about current policies affecting food insecurity, and look up statistics about hunger and poverty in your community.
In 45 Minutes...	You could meet with an elected official or their staff at their office to share how important food assistance programs are to the people you serve.
In 1 Hour...	You could write an op-ed or letter to the editor of your local newspaper, highlighting food insecurity and how others can get involved in advocacy.



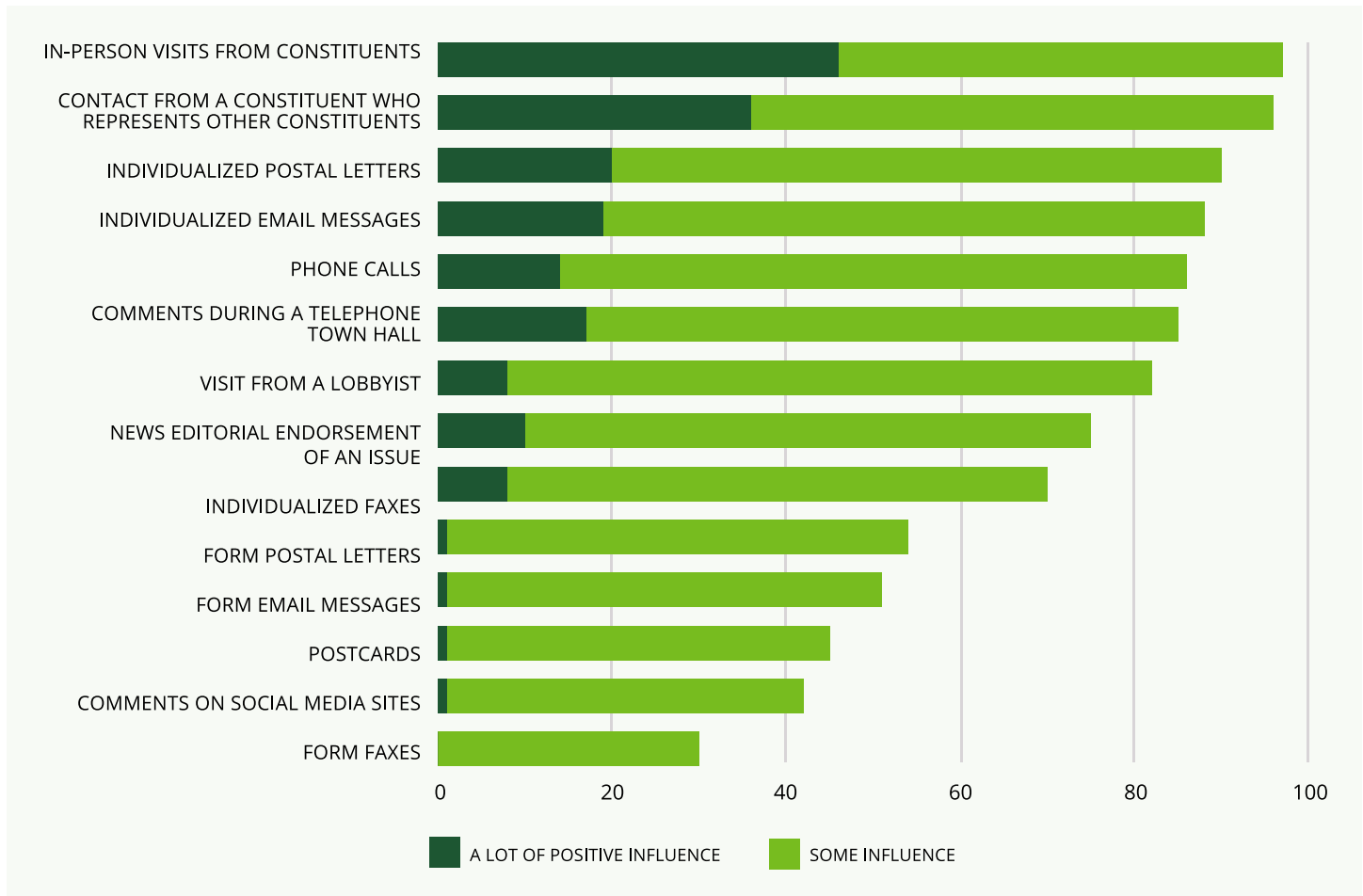
¹Adapted from "Advocating For Advocacy" by Josh Blair

ADVOCACY 101

WHY SHOULD I ADVOCATE?

1. ADVOCACY IS EFFECTIVE

The chart below shows the responses of 192 congressional staff members when asked, If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his/her decision?²



Overwhelmingly, congressional staff members responded that contact from concerned constituents can have a significant influence on their decisions. Beyond these survey responses, we've heard directly from elected officials that they are consistently happy to hear feedback and opinions from organizations and individuals.

“All legislation should be informed by constituents, whether directly through advocacy or indirectly through their experiences. In my office, everyone answers the phones, everyone interacts with constituents who walk in the door, and I personally respond to my own emails. If we hear the same story over and over from constituents, that means there is a systemic problem that needs a legislative response.”

-Hon. Donna Bullock, PA House Representative, District 195

² http://www.congressfoundation.org/storage/documents/CMF_Pubs/cwc-perceptions-of-citizen-advocacy.pdf

ADVOCACY 101

WHY SHOULD I ADVOCATE? (CONT.)

2. CUTS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS WOULD BE DEVASTATING

We have to take a multi-pronged approach to fighting hunger, and advocating for strong government programs and against harmful budget cuts needs to be included in our strategy.

SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) provides 12 times as many meals as all the food banks in the country combined. Just a 10% cut to SNAP would mean that Philabundance would have to more than double our services to make up the gap, which we do not have the capacity to do.



Furthermore, many government programs stock food cupboard and emergency kitchen shelves. TEFAP, TEFAP Bonus, CSFP, and SFPP and PASS in Pennsylvania all help to ensure the emergency food system has food available to those who need it.

3. WE HAVE SEEN ADVOCACY WORK

The pathway to PASS - the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System - was paved by anti-hunger advocates over the last ten years.

In 2006, Hunger Free Pennsylvania learned of a program in Michigan that promoted access to surplus agricultural products. They brought the idea to food banks and farmers around the state, and learned that both were highly interested in getting something similar started in Pennsylvania.

For the next two years, HFPA called, wrote to, and met with representatives. It took a lot of work, but the PA Department of Agriculture agreed to fund two pilot programs. After these programs were successful, advocates worked with state legislators to draft a law that would legally establish the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System. In 2009, the bill was passed unanimously in both the PA House and Senate, and PASS was created.

One staff member of one organization had an idea for this program, and with some persistent advocacy and coalition building, they were able to create an entirely new program serving the whole state. **With enough people and a good idea, advocacy can make a long-lasting impact.**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

ADVOCACY 101

ARE NONPROFITS ALLOWED TO ADVOCATE?

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING VS. CAMPAIGNING

All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying. In thinking about how to best be an advocate as a nonprofit organization, it can be helpful to be aware of the difference.

Advocacy is speaking up for or against something in any way. Lobbying has some specific legal definitions and regulations. There are two different kinds of lobbying:

- 1. Direct Lobbying** - Any form of communication with a member or staff of a legislative body that is intended to influence legislation. To be considered direct lobbying, a communication needs two parts:
 - Reference to specific legislation.
 - Reflect a view on the legislation.
- 2. Grassroots Lobbying** - Essentially, efforts to encourage the general public to participate in direct lobbying. To be considered grassroots lobbying, a communication needs three parts:
 - Refer to specific legislation.
 - Reflect a view on the legislation.
 - Include a “call to action” - meaning anything that instructs someone to contact a legislator, provides the contact information for a legislator, or provides a mechanism to contact a legislator, such as a webform or a postcard.

TAKE AWAYS

You can participate in *large but limited* amounts of lobbying on behalf of your organization.

You can participate in *unlimited* non-lobbying advocacy on behalf of your organization.

You *cannot* endorse or campaign for a candidate or political party on behalf of your organization.

You, *as an individual not representing your organization*, can participate in as much lobbying, advocacy, or endorsing of candidates as you would like.

ADVOCACY 101

EXACTLY HOW MUCH LOBBYING CAN I DO?

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING VS. CAMPAIGNING

There are two options for determining how much time and money your nonprofit organization can devote to lobbying efforts.

- 1. Default - Insubstantial Part Test** - The IRS guidelines for nonprofit organization states, “no substantial part of a charity’s activities...be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation.” What “substantial” means has not been clearly defined, but includes staff time, budget, volunteer time, and other activities. Most experts recommend 3-5% of an organization’s activities can safely be devoted to lobbying actions.
- 2. 501(h) Election** - Using the 501(h) election, nonprofits with budgets under \$500,000 can spend up to 20% of their budget on lobbying purposes, and 25% of their allowed lobbying budget can be used for grassroots lobbying. The percentage allowed decreases as the organizational budget increases, with the maximum allowed lobbying budget set at \$1,000,000. Under the 501(h) election, only monetary expenses are counted towards your lobbying budget, meaning volunteers or other non-expense resources can be used without limit.
 - Taking the 501(h) Election - In order to be held to these more specific lobbying restrictions, you need to file a very simple form: “Form 5768 - Election/Revocation of Election by an Eligible Section 501(c)(3) Organization to Make Expenditures to Influence Legislation” (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f5768.pdf>)
 - After filing the 501(h) form - You are required to keep track of the total amount of money you spend each year on lobbying efforts, and report your totals on IRS form 990, Schedule C (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990sc.pdf>)

LOBBYING LIMIT EXAMPLES

Exempt Purpose Expenditures (Your Budget)	Max Recommended Lobbying Budget		Insubstantial Part Test
	Total Allowed Lobbying Budget	Amount Allowed for Grassroots Lobbying	Max Recommended Lobbying Budget
\$1,000	\$200	\$50	\$30-\$50
\$5,000	\$1,000	\$250	\$150-\$250
\$10,000	\$2,000	\$500	\$300-\$500
\$30,000	\$6,000	\$1,500	\$900-\$1,500
\$50,000	\$10,000	\$2,500	\$1,500-\$2,500
\$500,000	\$100,000	\$25,000	\$15,000-\$25,000
\$750,000	\$137,500	\$34,375	\$22,500-\$37,500
\$1,500,000	\$225,000	\$56,250	\$45,000-\$75,000
\$10,000,000	\$650,000	\$162,500	\$300,000-\$500,000

ADVOCACY 101

WHO ARE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

FEDERAL



At the federal or national level, you have three main legislators: two senators and one representative.

Every state has two senators, who represent all people of their state, regardless of geographic area.

Representatives serve based on geographic area, called their district. You have one representative at the national level.

To find out who your representative and senators are, visit <https://live.cicerodata.com>, and enter your address. Click on any senator or member of congress to pull up their contact information.

STATE



At the state level, you have one state senator and one state representative. Unlike national representatives, both state senators and state representatives serve based on geographic area, or districts.

To find out who your Pennsylvania or New Jersey state representative and senator are, the same website listed above, <https://live.cicerodata.com>, will work.

LOCAL



At the local level, there are many different elected officials who may have influence over specific policies. Depending on where you live and what you are interested in advocating about, some of the most relevant local elected officials may be the mayor, members of city council, members of the school board, or the district attorney.

Because there are so many different elected officials with very different roles, and our partner organizations serve many different towns and cities, there may not be one location that has the information for every local elected official, but try the website listed above, or the website for your county or municipality.

ADVOCACY 101

YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Rather than looking up information on your elected officials each time you would like to contact them, it can be helpful to put together a cheat-sheet of who your elected officials are, and how to contact them.

The “Local” section has been left blank, as there are many different local officials (mayor, city council, school board, etc.) you may want to include. Try filling out a copy of this sheet based on your organization’s service area, and a copy based on your own personal address.



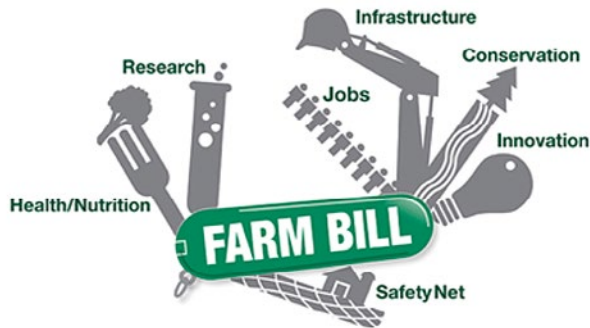
YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS			
Area	Position	Name	Contact Information
FEDERAL	U.S. Senator		
	U.S. Senator		
	U.S. Representative		
STATE	State Senator		
	State Representative		
	Governor		
LOCAL			



ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION: THE FARM BILL



“It’s like a Swiss Army knife.”

Image courtesy of the USDA

- President Obama 2/2/14

The Farm Bill covers a wide range of issues, and is the major food and farm legislation that gets revisited or reauthorized by Congress every 5 years. The Farm Bill sets U.S. food and farm priorities by developing policies and funding programs that provide a safety net for agricultural producers and for low-income Americans.

The next Farm Bill is scheduled to be reauthorized by October 2018, but may come up for debate sooner than that. Because the Farm Bill dictates how SNAP, the largest food aid program in the country, operates, it is crucial to advocate early and often to protect against cuts to the program.

Select Programs in the Farm Bill

SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States, serving more than 43 million Americans. SNAP works by issuing low-income Americans Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) debit cards with money that can only be used to purchase food. 2/3 of people receiving SNAP are children, seniors, or people with disabilities.
CSFP	Commodity Supplemental Food Program	CSFP is a USDA program that provides nutritious foods to low-income seniors 60 or older, through the distribution of food and administrative funds to state organizations.
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program	TEFAP is a commodity program that purchases and distributes food to low-income Americans. Much of the food purchased by the USDA is distributed by food banks and other local emergency food assistance programs.

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) authorizes several federal programs designed to ensure consistent access to healthy food for children at all times of the year. This network of programs allows schools and other organizations to provide meals at no cost to kids during the school day, after school, over breaks, and throughout the summer.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization is up for debate and review in Congress every five years, allowing for changes in the way programs are structured and funded. The current Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill (*Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*) expired on September 30th, 2015, but without reauthorization, the programs have been funded at the same level and continue to operate.

Select Programs in CNR		
SFSP	Summer Food Service Program	SFSP provides reimbursement to local organizations serving free and nutritious meals and snacks to kids throughout the summer.
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program	CACFP provides reimbursement to a variety of organizations, including child care centers and after school programs, serving meals at no cost to kids after school or during non-summer breaks.
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision	CEP is a federal program that became available in 2014. CEP allows schools and school districts in low-income areas to provide free meals to all students, regardless of individual household income, reducing administrative burden and the need to collect eligibility information from individual families.
NSLP	National School Lunch Program	The National School Lunch Program guarantees that low-income children are able to receive an affordable meal at school. Depending on their family's financial situation, a child may be able to receive a free or reduced price meal.
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children	The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for pregnant and recently pregnant women and their children up to age five.

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

PENNSYLVANIA SPECIFIC



At the state level, Pennsylvania has two programs aimed at improving the food security of low-income residents, while also providing economic support for local agriculture.

While smaller in budget and scope than many federal programs, these Pennsylvania specific programs have a large impact across the state.

“We now have a mechanism for our farm to recover a portion of the fixed costs associated with packaging and distribution of our donated potatoes. Thus, providing a benefit to our farming operation, while at the same time benefiting the charitable food system and those that it serves. It has truly been a win-win.”

— Dave Masser, President, Sterman-Masser Inc., describing the impact of PASS.

Select Pennsylvania Programs

PASS	Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System	The Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program connects local farmers and food producers to the charitable food system. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture provides funding to farmers to cover the costs of harvesting and processing surplus foods, which otherwise might have gone to waste. These foods are then donated to the food banks throughout the state for distribution to families in need. All 67 counties in Pennsylvania receive PASS funding, which can be used to cover the cost for farmers to harvest surplus, the cost of packaging product, and the cost of value added product.
SFPP	State Food Purchase Program	Pennsylvania’s State Food Purchase Program provides grants to counties for the purchase and distribution of nutritious food to low-income individuals. In Fiscal Year 2018, the program has been allocated \$18,188,000, which includes \$1,000,000 for PASS.

The background is a solid green color with a repeating pattern of white icons. The icons include a stack of books, a megaphone, and a hand with fingers spread. The text is centered in white.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORIES & DATA

BUILDING YOUR CASE

BALANCING STORIES & DATA

Understanding and effectively utilizing both stories and data can help you develop a strong and balanced case for what you are advocating for.

Data can tell us that around 326,000 people in Philadelphia are experiencing food insecurity, but that doesn't convey what food insecurity actually means, what it feels like on a daily basis, to the people experiencing it.

A personal testimonial from someone experiencing food insecurity can tell us that one person has to skip a few meals each week to make sure their kids get enough to eat, but that doesn't tell us how many other people might have similar experiences. Is this something experienced by just a few people in the area, or is this much more common?

Without one or the other of these pieces, you're leaving out a part of the story. By combining data and testimonial, you can communicate what food insecurity means on a personal basis, and how many other people are likely in similar situations.

CENTERING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

People who actively use anti-hunger or poverty programs are experts on the ground, and have the clearest perspective on how changes in policy would have an impact on their wellbeing. By centering the needs and wants of the people directly impacted, we can ensure our advocacy efforts are focused on what is most crucial.

An advocacy case that centers people with lived experiences is not only the most fair and equitable to the people who you serve, but also makes for a much stronger case.

STORY COLLECTION

WHY COLLECT STORIES?

“...Stories are political. Whose stories get told? What can those stories mean? Who benefits from their telling? These are political questions because they address the ways in which people's identities — their beliefs, attitudes, and values — are created and maintained.”³

People with lived experiences of poverty and food insecurity should be centered in anti-hunger efforts, and be given the opportunity to fully participate in advocacy efforts whenever possible.

When you can, you should aim to encourage people with lived experiences to directly contact legislators or attend meetings with you. However, when that isn't a possibility, you can encourage their participation by asking them to share their personal stories with you, which you can then pass along to elected officials during advocacy efforts.

Having a collection of stories related to specific issues or programs can help you act quickly in a variety of situations. If a reporter contacts you looking for information related to a current issue, if you're meeting with an elected official, or just trying to explain the importance of certain programs to others in your community, having stories on hand can make you a stronger and more prepared advocate.

Sharing stories can also be one of the most effective ways to highlight the impact that large anti-hunger policies, such as SNAP, have on people living in your community, and emphasize who will be effected by changes or cuts to these programs.

Philabundance can help you collect stories by sending staff or volunteers to speak with people at your program!

³Shannon, P. (1995). Text, lies, and videotape: Stories about life, literacy, and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORY COLLECTION QUESTIONS

The exact flow of collecting a story from someone is going to depend on the individual person and what advocacy issues are important at the time, but starting with a prepared list of questions related to current advocacy topics can be helpful for getting a conversation started.

START BY GATHERING BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON YOU ARE TALKING WITH:

- What is your name? What is your age and gender? Where do you live (state, city, neighborhood)?
- Can you tell me about yourself and your household? Who lives with you? What is the employment status of household members? What are their ages? How is their health? Are they veterans or in the military?

If you are trying to collect stories related to specific advocacy topics or anti-hunger program, you should aim to have most of your questions related to that topic. The following questions are aimed at gathering stories of people who receive SNAP benefits, but can be adapted for other programs or topics.



- Do you receive SNAP each month? If so, how long have you been receiving SNAP for?
- Is this the first time you've needed SNAP? What events happened in your life that led you to seek food assistance? What alternative sources of help did you seek first before seeking SNAP?
- What would happen to you and your family if SNAP was not here to help? Where would they go for assistance (church, family, friends), and would that assistance be available?
- Are your SNAP benefits enough to feed your family? Do they last all month or do they run out during the month? How do you fill the gap if SNAP isn't enough (food pantries, church, friends, family, etc.)? How long do your benefits last each month?
- How has participation in SNAP helped you/your family? Does it mean you are able to pay other bills? Has it impacted the foods you choose to eat?
- What would you say to lawmakers who are considering cutting SNAP and other food assistance programs in order to balance the budget?

You do not need to ask or get answers to all of these questions. If you feel as though the conversation is going well and you're getting the information you need, you should continue however feels most comfortable for you and the person you're speaking with.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORY COLLECTION BEST PRACTICES



BE RESPECTFUL

Choosing to share a story, especially one related to firsthand experiences with poverty or food insecurity, can be very difficult.

Throughout the whole story collection process, from first talking to someone about their story to however you end up sharing it, respect and dignity for the person telling their story should be your highest priority. People should never feel pressured into sharing, or feel that their receipt of services is dependent upon them sharing a story with you.



AVOID REINFORCING STEREOTYPES

When sharing stories, keep in mind the role you are playing in shaping the public narrative of people experiencing poverty or receiving food assistance. The stories you tell could reach an unexpectedly large audience, and impact the way that others think about people experiencing poverty or food insecurity. Sharing someone's story is an opportunity to highlight what has led to their current situation and highlight their successes, not to portray them as pitiable or unsympathetic.

Anyone could end up needing assistance at some point, and it's important to keep that in mind while choosing how to frame a story.



CONSENT AND PERMISSION FORMS

If you plan on sharing identifiable information about a person, including their name or photo, you need to have them sign a release and consent form. This provides protection for your organization, as well as the person sharing their story, by ensuring everyone agrees on how the information they provide may be used.

Explain as clearly as possible what a person's story, photo, or any other information they choose to share could be used for. If someone is only comfortable sharing their first name, or using a pseudonym, that option should be available to them.

The following page is the form that Philabundance uses when collecting stories that we plan to share publicly. If you are a partner agency of Philabundance, you are welcome to use this form and submit it back to us to keep on file, otherwise, you can use this as an example of the sort of language to use in a release form.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

I hereby irrevocably grant Philabundance in perpetuity and without limitations, the right and permission to copyright and/or use and/or publish or reproduce photographs, video, interviews or film of me, pictures in which I may be included in whole or part, and my voice – for education, public relations, advertising or any other purposes related to Philabundance’s charitable mission.

I hereby waive any right that I may have to approve the finished product, and I release and hold harmless Philabundance from any and all claims which I, my heirs, executors, or assigns, may at any time have against them on account of the granting of the rights set forth herein or arising out of such taking, recording, reproducing, publication, transmission, promotion, or exhibition referred to herein (including without limitation what might be deemed to be misrepresentation of me, my character, or my person due to distortion, optical illusion, or faulty reproduction which may occur in the finished product).

I hereby represent that I am of legal age and that I have every right to contract in my own name without violating any other commitment. I state further that I have read, or have had read to me, and understand this authorization and release, prior to its execution, and that I duly understand the contents thereof.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Phone #: _____

Parent or other Legal Guardian Printed: _____

Parent or other Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date of birth: _____

BUILDING YOUR CASE

USING DATA

MATCHING DATA TO STORIES

In addition to collecting stories, you should begin looking for data that you can use to demonstrate the scope of your advocacy issue.

If you are collecting and telling stories related to SNAP, for example, your data should be directly tied to that topic. Using SNAP participation rates or information about economic activity generated by SNAP in an area will provide meaningful context for your stories in a way that more general poverty data will not.




SNAP provides 12 times more meals than food banks


KEEPING IT SIMPLE

You don't need to be an expert to use data in advocacy, and your audience shouldn't need to be experts to understand the data you use. Your main task is identifying what information is most important to the case you are making, and selectively using it to enhance your argument.

For example, let's say you just told a story about someone who receives SNAP in Montgomery County, and how they saw their child's grades improve one they enrolled in the program. Rather than ending your story with:

 *"There are many other children in the area who rely on SNAP."*

Take the time to look up how many other children in the area are receiving SNAP, and say something closer to:

 *"Nearly 22,000 other children in Montgomery County are also counting on SNAP to be there for them."*

Using data can be that simple. With one slight rephrasing, you've communicated the scope of the issue and the impact of the program in a more meaningful way.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

RELIABLE DATA SOURCES

Not all data is good data! Data can be inaccurate, misleading, irrelevant, or out of date, and it's important to strive to use recent data from trustworthy sources.

The following is a list of relevant and reliable data regarding hunger and poverty. The following four pages of this toolkit summarizes key data pulled from these sources in 2017 for quick reference.

- 1. Feeding America** - Feeding America annually releases their Map the Meal Gap study, which provides food insecurity estimates by state, county, and congressional districts.
<http://map.feedingamerica.org>
- 2. Food Research Action Center (FRAC)** - FRAC publishes data related to many different food aid programs, including SNAP and child nutrition programs, as well as tools to visualize the data easily.
<http://frac.org/research>
- 3. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)** - CBPP publishes detailed analyses of state and federal policies that impact poverty and hunger.
<https://cbpp.org>
- 4. Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger** - The Coalition Against Hunger publishes data about the impact of the SNAP program by county or congressional district in Pennsylvania. They include information about the economic impact of SNAP, as well as who is being reached by the program.
<https://www.hungercoalition.org/ProtectSNAP/>
- 5. U.S. Census (American Community Survey)** - The U.S. Census annually publishes data covering a huge array of topics, including information about poverty and SNAP participation by demographic group in various geographic areas.
<https://factfinder.census.gov/>
- 6. USDA - Food Access Research Atlas** - The USDA publishes data and visualization tools to show food deserts, or areas with large low-income populations and low-access to places to buy food.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>
- 7. Your Organization/Coalition** - If your organization has surveyed clients, or if you are a part of a coalition with other organizations that have surveyed or collected data related to your services, consider including that data in your advocacy efforts.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PENNSYLVANIA HUNGER & SNAP DATA

PENNSYLVANIA HUNGER & SNAP					
Data	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
Population⁴	626,399	516,312	563,402	821,725	1,567,862
Food Insecure Population⁵	55,120	42,990	73,940	78,540	325,940
Food Insecurity Rate⁵	8.8%	8.4%	13.2%	9.7%	21%
Child Food Insecure Population⁵	17,950	15,020	18,540	22,650	72,310
Child Food Insecurity Rate⁵	13.2%	12.4%	14.6%	12.6%	20.9%
# of SNAP Recipients⁴	37,742	25,606	71,676	52,541	485,241
# of Child SNAP Recipients⁴	13,988	11,430	29,298	21,593	182,009
# of Senior SNAP Recipients⁴	6,404	3,528	8,681	8,038	69,144
Average Monthly SNAP Benefit⁴	\$122.42	\$118.72	\$125.89	\$123.51	\$133.67
One Month Total SNAP Dollars (March 2017)⁴	\$4,620,340	\$3,039,899	\$9,023,269	\$6,489,257	\$64,862,229
Annual Economic Activity Generated by SNAP (2016)⁴	\$96.8 Million	\$64.4 Million	\$186.1 Million	\$138 Million	\$1.4 Billion

⁴March 2017 data, Coalition Against Hunger - Protect SNAP.

⁵Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2017.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PENNSYLVANIA POVERTY DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

PENNSYLVANIA POVERTY					
Data	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
Population⁶	617,879	499,329	541,348	794,839	1,517,069
Population Below Poverty Level⁶	36,635	35,883	58,737	52,250	392,356
Poverty Rate⁶	5.9%	7.2%	10.9%	6.6%	25.9%
Child Population⁶	132,584	119,143	124,130	177,434	340,994
Child Poverty Population⁶	9,417	10,466	18,343	13,804	124,994
Child Poverty Rate⁶	7.1%	8.8%	14.8%	7.8%	36.7%
Senior Population⁶	101,468	72,016	82,096	127,612	188,185
Senior Poverty Population⁶	5,748	3,383	6,133	7,523	32,562
Senior Poverty Rate⁶	5.7%	4.7%	7.5%	5.9%	17.3%
Unemployment Rate (2016 Average)⁷	4.6%	3.9%	4.9%	4.2%	6.8%

⁶U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁷U.S. Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics

BUILDING YOUR CASE

NEW JERSEY HUNGER & SNAP DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

NEW JERSEY HUNGER & SNAP				
Data	Burlington	Camden	Gloucester	Salem
Population⁴	449,619	513,095	291,238	65,149
Food Insecure Population⁵	47,210	64,650	30,580	8,730
Food Insecurity Rate⁵	10.5%	12.6%	10.5%	13.4%
Child Population	99,520	120,127	67,266	14,595
Food Insecure Child Population⁵	12,440	18,860	9,350	2,700
Food Insecurity Rate (Children)⁵	12.5%	15.7%	13.9%	18.5%
Total Households⁶	12.5%	185,722	104,762	24,255
Number of Households Receiving SNAP	9,060	23,725	8,808	3,022
Percent of Households Receiving SNAP⁶	5.5%	12.8%	8.4%	12.5%

⁴March 2017 data, Coalition Against Hunger - Protect SNAP.

⁵Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2017.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

NEW JERSEY POVERTY DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

NEW JERSEY POVERTY				
Data	Burlington	Camden	Gloucester	Salem
Population ⁶	438,059	504,177	287,071	63,143
Population Below Poverty Level ⁶	28,440	66,882	23,257	8,692
Poverty Rate ⁶	6.5%	13.3%	8.1%	13.8%
Child Population ⁶	95,875	117,616	66,282	14,062
Child Poverty Population ⁶	8,414	23,444	6,469	3,420
Child Poverty Rate ⁶	8.8%	19.9%	9.8%	24.3%
Senior Population ⁶ (65 Years or Older)	67,677	70,485	40,254	10,459
Senior Poverty Population ⁶	3,329	6,924	2,298	744
Senior Poverty Rate ⁶	4.9%	9.8%	5.7%	7.1%
Unemployment Rate (2016 Average) ⁷	4.4%	5.5%	5.1%	6.3%

⁶U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⁷U.S. Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics

BUILDING YOUR CASE

THE POVERTY LINE

The poverty guideline, or poverty line, is set annually by the Department of Health and Human Services, and is used to determine eligibility for a wide range of programs, including SNAP, the National School Lunch Program, WIC, and many others.

It's important to note that being "above the poverty line" does not mean a person is not experiencing poverty or food insecurity. The poverty guidelines do not take into account location, rent or real estate prices, cost of living, or any personal circumstances that lead to food insecurity or poverty.

2018 POVERTY LINE (PL) BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household Size	Poverty Line	138% PL	150% PL	185% PL	200% PL
One	\$12,140	\$16,753	\$18,120	\$22,459	\$24,280
Two	\$16,460	22,715	\$24,690	\$30,451	\$32,960
Three	\$20,780	\$28,676	\$31,170	\$38,443	\$41,560
Four	\$25,100	\$34,638	\$37,650	\$46,435	\$50,200
Five	\$29,420	\$40,600	\$44,130	\$54,427	\$58,840
Six	\$33,740	\$46,561	\$50,610	\$62,419	\$67,480
Seven	\$38,060	\$52,523	\$57,090	\$70,411	\$76,120
Eight	\$42,380	\$58,484	\$63,570	\$78,403	\$84,760



ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Personal visits are a highly effective way of helping elected officials understand the issue you care about and your program. Elected officials are supposed to represent you, and welcome visits from constituents. They want you involved, even though they are busy people.

Repeatedly meeting or speaking with elected officials or their staff is an excellent way to develop a strong relationship, so that you can become one of their go-to resources when a vote is coming up related to your issue.



REQUEST/SCHEDULE THE MEETING

- Make your appointment 3-4 weeks in advance. On your elected official's website, they will either have a contact form, or information about scheduling a meeting. If you have a contact at the official's office, try reaching out to them to assist in scheduling a meeting.
- While scheduling the meeting, inform the staff of who you are, what organization you are representing, and what topic you are hoping to discuss with them.
- Be flexible! Try to make it easy for your elected official to meet with you, and be prepared for delays or cancellations.
- Consider whether you might know someone - a board member or volunteer maybe - who already has a relationship with the elected official and can make an introduction for you, and possibly attend the meeting.

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Invite other advocates! Bringing a coalition of diverse voices and experts on the issue can communicate the scope of the issue you are meeting about. Try to include people who use your program and have personal experiences with the issue you are meeting about. Because your time at the meeting will be limited, avoid bringing more than 4-5 other people.
- Write out your talking points, and practice them. You don't have to be a flawless public speaker to convey your message, but writing out the main points you are trying to get across can help you feel more prepared and get the most out of the meeting.
- If possible, send materials about your program and issue in advance, including data, stories, and fact sheets.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL (CONT.)

AT THE MEETING

- Bring printed copies of the materials you sent in advance.
- Don't be surprised or offended if you meet with staff rather than the representative. Staff meetings are incredibly valuable - they are the people the representative goes to before a vote!
- Be on time for your appointment. Be prepared, be polite, and be brief - you might only get fifteen minutes with the representative.
- At the beginning of the meeting, state who you are, who you represent, what you want to discuss, and what you want your elected official to do.
- Don't be surprised if your elected official does not know about your issue or program. Elected officials have to know about many issues and may specialize in areas unrelated to your work. Avoid overwhelming the elected official with information and detail.
- If you do not know the answer to a specific question, offer to find the answer and then forward the information to the elected official after the meeting. You want to emphasize that you are a resource for the elected official.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE MEETING

- If you feel comfortable, ask your elected official for some sort of commitment. If you are meeting before a vote, clearly ask them to vote the way you would like them to.
- Leave behind any materials about your issue or program, summarizing your points, ideally including your key points and ask. Make sure you leave either a business card or your contact information.
- Share any program information that might be helpful for their constituent services staff, such as information about your food distribution times and locations.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up the meeting with a thank you note or email, thanking the elected official for their time. Be sure to re-state your position in this note.
- If the elected official asks for more information, get this information to them as soon as possible.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

HOSTING ELECTED OFFICIALS

WHY HOST AN ELECTED OFFICIAL?

Bringing an elected official to your organization or to an event can be an excellent way to show what food insecurity looks like at the community level and give others the chance to speak with their elected officials.

SETTING UP THE EVENT OR PROGRAM

- **Inform attendees** - Try to give everyone, including staff, volunteers, and other attendees, advanced notice that an elected official is going to be attending the event or program. They may want to consider questions they would like to ask, and should be informed that there may be media and others present, which may impact whether they would like to attend. If there are people with experiences related to the issue, such as clients of your program or people with experience with food insecurity, ask if they would be comfortable talking to the elected official.
- **Invite others** - Having people representing a few different organizations present, even just to introduce themselves and show that they also care, can enhance the impact of a visit. These could be your traditional partners or other stakeholders that care about your issue but have a different perspective (e.g. health care providers, educators, grocers).

AT THE EVENT

- **Make Introductions** - If there are specific attendees at the event or program who you know are skilled at talking about a particular issue, or have a powerful and relevant story to share, try to introduce them to the visiting elected official. One of the biggest benefits of hosting an elected official is the opportunity for them to speak directly with people who would be impacted by legislation, rather than hear their stories indirectly.
- **Explain the context** - If you are hosting an elected official at a food distribution, for example, be prepared with information about how the program operates, which programs provide food or funding, and information about food insecurity in the area. If there is legislation or an upcoming vote that would impact the people at the event or the ability of the program to operate, make sure you inform them of this.
- **Have something prepared for them to do** - If there is a volunteer opportunity at the event, such as handing out or sorting food, be sure to extend an offer to participate. They may or may not accept, or may only participate for a few minutes and take photographs, but they should have the opportunity to take part at any time, as they may not be able to attend for very long

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

ABOUT SCHEDULING

Your Senators and Members of Congress travel back and forth many times each year between their home district and Washington, D.C. Your best chance to meet with a Senator or Member of Congress is to set up a meeting or invite them to an event during their time in their home district. Below are the tentative home district dates for the U.S. House and Senate in 2018.

U.S. Senate - Dates in Home District 2018

DATES	
February 19-February 23 (Presidents' Day)	July 2-July 6 (Independence Day)
March 26-April 6	August 6-September 3 (Labor Day)
April 30-May 4	October 29-November 12 (Veterans Day)
May 28-June 1 (Memorial Day)	November 19-November 23 (Thanksgiving)

U.S. Senate - Dates in Home District 2018

DATES	
January 22-January 26	July 30-August 31
February 19-February 23 (Presidents' Day)	September 17-September 21
March 26-April 6	October 15-November 9
May 1-May 4	November 19-November 23 (Thanksgiving)
May 28-June 31	December 17-December 21
July 2-July 6 (Independence Day)	

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

WRITING TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

GENERAL TIPS

- 1. Personal or form letters?** - Writing a personalized letter is significantly more impactful than signing on to or reproducing a form letter. Taking the time to write down a personal story about why you care about an issue can be much more persuasive than a form letter covering the basics, though form letters are still worth sending if that is what you have time for.
- 2. When should you write a letter?** - Generally, the most important time to write a letter to a legislator is before a vote on a bill, so your input can be taken into consideration. However, it is also worthwhile to write to a legislator to either thank them or express concern after a vote, depending on which way they voted.
- 3. Keep it brief** - Keep your letter under one page. Your letter will most likely be read by a staff member and summarized for your legislator. Focusing on a few brief points ensures that your purpose for writing is clear.

KEY POINTS TO INCLUDE

- 1. Who are you writing to?** - Open your letter with a greeting. If you are writing to a Senator, “Dear Senator ____” will work. If you are writing to a Representative, “Dear Representative ____” will work.
- 2. Who are you?** - Identify yourself early on in the letter as a constituent of the person you are writing to. If you are representing an organization or an agency, identify yourself in this way as well.
- 3. What are you writing about?** - Try to be as specific as possible. If you are writing about a specific bill or piece of legislation, include the name or bill number in the first paragraph of your letter. Asking a legislator to “fight hunger” gives them leeway to interpret your ask many different ways, but asking a legislator to, for example, vote for “The Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016” can only be interpreted one way.

If you are writing after a vote to express thanks or concern over the way a legislator voted, the same applies. Be as clear as possible in what you are thanking or criticizing them for.
- 4. Why is this important to you?** - How will this bill positively or negatively impact you or your community? If you can, include both data and a story.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

EXAMPLE LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

LETTER

_____ (Date)

Dear Senator _____ (or Rep. _____)

As your constituent, I am writing to express my deep concern with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and asking you to vote against this piece of legislation.

I am a staff member/employee/volunteer of _____ (your agency), an organization dedicated to fighting hunger in _____ (your town or county), and I have seen firsthand how many people in my community are already struggling with hunger and economic insecurity.

Increasing the deficit by \$1.5 trillion dollars is going to open up crucial anti-hunger and poverty programs to cuts to balance the budget in future years. This piece of legislation is only going to hurt people who are already struggling to provide enough food for themselves and their families.

Just this last week, I spoke with a neighbor in my community who shared that even with a job and SNAP, he has to come to the pantry each month when his benefits run out. He is already working hard and making sacrifices to make sure his family gets enough to eat, and doesn't know what will happen if his benefits are reduced. These are the people who are going to be hurt if this bill passes.

I am asking you to vote against this bill, and look forward to reading your reply.

Sincerely,

Your name,

Address

Phone Number

Email Address

EXPLANATION

1. Today's date
2. Who you are writing to
3. What you are writing about
4. Who you are
5. Why this is important to you
6. A personal connection to the issue.
7. Clearly restating your ask
8. Formal farewell
9. Your name and contact information

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CALLING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

GENERAL TIPS

1. **Keep it brief** - Your call should be somewhere between 30 seconds and one minute. Your goal is to state who you are, what issue you're calling about, why you care about it, and what you would like the person you're calling to do. Limiting yourself to one to two sentences on each of these points will help you keep the call clear and on topic.
2. **Be kind** - Most likely, you are going to be speaking with a staff member at the office who takes calls from constituents all day. Yelling or making their job unpleasant can get your call discounted. Be polite but firm with your requests.
3. **Write out a script** - Writing down what you're planning to say, or even just a few bullet points about the subject, can be very helpful to make sure you and the staff member get the most out of your call.

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. **Federal** - To reach a member of Congress via phone, you can call the United States Capitol switchboard at: (202) 224-3121. You will be connected to a switchboard operator who can connect you to your requested elected official's office.
2. **State:**
 - **For Pennsylvania**, you can find contact information for your representatives at: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/#address>
 - **For New Jersey**, you can find contact information for your representatives at: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp>

SAMPLE SCRIPT

"Hi, my name is [NAME] and I'm a constituent from [TOWN/CITY].

I'm calling to express my opposition to any new work requirements for the SNAP program. The current SNAP work requirements already place an unfair burden on people living in areas where jobs are hard to find, and taking food off of their plates is not the solution. I ask that you oppose any and all expansion of these requirements, for the sake of those experiencing hunger in your district.

Thank you for your time and attention."

[IF LEAVING A VOICEMAIL: please leave your full street address to ensure your call is tallied]

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MAKING YOUR PERSONAL CALL SCRIPT

My name is _____, and I am from _____, _____ (city, state).

List the reason you are calling and then condense it to one or two sentences:

How does this legislation or issue affect you personally?

What is the call to action for your representative? Do you want a statement, cosponsorship of a bill, a vote, or something else?

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

GRASSROOTS AND GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

One of the most effective and often underused strategies available to nonprofits is grassroots advocacy. Generally defined as “the basic source of support from the ground up,” grassroots advocacy includes organizing, mobilizing, and engaging the public to advocate for themselves. The value of this form of advocacy is that it is driven by the people. It is grounded in the belief that people matter and that their collective voices are powerful in influencing elected officials and in shaping policies at all levels of government.⁴

GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY

Grasstops are activists or members of an organization or geographic area that have a high professional and/or public profile, may be part of the “political family” for a decision maker, and can raise public attention or influence decision makers through established connections. For example, an organization’s board members and founders, community leaders, and nationally recognized individuals (including experts, professionals, etc.) constitute potential grasstops advocates. Grasstops advocates can reinforce grassroots action, move an issue into the spotlight, and carry a message between the general public and more powerful targets.⁵

Successfully engaging both grassroots and grasstops advocates will allow you to build a broad base of support for your advocacy issues, and effectively utilize the networks of people connected to your organization.

ENGAGING GRASSTOPS ADVOCATES

You might know some potential grasstops advocates and not even know it! Perhaps you have a board member who used to work at the same law firm as your senator, or maybe someone on staff is related to a local legislator, or a donor of yours also contributes to the campaigns of legislators, or maybe you have a volunteer who has connections with a local news station.

Determining if you have these connections, and clearly asking them to participate in your advocacy efforts by making calls, talking to the media, or participating however else they are willing, can strengthen your advocacy campaign impact.

You never know who in your network might have a relationship with a legislator until you ask! Consider talking to your board members, volunteers, staff, and donors about your advocacy efforts, and whether they have any connections that could be helpful to you.

⁴http://www.gih.org/files/usrdoc/Grassroots_Advocacy_Sunflower_Foundation_November_2010.pdf

⁵<https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/Tip-Sheet-for-Working-with-Grasstops.pdf>

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

GRASSROOTS AND GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY

SOCIAL MEDIA

Does your organization have a Facebook page? Or Twitter? Or Instagram? All of these, and other social media pages, can be excellent tools to engage those around you in advocacy. One post with relatively little effort can reach a wide audience that may not otherwise know about the issue or how they could take action.



This tweet from the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger shows how short and simple an effective call to action can be. Consider sharing content from other organizations as an easy start.

BUILDING A MAILING LIST

Having a mailing list sign-up sheet available whenever you're interacting with clients or the public can help you build a strong network of advocates.

See the next page of the toolkit for a template of a basic mailing list sign-up sheet.

If you already have an active mailing list for sending out news about your organization, consider adding action alerts along with other news that you send to your network.

WHEN IN DOUBT, REFER!

Philabundance has dedicated advocacy staff and an advocacy mailing list, and we periodically email out information on current legislative concerns and how to take action. If you are unsure about writing your own advocacy updates, consider forwarding Philabundance advocacy update emails to your network, or referring people to sign up to receive the emails directly from Philabundance.



philabundance.org/advocate/#advo-alerts

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

ADVOCACY CONTACT LIST SIGN-UP

Interested in anti-hunger advocacy? Put your contact information on the list to begin receiving advocacy alerts.

Contacts		
NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS	Phone Number

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

WHY ENGAGE CLIENTS IN ADVOCACY?



“Individuals connected to the emergency food system bring an important perspective to the policy debates surrounding hunger and poverty. They see the struggles of people dealing with hunger and poverty every day in their work. They see the shortcomings of the social safety net in the United States and know the stories of those individuals who experience the daily problem of putting food on their table. This unique perspective must be heard by policymakers and it is our job to make sure that they listen.”⁶

People with firsthand experience with hunger need to be at the forefront of efforts to end it. Engaging people with lived experiences in advocacy is crucial in creating a food system that everyone can participate in in equitable ways.

HOW CAN WE ENGAGE CLIENTS IN ADVOCACY?

- Talk to people who use your program about the issues they care about. Advocacy efforts on behalf of your organization should be representative of the interests of the people you serve.
- Encourage people who use your program to directly contact legislators, and offer to pass their stories or comments to legislators if they would rather not do it themselves. If they would like to contact a legislator but aren't sure how, provide them with relevant instructions. If you are meeting with a legislator or their staff, consider inviting someone who uses your program to attend with you and share their thoughts.
- Ensure that your advocacy efforts are communicated in a way that your clients will receive and understand them. This could mean putting together a flyer to put in food packages, talking to people directly, or sending out an email, depending on who you serve. If possible, strive to make information or materials available in whatever languages are commonly spoken by people at your program.
- Seek and encourage feedback. Are your clients happy with your advocacy efforts? Are there ways they would like to be involved that haven't been provided? By openly talking about your advocacy and being available to receive feedback you can work to make sure your advocacy efforts best represent the people you serve.

⁶Pedulla, David. Advocating for Change

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

VOTER REGISTRATION



WHY VOTER REGISTRATION?

Voting is one of the most fundamental ways that people can engage with their elected officials, impact policy, and create change. Unfortunately, people experiencing poverty are significantly less likely to be registered to vote or vote in most elections.⁷ We would like to ensure that as many people receiving our services are empowered and encouraged to participate in the political process and choose their elected officials.

“ Our congregation is in one of the most marginalized areas in the city. If we don’t exercise our right to vote, we cannot expect our local, state, or national officials to give us any consideration when making decisions. They monitor who is going to the polls, so if you are not, then they won’t put energy into your community needs. For this reason, Children’s Mission is very much involved in registering individuals to vote, Get Out the Vote campaigns, and phone-banking. ”

-Pastor Melanie Dubouse, Executive Director of Children’s Mission

STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE VOTING

Many organizations are willing to provide volunteers and materials to assist in registering people to vote. Consider reaching out to your local League of Women Voters, Rock the Vote, or POWER if you would like to hold a voter registration event at your organization.

To support ongoing voter registration efforts, consider incorporating questions about voter registration status into any intake or registration processes for people who visit your organization.

For Pennsylvania, you can register to vote online or find printable voter registration forms at:

- <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>

For New Jersey, you can find statewide voter registrations forms in several languages at:

- <http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voting-information.html>

As a nonprofit organization, you cannot participate in “campaigning,” or encouraging people to vote for a specific candidate or party. All voter registration efforts need to be strictly nonpartisan.

⁷<http://www.people-press.org/2015/01/08/the-politics-of-financial-insecurity-a-democratic-tilt-undercut-by-low-participation/>



CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

SHOULD I DESIGN MY OWN ADVOCACY PLAN?

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

An advocacy plan can be as simple as committing to participate in calls to action from anti-hunger organizations! Many organizations, included those listed below, send out action alerts when they need their networks to take action. If you have concerns about getting an advocacy plan going at your organization, try starting by signing up for and following the alerts sent out by one or more of these groups.



Philabundance

- <http://www.philabundance.org/advocate/#advo-alerts>

Feeding America:

- <http://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/>

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger

- <https://hungercoalition.salsalabs.org/advocacyalerts/index.html>

Food Research and Action Center

- <http://frac.org/subscribe-to-enews>

New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition

- <https://cfanj.org/njahc-home/ewssignup/>

DESIGNING YOUR OWN PLAN

If your organization involves issues that extend beyond the anti-hunger area, or if you are interested in starting a more in-depth conversation at your organization about the role of advocacy in fighting hunger, taking the time to discuss and create your own plan is worthwhile.

This section of the toolkit contains resources, including questions you can ask yourself or others in your organization to get started, guides to defining advocacy priorities within an organizational setting, and a brief example of how Philabundance sets our advocacy priorities.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

There is no one size fits all plan for advocacy!

Advocacy can be a full time job, or as easy as setting aside five minutes a month to contact a representative to share your thoughts, or anywhere in between. It's important to make sure your plan works for you. It's better to set a reasonable goal and make progress towards it, rather than set a lofty goal with little progress.

Remember, improvement is always valuable. Try not to get overwhelmed by information about what other organizations are doing for advocacy, and focus on building your own abilities to be an effective advocate.

SET A SMART PLAN

Using the SMART framework can be helpful for setting a plan that is both achievable and impactful.

SMART PLAN		
S	SPECIFIC	Be as clear as possible in your plan. Who is involved? What are you trying to accomplish? When will it happen?
M	MEASURABLE	How can you track the outcome of your plan or your progress? Set criteria and milestones to keep track of your efforts.
A	ACHIEVABLE	Is your plan realistic? Can you fit it into your schedule? Is it something you will be able to commit to? Do you have the resources to make it happen?
R	RELEVANT	Does your plan relate to building your advocacy capacity? Is it relevant to the needs of the people you serve?
T	TIMELY	When do you want to do things? What's the deadline? Do you want to take a specific number of actions each month?

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

ADVOCATING WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

While you are always allowed to advocate and lobby as an individual, advocating as a representative of an organization has unique challenges, and necessarily involves considering the needs and viewpoints of others who lead, work for, fund, or rely on your organization.

Clearly defining what advocacy efforts your organization should participate can be difficult, but doing so early on in developing an advocacy plan can help you avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone is on the same page.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

- **Organization Leadership** - Do you have a board of directors, and are they active in decision making? What about an executive director or CEO? Depending on their level of involvement, they may want to sign off on an official advocacy plan, or participate in setting organizational advocacy priorities. Working with leadership on developing an advocacy policy can also encourage them to get involved, and they could potentially be strong allies in your efforts.
- **Funders** - If you are an organization that relies on donors or outside funding to operate, you need to consider what impact taking a stance could have on your organization, and if you will alienate any current or potential donors. If you have staff or volunteers leading fundraising or development efforts for your organization they should be involved in conversations about potentially controversial advocacy topics.
- **The People You Serve** - As an organization that addresses hunger and food insecurity, be careful that you don't lose sight of the people who you serve in favor of appealing to leadership or funders. Advocating within an organization can be a balancing act, but the needs of the people you serve should be central to your organization's advocacy efforts.
- **You (Or Whoever Will Be Leading Advocacy Efforts)** - Don't bite off more than you can chew with your plan. If you will be the one taking the actual advocacy actions laid out in the plan, make sure it accounts for your schedule and other responsibilities. If you can divide the efforts among several people, you might be able to take on a more ambitious plan.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

DEFINING YOUR ADVOCACY AREAS

WHY SET ADVOCACY AREAS?

There are countless issues worth caring and advocating about, and as an individual you might want to spread your efforts between a wide range of topics. However, if you are speaking as a representative of your organization, the topics you advocate about should be directly related to your organizational mission. By taking the time to define your criteria for advocacy, you can create an achievable plan and a clear process for determining what actions to take for any issue.

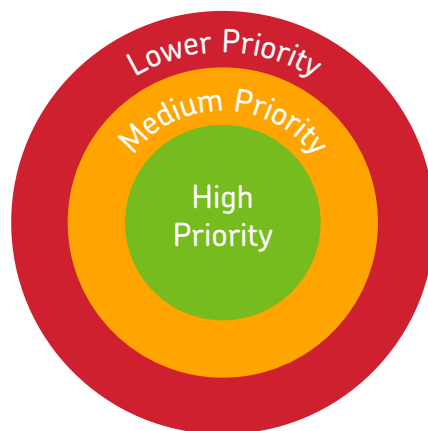
SETTING ADVOCACY PRIORITY AREAS

It can be helpful to think of advocacy priority areas in terms of concentric circles, or a target.

At the very center are policies that are central to your organizational mission and operation. If you are an anti-hunger organization, these policies should be related to programs or funding that bring food to your organization or the people you serve. If you also have a focus on another issue, such as racial equity or homelessness, policies that directly impact these issues could be within this area as well. Try to keep these as clear and focused as possible.

The next ring out from the center are policies that are tied to your organization's mission, but less directly tied to your programs and operation. These could be policies that relate to hunger relief programs that your organization does not participate in, but still impact the people who you serve. This likely includes a fairly wide range of issues.

The outer ring encompasses policies that are either unrelated or unclearly tied to your organization's mission. Issues in this area should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If you choose to advocate about something that falls into this category, you should have a very clear explanation for why your organization is taking action and how it relates to your mission.



You can use different criteria for what falls in high, medium, or low priority, but be clear in how you are deciding which issues go in which categories. Consider checking out Feeding America, FRAC, and Philabundance's policy priorities as a guide.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

DRAFTING AN ADVOCACY POLICY

“IF/THEN” ADVOCACY STATEMENTS

“If/Then” statements can be an excellent way to frame an advocacy discussion and work towards creating an organizational policy. There are endless “If/Then” statements you could decide to use in an advocacy plan, but these are a few examples if you decide to use the high/medium/low priority framework from the previous page:

- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the high priority category, **THEN** you can actively participate in advocacy efforts, including encouraging others to advocate, creating informational materials, and setting up meetings with legislators, without seeking approval from the board of directors or organization leadership.
- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the medium priority category, **THEN** you are able to sign on to petitions, letters, and make statements about your organization’s position without seeking approval from the board of directors.
- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the low priority area, but you believe your organization should advocate about it, **THEN** you can present information and justification to the board of directors (or a subset of the board of directors), who can approve or deny whether the organization should publicly take a position on the issue.
- **IF** the advocacy plan has not been evaluated in a year, **THEN** we will discuss and decide if revisions are needed at the next board meeting.
- **IF** Philabundance publicly takes a stance on an issue or asks your organization to take action, **THEN** you will advocate about the issue.

Another way you can conceptualize “If/Then” statements for your advocacy plan and agreement is through creating a flowchart that you can use to evaluate issues (see page 49 for an example).

MAKING IT OFFICIAL

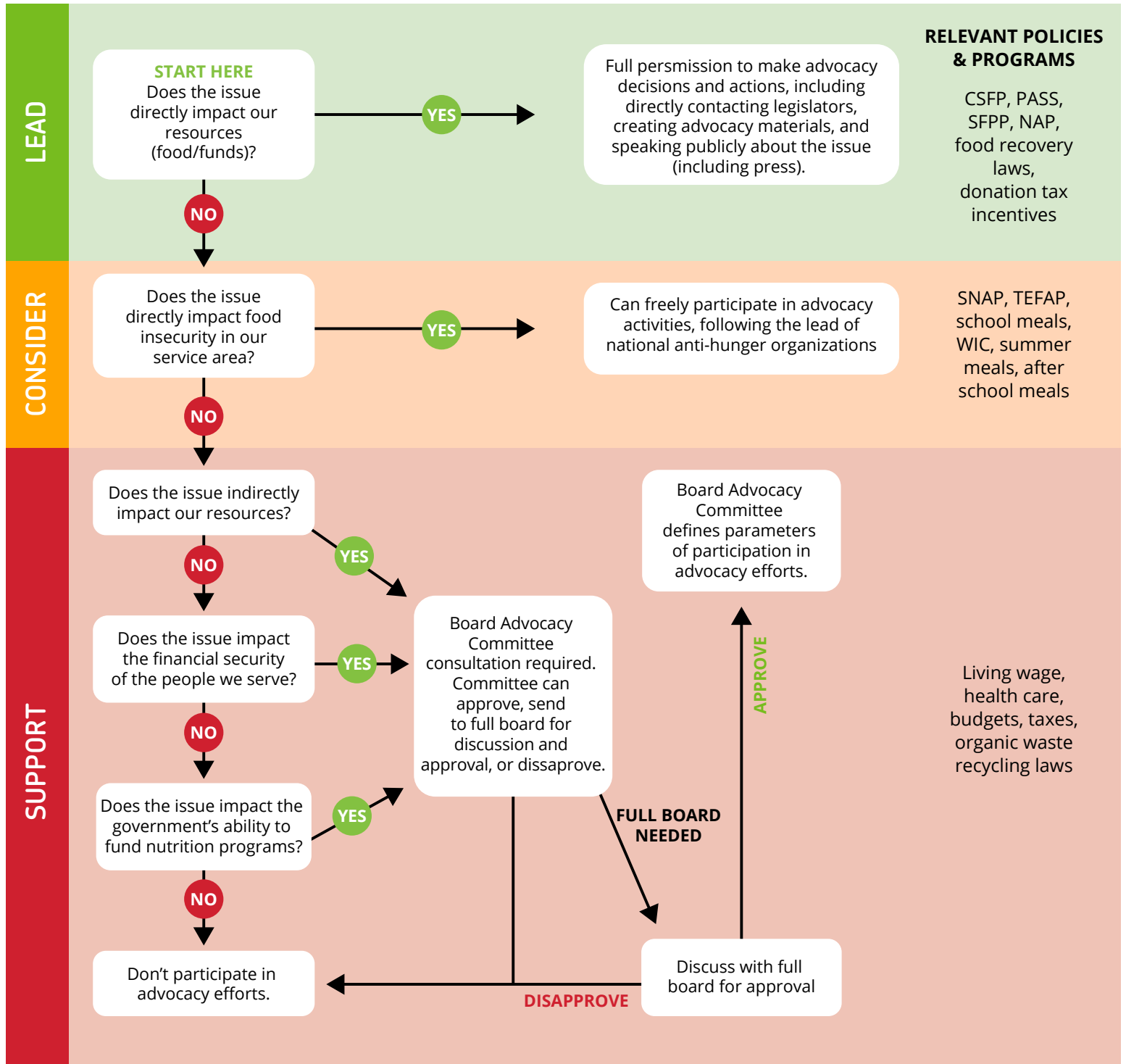
Once you have an idea of how you believe your organization should structure, evaluate, and respond to advocacy issues, it’s time to get it approved. What this means will heavily depend on your organization’s structure, but this is a great time to practice advocacy.



Be prepared to explain to your organization’s leadership, or the board of directors, why advocacy is a crucial aspect of anti-hunger work, and how you decided on the topics you believe should be advocated for.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

ADVOCACY FLOW CHART EXAMPLE



CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

PHILABUNDANCE'S ADVOCACY AREAS

When deciding whether to participate in advocacy efforts, Philabundance groups issues into three main categories based on how critical each is to our ability to operate and the food security of the people we serve.

1. **Lead - Issues that directly impact Philabundance's resources (food/funds).** We strive to take a leading or co-leading role in advocacy efforts related to these issues, and will devote time and effort to encourage others to advocate.
2. **Support - Issues that directly impact the food security of people in our service area.** We support other anti-hunger organizations in advocating about these issues, through letter sign-ons, showing up to events, and other efforts.
3. **Consider - Issues that relate to the economic wellbeing of the people we serve, the government's ability to fund nutrition programs, or indirectly impact Philabundance's resources.** We will carefully and thoughtfully consider on a case-by-case basis whether to participate in advocacy efforts about these issues, and will discuss with leadership, the development department, and the Board Advocacy Committee before taking action.

LEAD	Can advocate freely and strongly about these issues, and encourage others to do so as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSFP • Donation tax incentives • Neighborhood Assistance Program -Charitable Food Pro-gram (PA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food recovery laws • PASS (PA) • SFPP (PA)
SUPPORT	Can freely participate in advocacy efforts and express support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAP • The Emergency Food Assistance Program & TEFAP Bonus • WIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFSP & CACFP • National School Lunch Program & School Breakfast Program
CONSIDER	Discuss the topic with Board Advocacy Committee and development department before taking action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living wage • Affordable health care • Predatory lending • Affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste recycling laws • Childcare and worker benefits • Budgets • Taxes

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

This page and section are intended to help you begin thinking about what is important to you and your organization, and what you want to include in an advocacy plan.

What is your organization's mission?

What policies or laws impact the work you do or the people you serve?

Who are the key people involved?

Why should other people care?

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR RESOURCES AND ASSETS

No matter how large or small your organization is, you have resources and expertise! Use this section to start to think about what these resources are, and how you can use them towards advocacy efforts.

Resources and Assets		
FUNDS	How much money can you devote to this?	
STAFF	How much time can paid staff devote to this?	
VOLUNTEERS	How many unpaid people are willing to help?	
CONTACTS	Who do you know? Who do those people know?	
KNOWLEDGE	What do you know? What is your expertise?	
LIMITATIONS	Will anyone at your organization or funding push you back?	

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

EXPANDING YOUR RESOURCES AND ASSETS

Are you satisfied with the resources you have? Or do you think you will need more to achieve your goal? What resources might you need more of to be more effective in your advocacy and how can you get there? Consider the impact that pushing for more resources could have on your organization.

Resources and Assets		
FUNDS	Can you fundraise for this?	
STAFF	Can you hire additional staff or devote more staff time?	
VOLUNTEERS	Can you recruit more volunteers?	
CONTACTS	Who should you <i>try</i> to know? How can you meet them?	
KNOWLEDGE	What more should you learn?	
LIMITATIONS	Can you push back against these limitations?	

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR ADVOCACY ENVIRONMENT

Use this section to start to think about who else is involved in what you are advocating for. Are there other people or organizations who care about the issue? Are they likely to want to help you, or are they likely to be on the other side of the issue? Thinking about who else is going to be involved early on can help you to put together a strong advocacy plan.

Who is (likely) on your side?	Who is (likely) opposed?	Who is (likely) on the fence?

What share of time/resources will you devote to each of these groups?

How much effort should be spent making sure those on your side are taking action?

How much effort should be spent countering your opposition?

How much effort should be spent swaying those on the fence to your side?

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR SMART ADVOCACY PLAN

SMART PLAN		
SPECIFIC	What specifically do you want to accomplish?	
MEASURABLE	How can you keep track of progress and results?	
ACHIEVABLE	Do you have the time and resources for your plan?	
RELEVANT	Is this plan related to your organizational goals?	
TIMELY	How often do you want to take action? For how long?	