



Your Voice Matters: A Nonprofit's Guide to Advocacy



**BRAIN INJURY
ASSOCIATION**

OF AMERICA

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy (n.) – The act of supporting or arguing for a cause, idea, or policy. (Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition)

Advocacy is all about actively supporting a cause, idea, or policy. For those new to advocacy, it can feel overwhelming due to the vast amount of information and the scope of work involved. However, starting with the basics can make the process more manageable.

Advocacy generally falls into two main types: grassroots and grasstops. While advocacy is a broad term and can encompass various specific approaches, the following definitions are widely applicable:

- **Grassroots Advocacy:** This involves building and mobilizing a base of supporters. Identify and recruit individuals and organizations within the mountain bike community that align with your goals. Once this base is established, engage them to contact key decision-makers on the issue. Outreach tools may include petitions, phone calls, sign-on letters, social media, and digital ads.
- **Grasstops Advocacy:** This approach focuses on engaging specific decision-makers by leveraging personal connections, such as donors, friends, and community members. The goal is to use these connections to facilitate direct interactions with decision-makers. While both types of advocacy use similar tactics, grasstops advocacy often aims for in-person meetings.

Advocacy is a continuum that is founded in education and awareness. It's a holistic approach which requires the empowerment of others, activating one's voice and holding those in power accountable for change. A nonprofit organization can participate in the Advocacy Continuum at any point in its life cycle. As an organization participates in the continuum, they must ensure that they follow any laws that may restrict their advocacy efforts.

What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying?

It's easy to mix up "advocacy" and "lobbying." Lobbying specifically refers to efforts to persuade legislators—whether at the federal, state, county, or city level—to act on a particular piece of legislation. Advocacy, however, encompasses a wider range of activities that may or may not involve lobbying. Nonprofit organizations can engage in lobbying as part of their advocacy efforts without risking their tax-deductible status, but there are limits to the amount of lobbying they can do. It's important to be aware of and adhere to these limits.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is when people or organizations try to persuade lawmakers or government officials to create, change, or block laws or policies. It can take many forms, such as writing letters, meeting with officials, or presenting research to support a position. While lobbying is legal and an important part of the democratic process, it is closely regulated at both the federal and state levels.

Restrictions on Nonprofit Lobbying

Nonprofits, especially those classified as 501(c)(3) organizations, face specific limits on how much lobbying they can do. This is because they are tax-exempt and expected to focus on charitable, educational, or religious activities, not political ones.

Federal Restrictions



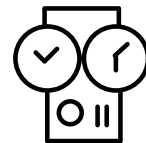
Limited Lobbying Activities:

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- 501(c)(3) nonprofits can engage in lobbying, but it cannot be a substantial part of their activities. The IRS uses a "facts and circumstances" test to decide what "substantial" means.



Prohibition on Political Campaign Activities:

- Nonprofits cannot support or oppose political candidates directly. This is different from lobbying for or against policies or legislation.



The 501(h) Election:

- Nonprofits can choose to file a 501(h) election with the IRS.
- This option provides clearer rules for how much they can spend on lobbying.
 - For example, lobbying expenses are capped based on the organization's budget (e.g., 20% of the first \$500,000).
- By electing this, nonprofits can avoid the vague "substantial" test and follow defined financial limits.

Grassroots vs. Direct Lobbying:

- Direct Lobbying: Communicating directly with lawmakers or officials to influence a specific policy.
- Grassroots Lobbying: Encouraging the public to contact lawmakers or take action on an issue.
 - **Both types count toward lobbying limits under the 501(h) rules.**

State-Level Restrictions

State laws also regulate nonprofit lobbying, but they vary widely.

- Most states require nonprofits to register as lobbyists if they engage in direct lobbying.
- Some states impose limits on how much nonprofits can spend or require detailed reporting of lobbying activities.
- Penalties for failing to comply can include fines, loss of tax-exempt status, or other legal actions.

To learn about your state's regulations on nonprofit lobbying please visit:

<https://afj.org/bolder-advocacy/state-law-resources-practical-guidance-series/>

How Does the 501(h) Election Help?

The 501(h) election simplifies lobbying rules for nonprofits:

- It replaces the unclear "substantial part" test with clear financial thresholds.
- It provides more freedom for nonprofits to plan and carry out lobbying efforts while staying within legal limits.
- Example: A nonprofit with a budget of \$1 million can spend up to \$225,000 on lobbying (\$100,000 for grassroots lobbying) under the 501(h) election.

Why These Rules Exist:

Nonprofits receive tax benefits because they serve the public good. To ensure fairness, they are restricted in how much they can influence laws or politics. These rules aim to:

- Prevent abuse of tax-exempt status for political gain.
- Maintain a focus on charitable and educational missions.
- Promote transparency in lobbying activities.

Understanding these rules helps nonprofits use lobbying to advance their causes legally and effectively.

The 501(h) Election – In Detail

Known as the 501(h) Election, the second set of rules, established by Congress in 1976, provides a clearer definition of lobbying and specifies spending limits based on the size of the organization's budget. Nonprofits must formally choose to operate under these 1976 provisions by filing IRS Form 5768. This more recent set of rules also outlines activities that are not considered lobbying and thus do not count towards the lobbying limits. These include:

- **Executive Branch Contacts:** Interactions with executive branch employees or legislators regarding proposed regulations are not considered lobbying.
- **Volunteer Lobbying:** Expenses related to volunteer lobbying are considered lobbying expenditures only if they involve costs incurred by the organization, such as organizing a rally.
- **Member Communication:** Communicating with your members about legislation is not considered lobbying, as long as you do not encourage them to contact legislators.
- **Technical Advice to a Legislative Body:** Providing written responses or technical advice to legislative bodies is not considered lobbying, allowing you to offer testimony or develop requested materials without it being classified as lobbying.

By submitting IRS Form 5768, a nonprofit establishes lobbying expenditure limits according to a sliding scale based on its annual exempt purpose expenditures. This process sets distinct ceiling limits for both total lobbying activities and grassroots lobbying efforts.

According to the IRS website: “Under the expenditure test, an organization’s tax-exempt status will not be at risk as long as its lobbying expenditures do not typically exceed the amount specified in section 4911. This limit is generally determined by the size of the organization and may not exceed \$1,000,000, as shown in the table below.

Organizations electing to file the 501(h) election must submit Form 5768 at any time during the taxyear for which it is to be effective. The election remains in effect for succeeding years unless it is revoked by the organization. Revocation of the election is effective beginning with the year following the year in which the revocation is filed.

Understanding and adhering to these rules is crucial for maintaining compliance and ensuring that your lobbying activities remain within legal limits.

501(h) Election Thresholds

If the amount of exempt purpose expenditures is:	Lobbying nontaxable amount is:
≤ \$500,000	20% of the exempt purpose expenditures
>\$500,00 but ≤ \$1,000,000	\$100,000 plus 15% of the excess of exempt purpose expenditures over \$500,000
> \$1,000,000 but ≤ \$1,500,000	\$175,000 plus 10% of the excess of exempt purpose expenditures over \$1,000,000
>\$1,500,000 but ≤ \$17,000,000	\$225,000 plus 5% of the exempt purpose expenditures over \$1,500,000
>\$17,000,000	\$1,000,000

Your Voice Matters: Why Advocates Should Share Their Stories

Your story has the power to change lives and shape the laws that impact your community. By sharing your personal experiences with lawmakers, you make abstract issues real and inspire action. Policies are created by people, for people—and your story helps decision-makers understand why change is needed.

Why Sharing Your Story Makes a Difference

- Humanizes Issues: Lawmakers hear facts and figures all day. A personal story makes the issue relatable and memorable.
- Builds Empathy: Stories can bridge political divides and help people see beyond party lines.
- Drives Change: A heartfelt story can lead to new policies, better funding, or changes in how laws are enforced.

Tips on Telling Your Story



How to Frame Your Story:

Use this simple structure to write and organize your story:

- **Introduction:**
 - Who are you?
 - What issue are you speaking about?
- **The Problem:**
 - What challenge did you or your community face?
 - Be specific—what happened and how did it impact you?
- **The Turning Point:**
 - What made you realize something had to change?
 - How did it inspire you to speak out?
- **The Solution:**
 - What change do you want to see?
 - How can the decision-maker help?
- **Call to Action:**
 - End with a clear, direct request (e.g., “Please support [policy/bill].”).



Self-Care While Sharing Your Story

Sharing personal experiences can be emotionally draining. Take steps to protect your mental and emotional well-being:

- **Know Your Boundaries:**
Share only what feels safe and comfortable. It's okay to say no to sharing certain details.
- **Have a Support System:**
Bring a friend, family member, or fellow advocate for emotional support.
- **Take Breaks:**
After sharing, take time to rest, recharge, and reflect.
- **Seek Professional Help if Needed:**
If sharing your story brings up difficult emotions, reach out to a counselor or therapist.
- **Celebrate Your Courage:**
Acknowledge your bravery and the impact you're making by speaking out!

Your story is a gift to the world. By sharing it, you amplify the voices of others who may not have the chance. Together, we can create meaningful change.

Volunteer Engagement: The Basics:

Volunteer opportunities come in many forms, and offering a diverse range of options is a smart strategy to boost long-term engagement and allow for varied participation. As you develop your volunteer management plans, consider including some of these different roles that volunteers can take on.

Here are several types of volunteering to incorporate into your approach:

Event Support

- Your organization likely hosts several fundraising events each year to promote your cause and raise funds. Volunteers can provide essential on-the-ground support to ensure these events run smoothly. Event support roles may include tasks like setup, guest registration, discussion facilitation, and merchandise sales.

Skills-Based

- Volunteering Skills-based volunteers contribute their professional expertise to nonprofits, offering services such as accounting, event planning, legal work, PR assistance, or digital marketing. These volunteers typically use skills they already employ in their careers and can be valuable on a one-time basis or throughout an ongoing project.

Long-Term Volunteering

- Long-term volunteers commit to ongoing roles within the organization, with set expectations and a designated time commitment communicated upfront. Examples of long-term volunteering include roles like youth mentors, tutors, coaches, and troop leaders.

Administrative Support

- Volunteers who provide administrative support assist your staff with office tasks, such as clerical work, data entry, or reception duties. While these volunteers often spend significant time in the office, their commitment may not be as extensive as that of long-term volunteers.

Advocacy Work

- Advocates play a key role in raising awareness for your cause and can be considered a type of volunteer. Their responsibilities may include promoting campaigns, securing petition signatures, or hosting discussion events to further your organization's mission.

Committee or Board Service

- Committee and board members hold vital roles in advancing your projects and ensuring your organization stays on course. Committees typically focus on specific tasks, like event planning, while board members take on a broader range of responsibilities, such as attending meetings, shaping strategies, and voting on key decisions.

Virtual Volunteering

- Virtual volunteers contribute remotely, making it possible for supporters to engage with your organization even when they can't be physically present. This approach also expands your reach to a wider geographic audience. Virtual volunteering opportunities might include:
 - Hosting or participating in virtual discussion events, like town halls and roundtables
 - Joining online meetups and celebrations
 - Engaging in phone and text banking and training
 - Training others for online advocacy
 - Participating in live-streamed programming

As the world becomes more digital, virtual volunteering is likely to remain a vital aspect of volunteer engagement, ensuring your strategies are effective for both virtual and in-person events.

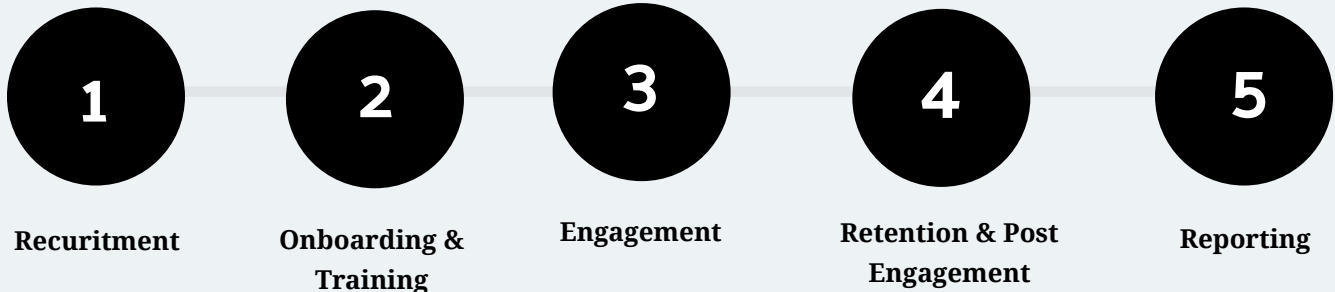
To secure virtual volunteers:

- Have an accessible website that's easy to navigate and understand
- Clearly state the needs of your organization and volunteer opportunities
- Create an easy pathway for a potential volunteer to contact your organization about the opportunity.



Volunteer Management Best Practices

The 5 Steps of Volunteer Management Cycle



Each of these steps plays a crucial role in streamlining your volunteer management process. Mastering these steps ensures that you can easily recruit volunteers, keep them informed and prepared, and motivate them to remain committed to your organization over the long term.

Step One: Recruitment

Recruitment is the first step in the volunteer management cycle. Without volunteers, your organization cannot train or retain a team. The strategies you use to recruit volunteers are crucial because your nonprofit relies on dedicated, mission-driven individuals.

To optimize volunteer recruitment:

- Make sure the onboarding steps are clear, and that volunteers understand their roles, how to begin training, and who to contact with questions.
- During training, set clear guidelines and expectations upfront.
- Provide ample opportunities for volunteers to ask questions and seek clarification, such as webinars with email reminders.

Step Two: Onboarding & Training

After recruiting volunteers, it's essential to prepare them for their roles through a comprehensive onboarding and training process. If new volunteers are unclear about their next steps, they may either miss important steps or decide that volunteering is not worth the effort.

To ensure a smooth onboarding process:

- Gather feedback from current volunteers to identify areas for improvement in the training process.

Step Three: Engagement

Volunteer engagement is vital to maintaining an active and committed team. Volunteers are more likely to sign up for shifts and support your organization if they feel personally connected to your mission and invested in your story.

To foster volunteer engagement:

- Organize fun events and activity days to help volunteers connect with each other and enjoy their involvement with your nonprofit.
- Send out newsletters and updates so volunteers can see the impact of their work and stay informed about your organization's progress and achievements.
- Encourage microdonations, which help volunteers feel more invested in your mission and contribute to your shared goals as a community.

Step Four: Retention and Post Engagement

Lifelong volunteers are essential for the long-term success of your nonprofit. Retention and post-event engagement strategies are critical to keeping volunteers involved beyond a single event.

To cultivate lifelong volunteers:

- Send thank-you notes and other expressions of appreciation after volunteers help with an event.
- Acknowledge and celebrate milestones, making volunteers feel part of something special. A volunteer management system that tracks hours served, days volunteered, and the monetary value of volunteer contributions can help with this.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to voice concerns or issues in real-time, so problems can be addressed promptly. Volunteer management platforms with feedback forums can be particularly useful for monitoring volunteer sentiment.

Step Six: Reporting

Reporting is the final step in the volunteer management cycle and is crucial for increasing donations and re-engaging volunteers. Accurate reporting showcases your organization's impact and can lead to increased funding and grant opportunities.

To improve reporting:

- Use volunteer management systems that make self-reporting easy for volunteers.
- Send reminders immediately after a volunteer checks out from an event.
- Provide incentives or hold competitions to reward

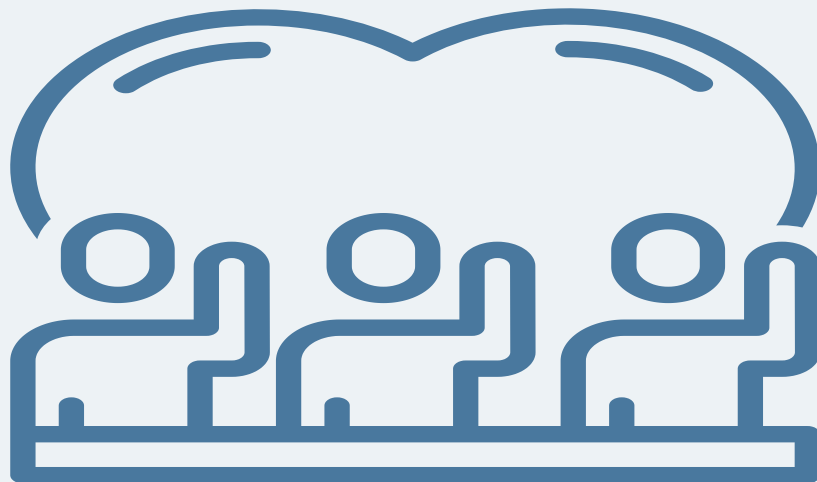


Engaging Volunteers and Their Communities in Advocacy

Advocacy is a powerful way to advance your nonprofit's mission and create lasting change. Engaging volunteers and their communities in advocacy strengthen your efforts and helps amplify your organization's voice. This guidebook provides a roadmap for why and how to involve volunteers in advocacy, how to manage and sustain their engagement, and how these efforts benefit your nonprofit.

Why Engage Volunteers and Communities in Advocacy?

- Amplifies Your Voice:
 - Volunteers bring diverse perspectives, networks, and lived experiences to your advocacy efforts, increasing your reach and impact.
- Builds Grassroots Power:
 - Advocacy rooted in community involvement creates groundswell support, making your message more powerful and harder for decision-makers to ignore.
- Empowers Volunteers:
 - Engaging volunteers in advocacy provides them with tools to make a difference, fostering a deeper connection to your mission.
- Strengthens Relationships:
 - Advocacy creates opportunities to build strong, lasting relationships with stakeholders, community members, and lawmakers.
- Increases Visibility:
 - Advocacy efforts often draw attention from the public, media, and policymakers, raising awareness of your organization and its mission.



How to Engage Volunteers and Communities in Advocacy

- **Educate About Advocacy:**
 - Offer training sessions to explain what advocacy is and why it's important.
 - Provide examples of past successes to show the tangible impact of advocacy efforts.
- **Share Your Advocacy Goals:**
 - Clearly communicate the issues you are advocating for and the changes you hope to achieve.
 - Break down complex issues into understandable and actionable steps.
- **Offer Flexible Roles:**
 - Identify ways for volunteers to contribute based on their interests, skills, and availability (e.g., letter writing, social media campaigns, attending rallies, or meeting with lawmakers).
- **Equip Them with Resources:**
 - Provide fact sheets, sample scripts, and talking points to help them feel prepared and confident.
 - Share templates for emails, letters, and social media posts.
- **Leverage Community Networks:**
 - Encourage volunteers to involve their friends, families, and local groups in your advocacy campaigns.
 - Partner with other community organizations to broaden your reach.

How to Manage Volunteer Advocates

- **Define Roles and Responsibilities:**
 - Clearly outline what is expected of volunteers in advocacy efforts to avoid confusion.
- **Provide Training and Support:**
 - Offer workshops, webinars, or one-on-one coaching to ensure volunteers feel prepared.
 - Assign a staff member or experienced volunteer to serve as a point of contact for questions and support.
- **Track Progress:**
 - Use tools like spreadsheets, advocacy platforms, or CRM systems to monitor volunteer participation and the impact of their efforts.
- **Recognize and Celebrate Efforts:**
 - Publicly acknowledge volunteers for their contributions through newsletters, social media, or special events.
 - Share success stories and updates on advocacy milestones.



How to Keep Volunteers Engaged in Advocacy

- ***Build a Community:***
 - Create spaces (online or in-person) where volunteers can connect, share ideas, and celebrate wins together.
- ***Offer Ongoing Opportunities:***
 - Keep volunteers engaged by providing regular advocacy actions, such as signing petitions, attending town halls, or organizing letter-writing campaigns.
- ***Communicate Regularly:***
 - Keep volunteers informed about your advocacy progress and how their efforts are making an impact.
 - Share updates, thank-yous, and calls to action through emails, social media, or group meetings.
- ***Provide Growth Opportunities:***
 - Offer advanced training or leadership roles for volunteers who want to deepen their involvement.
- ***Ask for Feedback:***
 - Regularly check in with volunteers to learn how you can improve their advocacy experience.

How Volunteer Advocacy Positively Impacts Your Organization

- ***Enhances Mission Fulfillment:***
 - Advocacy efforts help your organization achieve systemic change, directly supporting your mission and long-term goals.
- ***Strengthens Community Ties:***
 - Engaging volunteers and communities in advocacy deepens their connection to your organization, creating long-term supporters.
- ***Increases Resources:***
 - Successful advocacy can lead to increased funding, better policies, and more resources for your programs and services.
- ***Builds Organizational Credibility:***
 - A strong advocacy presence positions your nonprofit as a leader in your field, attracting partners, donors, and media attention.
- ***Fosters a Culture of Engagement:***
 - Involving volunteers in advocacy cultivates a culture of active participation, empowering your supporters to become lifelong champions of your cause.

In Conclusion: Engaging volunteers and their communities in advocacy is a powerful way to amplify your nonprofit's voice, drive meaningful change, and strengthen your organization. With clear goals, effective management, and sustained engagement, your volunteers can become unstoppable advocates for your mission. Together, you can create a lasting impact!

How Congress and State Governments Work: A Guide for Advocates

Understanding how governments work is essential for effective advocacy. This guide explains how Congress and state governments function, their similarities and differences, and why engaging in state-level advocacy is so important.

How Congress Works

The Basics : Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government, responsible for making laws for the entire country. It has two chambers:

- *House of Representatives:*
 - Members: 435 representatives based on state populations.
 - Term: 2 years.
 - Role: Initiates revenue bills, impeaches officials, and represents smaller districts within states.
- *Senate:*
 - Members: 100 senators, 2 per state.
 - Term: 6 years.
 - Role: Confirms presidential appointments, ratifies treaties, and acts as a jury in impeachment trials.

Committees: Committees are the engines of Congress, where most of the work on bills and policy issues happens. They allow Congress to divide its workload and focus on specific areas. Here's a deeper look at the types, functions, and examples of Congressional committees:

Standing Committees in the House of Representatives

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agriculture• Appropriations• Armed Services• Budget• Education and the Workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commerce• Financial Services• Foreign Affairs• Homeland Security• Oversight and Accountability• Rules | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science, Space, and Technology• Small Business• Transportation and Infrastructure• Veterans' Affairs• Ways and Means |
|--|--|--|



Standing Committees in the Senate

- Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Budget
- Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environment and Public Works
- Finance
- Foreign Relations
- Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
- Judiciary
- Rules and Administration.
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Veterans' Affairs

Other Committees in both Chambers:

- **Select Committees:**
 - Temporary committees created to investigate specific issues or address urgent matters.
 - Example: The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis examines strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Joint Committees:**
 - Composed of members from both the House and Senate, these committees coordinate efforts on issues that affect both chambers.
 - Examples:
 - Joint Committee on Taxation: Reviews tax laws and their implementation.
 - Joint Economic Committee: Analyzes economic trends and policies.
- **Conference Committees:**
 - Temporary committees formed to resolve differences between House and Senate versions of a bill. They ensure a single, unified version of the bill is sent to the President.
- **Subcommittees:**
 - Subdivisions of standing committees that focus on specific topics within a broader policy area. For example, the Senate Armed Services Committee has subcommittees for military personnel and cybersecurity.

How a Bill Becomes a Law



Introduction:

A bill is introduced in either the House or Senate.



Committee Review:

Assigned to a relevant committee for study, debate, and amendments.



Floor Debate:

Debated and voted on by the full chamber.



Other Chamber:

The bill is sent to the other chamber for approval.



Conference Committee:

Resolves differences between House and Senate versions.



Presidential Action:

Sent to the President to sign, veto, or let it become law without signature.

Key Nuances of Congressional Procedures

- ***Filibuster:*** A Senate rule allowing extended debate to delay a vote.
- ***Cloture:*** A procedure to end a filibuster, requiring 60 votes.
- ***Budget Reconciliation:*** A process for passing certain budget-related bills with a simple majority in the Senate.



How State Governments Work

The Basics: State governments mirror the federal system but focus on local issues like education, transportation, and public safety. They consist of three branches:

- **Legislative:**
 - Structure: Most states have bicameral legislatures (Senate and House of Representatives). Nebraska is unicameral.
 - Role: Passes state laws, approves budgets, and oversees state agencies.
- **Executive:**
 - Governor: The state's chief executive, signs or vetoes bills, and oversees state agencies.
 - Lieutenant Governor: Often serves as the governor's second-in-command, presiding over the state Senate or acting as governor when needed.
 - Attorney General: Acts as the state's top legal officer, handling lawsuits and giving legal advice to state agencies.
 - Secretary of State: Manages state records, elections, and business registrations.
 - Treasurer/Comptroller: Oversees the state's finances, including tax collection and budget disbursement.
- **Judicial:**
 - Interprets state laws and resolves legal disputes.

State Powers and Responsibilities

State governments wield significant power, including:

- Education: Setting standards for public schools and managing funding.
- Healthcare: Administering Medicaid and implementing public health initiatives.
- Transportation: Building and maintaining roads, bridges, and public transit systems.
- Law Enforcement: Overseeing police, courts, and correctional facilities.
- Elections: Running elections, including setting voting procedures and managing voter rolls.

Committees

- Similar to Congress, state legislatures use committees to review and refine bills before voting. However, states often have fewer members and committees.

In Conclusion: Understanding the nuances of how Congress and state governments work empowers you to be an effective advocate. While federal advocacy is essential for nationwide change, state advocacy allows you to make a direct impact on the issues that matter most to your community. By engaging at both levels, you can drive meaningful, lasting change.

Why State Advocacy Matters

Advocacy at the state level is crucial for nonprofit organizations to drive meaningful change and advance their missions. State governments often have the most direct impact on issues affecting communities, making engagement essential for creating and sustaining positive outcomes.

Why focus on State issues?

- **Closer to Home:**
 - State laws often have a more immediate and direct impact on your community than federal laws.
- **Quicker Change:**
 - State governments can act faster than Congress, making it easier to address urgent issues.
- **Easier Access:**
 - State lawmakers are often more accessible and responsive to their constituents.
- **Policy Innovation:**
 - States serve as testing grounds for new policies that can later influence federal law.
- **Critical Areas of Focus:**
 - Many issues like education, healthcare, and public safety are primarily managed at the state level.

Why Engage with State Legislatures?

- **Direct Policy Influence:**
 - State legislatures pass laws that directly affect local communities. Nonprofits can advocate for or against legislation that impacts their mission.
- **Timely Action:**
 - State legislatures often act faster than Congress, allowing nonprofits to address urgent issues more quickly.
- **Local Representation:**
 - Legislators are more accessible and focused on local needs. Building relationships with them increases the likelihood of support for your initiatives.
- **Budget Advocacy:**
 - Many state programs depend on state funding. Engaging with legislators ensures your nonprofit's priorities are considered during budget discussions.



Why Engage with the Governor?

- **Executive Leadership:**
 - The governor sets the state's policy agenda and can prioritize issues aligned with your nonprofit's mission.
- **Budget Authority:**
 - Governors draft and approve state budgets, giving them significant influence over funding allocations.
- **Veto Power:**
 - The governor can sign or veto legislation. Nonprofits can advocate for their positions directly to ensure favorable outcomes.
- **Statewide Visibility:**
 - Partnering with the governor's office can raise awareness of your nonprofit's work and increase credibility.

Why Engage with State Cabinet Members?

- **Specialized Expertise:**
 - Cabinet members oversee specific departments (e.g., health, education, transportation) and have deep knowledge of their areas.
- **Policy Implementation:**
 - They play a key role in translating legislation into actionable programs, making them critical partners for nonprofits.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:**
 - Cabinet members can collaborate on initiatives, provide grants, and support your nonprofit's programs.

Why Engage with Statewide Departments?

- **Program Administration:**
 - Departments manage the day-to-day implementation of state programs. Nonprofits can influence how these programs operate.
- **Funding and Grants:**
 - Many departments offer grants and funding opportunities for nonprofit programs.
- **Data and Resources:**
 - Departments can provide valuable data, research, and resources to support your nonprofit's initiatives.
- **Community Impact:**
 - Engaging directly with departments ensures your nonprofit's perspective is included in program design and execution.

Tips for Successful State-Level Engagement

- **Build Relationships:**
 - Regularly meet with legislators, the governor's office, and department leaders to establish trust and mutual understanding.
- **Educate Policymakers:**
 - Share data, stories, and examples to demonstrate the impact of your nonprofit's work.
- **Be Specific:**
 - Clearly articulate the changes or support your organization needs and why it matters.
- **Monitor Legislation:**
 - Stay informed about bills, budget cycles, and administrative changes that may affect your mission.
- **Collaborate:**
 - Partner with other nonprofits, coalitions, or businesses to amplify your advocacy efforts.
- **Follow Up:**
 - Maintain communication and provide updates to demonstrate accountability and commitment.

The Impact of State Engagement

- Policy Wins:
 - Direct engagement leads to policy changes that benefit the communities your nonprofit serves.
- Increased Funding:
 - Advocacy ensures your programs are prioritized in state budgets, securing necessary funding.
- Stronger Programs:
 - Input during program design improves effectiveness and ensures initiatives align with community needs.
- Greater Awareness:
 - Building relationships with state leaders raises your nonprofit's profile and credibility.

In Summary: State-level engagement is a powerful tool for nonprofit organizations. By working with state legislatures, governors, cabinet members, and departments, nonprofits can shape policies, secure funding, and amplify their impact. Advocacy at this level ensures that the voices of the communities you serve are heard and addressed effectively.



Why and How to Engage With Your Congressional Representatives

Why Engage With Your Congressional Representatives?

Your congressional representatives—both in the House and Senate—play a critical role in shaping laws and policies that directly impact your community, state, and nation. Engaging with them is an essential part of advocacy because:

- **They Represent You:** As elected officials, their job is to listen to and act on the concerns of their constituents.
- **They Have Influence:** Representatives and senators vote on legislation, shape budgets, and make decisions that affect your daily life.
- **Your Voice Matters:** Individual and collective advocacy can influence their decisions, especially when many constituents raise the same issue.
- **Local Impact:** By engaging, you can ensure that your community's needs and priorities are heard in Washington, D.C.

Tips for Effective Engagement

- **Be Clear and Concise:** Focus on one issue and explain why it matters to you and your community.
- **Share Your Story:** Personal experiences help humanize the issue and make your advocacy memorable.
- **Be Respectful:** Approach every interaction professionally, even if you disagree with their stance.
- **Follow Up:** Send a thank-you note after meetings or calls to show appreciation and reinforce your message.



Ways to Engage With Your Representatives:

Meet With Them

- Schedule a Meeting:
 - Request a one-on-one or group meeting with your representative or their staff to discuss your issue.
- Attend Town Halls:
 - Representatives often host public meetings to hear from constituents. Use this opportunity to ask questions and share concerns.
- Visit District Offices:
 - District offices are closer to home and often more accessible for in-person advocacy. Staff there can pass along your message.

Use Social Media

- Follow Them: Stay informed by following your representative on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.
- Engage Publicly: Comment on their posts or tag them in your advocacy messages to amplify your cause.

Contact Their Offices

- Phone calls are one of the most effective ways to express your views on an issue.
 - District offices handle local matters, while D.C. offices focus on policy.
- Email Them:
 - Use their official website or online contact forms to send a personalized message.
- Write Letters:
 - A handwritten letter to their district or Washington, D.C., office adds a personal touch.

Participate in Public Events

- Attend events hosted by your representative, such as ribbon cuttings, speeches, or community forums, to engage informally and build rapport.

Invite Them to Events

- Invite your representative to visit your organization, school, or community event to showcase issues that matter to you.

Why Interact With Their District Offices?

District offices serve as a bridge between representatives and the communities they serve. Engaging with these offices can:

- **Provide Access:** It's often easier to schedule meetings with local staff than with officials in D.C.
- **Influence Locally:** Staff in district offices report constituent concerns directly to the representative.
- **Address Local Issues:** District offices often handle community-specific problems, like federal benefits or local projects.

Remember: Engaging with your congressional representatives strengthens democracy and ensures that your voice helps shape decisions that impact your community. Your advocacy can make a real difference!



How to Create an Advocacy Campaign:

An advocacy campaign is a strategic effort designed to influence public opinion, policy decisions, or actions on a particular issue. These campaigns aim to bring about change by raising awareness, mobilizing supporters, and applying pressure on key stakeholders, such as governments, corporations, or communities. Advocacy campaigns are often centered around social, environmental, economic, or political causes, and they typically involve a variety of communication and engagement tools like social media, public events, petitions, lobbying, and storytelling.

Why an Organization Should Create an Advocacy Campaign:

- ***Advance a Mission or Cause***

Advocacy campaigns align with an organization's mission and goals, helping to drive meaningful change on issues that are central to its work. For nonprofits or mission-driven entities, these campaigns amplify their impact.

- ***Raise Awareness***

Advocacy campaigns help educate the public and stakeholders about critical issues that might otherwise be overlooked. Increased awareness often leads to greater support and engagement.

- ***Influence Policy and Decision-Making***

By organizing and mobilizing supporters, an advocacy campaign can put pressure on policymakers, businesses, or other influential groups to enact or change laws, policies, or practices.

- ***Engage and Empower Stakeholders***

Advocacy campaigns give individuals and communities a platform to voice their concerns and contribute to change, fostering a sense of empowerment and participation.

- ***Build Organizational Credibility and Visibility***

Campaigns can position an organization as a leader or expert in its field, increasing its visibility and strengthening relationships with its audience, partners, and funders.

- ***Drive Social or Cultural Change***

Advocacy campaigns can challenge norms, shift attitudes, and inspire collective action, leading to lasting change at a societal level.

- ***Attract Funding and Resources***

Successful campaigns often attract donors, grants, and partnerships, as they demonstrate the organization's ability to achieve tangible results and mobilize people around a cause.

By creating a well-planned advocacy campaign, an organization can not only make progress on a pressing issue but also build stronger connections with its audience and partners, furthering its long-term mission.

Creating an Advocacy Campaign

Use the template below to create your advocacy campaign. Be as inclusive as possible when considering your problem, goals, audience and power.

1. REVIEW THE ORGANIZING SENTENCE:

On one piece of flipchart paper, write out your organizing sentence. Fill in the who and what purpose sections you drafted during the shared purpose exercise.

Organizing Sentence:

We are organizing (who) _____ to pursue (what purpose)
_____ by (how: theory of change) _____ to
achieve (what objective) _____ by (what date)
_____.

Bus boycott example: We are organizing African-Americans in Montgomery to achieve racial justice (or end institutionalized racism) by organizing a boycott of the buses to compel the bus company and city council to desegregate them for as long as it takes.

Now you will build a strategic goal based on an analysis of who your constituency is, what they want, and how they can get what they want. Follow the steps below.



2. GETTING FOCUSED: WHO ARE YOUR PEOPLE? WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

Step A: With your team, fill in the table below:

PEOPLE (5 mins) Who Are My People? (constituency)	
CHANGE	
What Is Their Problem?	How Would the World Look Different If Their Problem Were Solved?
Why Hasn't Their Problem Been Solved?	What Would It Take <u>To</u> Solve Their Problem?

Step B: Review criteria for a good strategic goal

- Focuses effort
- Motivates participation
- Leverages resources
- Builds capacity
- Can be emulated

Step C: Decide on a Strategic Goal

What concrete outcome will you aim to achieve that will help your constituents get what they want? First openly brainstorm and build upon each idea, then use your criteria above to evaluate them, and make a decision.

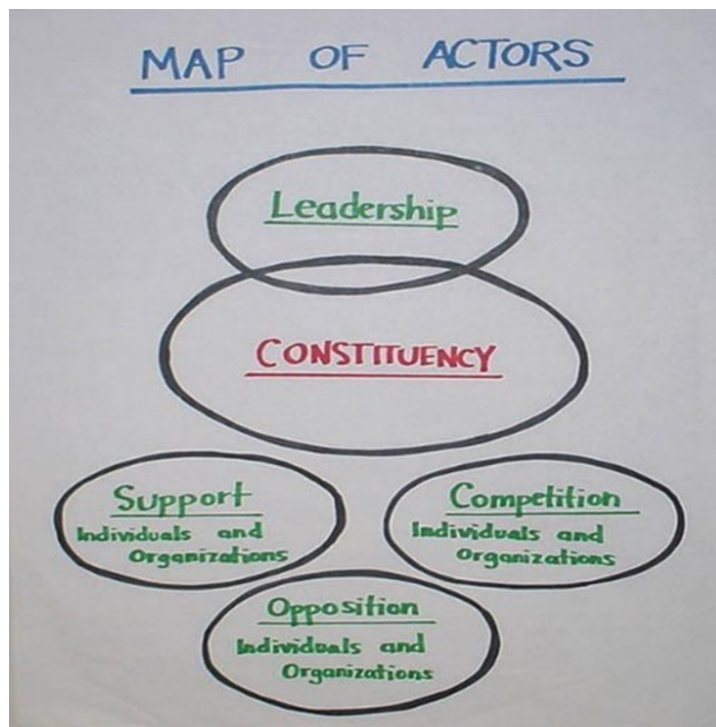
Answer this question: ***What is the goal of your campaign?***

3. WHO ARE THE ACTORS:

Step A: Create the map

Draw a map-of-actors chart like the one you see below on flipchart paper. Write the names of all of the actors on sticky notes, indicating their resources and their interests. Then place them on the map of actors where you think they are most likely to be. Start with yourselves. Use what you learned from building relationships to fill this out. Brainstorm other actors involved in your efforts, at local, state, and national levels by name or specific position wherever possible. Put these names on post-its and add them to the map. Include the following:

- Who might be members of your constituency?
- Who might be your opposition?
- Who might be your allies?
- Who might be competitors and collaborators?
- Who might play other key roles, depending on how they are mobilized (courts, press, voters, etc.)?





4. WHERE'S THE POWER? DEVELOPING YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Your **theory of change** is your hypothesis about how to organize your constituents' resources to affect those who hold the resources/power to solve the problem. *What would it take to get these different actors to take actions that further your strategic goal? At what point will they actually feel your constituents' power? Which candidates do you need to develop, support, and/or hold accountable?*

Think back to your goal, above: *Who holds the resources and decision-making power needed to achieve that goal?*

Fill in the corresponding table below:

POWER WITH 	POWER OVER  <p><i>If <u>your people</u> need access to the resources held by others to achieve the goal, complete the following:</i></p>
<i>What resources do our people hold that they can use to achieve their goal? (make a creative and specific list)</i>	<i>What resources do our people need to access to achieve <u>the</u> goal? (make a specific list)</i>
	<i>Which actors hold those resources?</i>
<i>Why haven't our people used these resources to achieve their goal?</i>	<i>What resources do our people hold that these actors need?</i>
<i>How can our people use their resources in new ways that can achieve their goal?</i>	<i>How can our people leverage what they <u>have to</u> get what they want from these other actors?</i>
<p>Write your theory of change: </p> <p><i>If my people do...</i></p> <p><i>Then the result will be...</i></p> <p><i>Because...</i></p>	

5. REVIEW YOUR WORK, SUMMARIZE, VISUALIZE:

1. Review your team's work so far in this section and discuss these questions:

- Are we clear on our constituency?
- Do we want to specify our goal more concretely?
- Are we clear about our theory of change?

On two pieces of flipchart paper, write out the following:

2. Rewrite your organizing sentence.

ORGANIZING SENTENCE: We are organizing (who) _____ to pursue
(what purpose) _____ by (how: theory of
change) _____ to achieve (what objective)
_____ by (what date) _____.

Bus boycott example: We are organizing African Americans in Montgomery to achieve racial justice by organizing a boycott of the busses to compel the bus company and city council to desegregate them for as long as it takes.

3. Draw a picture of your strategic goal. What would the world look like if you achieved it?

Power Mapping – An Advocate’s Tool for Targeting Stakeholders

While government officials are central to drafting and enacting local policies, other stakeholders also play a significant role in shaping and implementing these policies. By influencing the general public, you can shift perspectives, affect future voting behaviors, and reduce the bias and discrimination that create unnecessary obstacles for marginalized communities. Additionally, organizational decision-makers—such as School Board members, school administrators, hospitals, and business owners—may also be crucial to achieving specific policy objectives.

Power Mapping is a strategic tool used to identify the various potential targets in a policy campaign. The chart provided here serves as an introductory guide to this method. Begin by assessing decision-makers based on their values, using sources like news reports, their official websites, and past voting records to gauge their likely support or opposition to your goals. Next, position these individuals on the chart according to their influence on the specific outcome you seek. Visualizing this information can help pinpoint the most effective leverage points for your advocacy efforts. Use the following steps to power map around your issue:

Define Your Goal or Problem Statement

From the outset, be crystal clear about what you aim to accomplish.

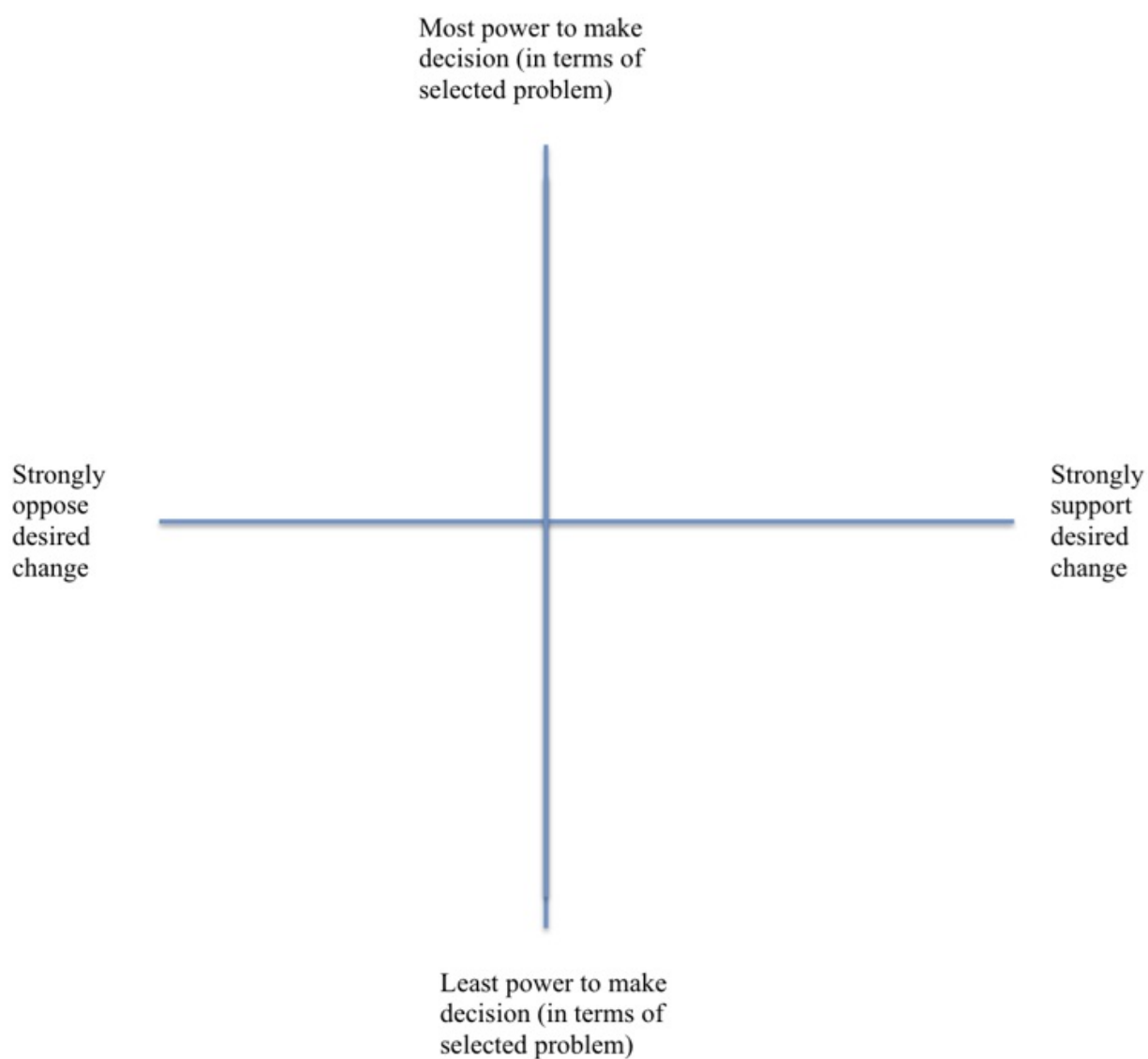
Ask yourself: Are you trying to pass or block a piece of legislation? Are you working to bring a policy to a vote, or to get it removed from a committee? Your goal should be specific and measurable—so you can definitively determine whether your campaign is successful. For instance, a clear measure of success would be if the legislation you supported was successfully enacted.

Conduct Thorough Research

As with any effective plan, research is essential to identify who holds power over your issue. These key players are typically members of councils, committees, assemblies, or legislatures who have the authority to vote on your goal. Additionally, identify institutions, organizations, and the individuals within them who have a stake in the issue. This research will help you pinpoint the primary targets for your advocacy efforts.

Mapping Power Dynamics

- **Vertical Axis:** Plot your targets based on the level of power they have to make impactful decisions on your issue.
- **Horizontal Axis:** Plot your targets based on how strongly they support or oppose your stance on the issue



For example, if a powerful target like the Speaker of the House supports your issue, place them in the top left of your map. Conversely, if a target with little power opposes your stance, place them in the bottom right.

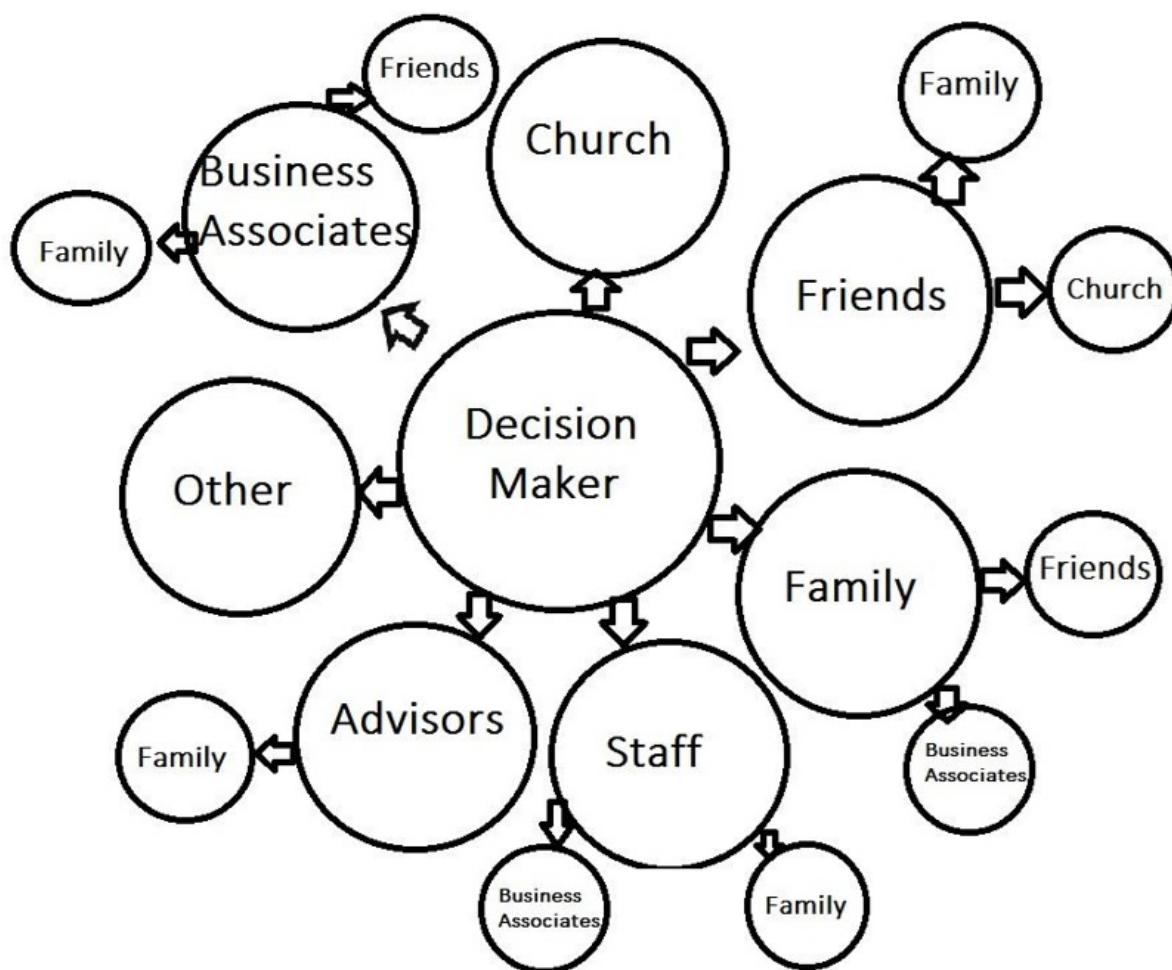
Who Belongs on the Map?

- **Decision Makers:** Start by mapping the individuals who have the authority to influence the outcome—those who can cast a vote. Position them based on their level of power and their stance on the issue.
- **Influencers:** After placing decision-makers, add individuals or organizations that can influence them. While these influencers may not have voting power, they can sway the decision-makers.

As you brainstorm, be sure to consider the following:

- Think broadly of all the associations that have a relationship with the target. This can include work, politics, family, religious institutions, and neighborhood times. Anyone who can exert influence on this individual should be mapped.
- Be Creative. Even if you decide you do not want to add one's family, put them on the list anyways. This may give you ideas for other avenues of influence.
- Be Strategic. Those in power have many unseen influences such as major donors and current/future constituency groups.
- Be thorough. Think about your target through EVERY angle. Start thinking about institutions and people they are connected to.

Use the below as a starting point to better understand those who may influence your target.



Selecting Your Targets

Step back and review your map. Take note of your allies, opponents, and the power balance on both sides. Your objective is to move targets up the power axis and to the left on the support axis. With limited time and resources, focus on the targets most crucial to achieving your goal. This often involves solidifying support among allies and leveraging influencers to sway neutral or undecided targets.

For example, if a city council has five voting members, you likely need at least three votes to pass a policy. If your map shows two councilors in support, two against, and one neutral, invest time in strengthening the power of your supporters and work with influencers to persuade the neutral councilor to vote with you.

Focusing Your Resources

Use the map to identify the most strategic places to invest your time, money, and manpower. Select strategies and tactics tailored to your specific targets, as not every approach will work for every individual. Focus your efforts on those actions that will most effectively sway your selected targets.

Persuasion v. Pressure:

As you progress through power mapping, it's crucial to start discussing the distinction between persuasion and pressure. Typically, groups tend to focus on persuasion techniques—such as studies, fact sheets, and economic research—as the mainstay of their efforts. Most smart growth advocates allocate about 80% of their time to developing persuasive information, hoping it will carry the day, while only 20% is devoted to applying pressure. For our campaigns to succeed, we need to reverse this approach, dedicating 80% of our time and resources to developing pressure tactics and just 20% to persuasion efforts.

Maintain and Update Your Map

Remember, your map is a dynamic tool. Continuously revisit and update it throughout your campaign. As you gather more information, or if power dynamics shift, consult your power map. The more detailed and up-to-date your map, the more effective your targeting, strategy, and tactics will be!

How to have a successful meeting with an Elected Official:

Expectations: Meeting with an elected official can happen in various settings, whether in their office, at an official event or in the community, you should set a level expectations for your meeting.

- The power rests in the staff. An elected official's scheduler and main policy staffer are your gatekeepers to success. Treat all staff with respect and appreciation for they can make or break a meeting. Additionally, the elected official most likely receives direct recommendations from their staff. It is important to educate and empower them as much as the elected official.
- In office meetings and/or office hour meetings tend to be short. Understand the amount of time you will have to talk to the elected official or their staff in advance of the meeting. 15 minutes are normally allocated during a legislative session.
- You are the expert in the room. Most likely the person you are meeting with is not as well versed in brain injury as you are. Make sure you are educating and providing space for reflection and questions during meetings.

Preparation: As you prepare to share information with your officials, consider these tips to maximize the effectiveness of your interactions:

- Present details about your issues that are specific to your legislator's district or state.
- Share personal stories that illustrate how the issue directly impacts you, your family, or friends within the district.
- Offer or provide data that supports your issue.
- Facilitate opportunities to meet with disability advocates and leaders and create media opportunities.
- Understand the arguments of those who oppose your position; use this knowledge to acknowledge differing viewpoints and work towards compromise and solutions.

During the Meeting: When meeting with an official, arrive early and review your talking points beforehand. Keep introductions brief but make sure to mention the part of their district you represent. After the introductions, present relevant data and materials, prioritizing those specific to the district whenever possible. Focus the discussion on an "ask". During discussion, solicit the Member's views on the issue and make it clear how the issues affect those in their district. During the meeting, be sure to take notes. These will be impactful when following up and identifying next steps.

Always close the meeting with reiterating your ask.

Before concluding the meeting, ask for business cards so you can send thank-you notes later.



Follow-Up: After a meeting with an elected you should:

- Debrief with your team or interested parties.
- Post about meetings on social media to engage your network and establish yourself as a resource for others looking to follow your example.
- Send a thank you note and provide any follow-up materials needed.

Meeting Don'ts: To ensure a successful meeting, there are several things you should avoid.

- Being partisan: Yes, the person you work with may belong to a political party, but your meeting is with them as an elected official, not a candidate. Brain injury is a nonpartisan issue. During this meeting you should put any partisan points away and stick to the issue at hand.
- Speaking too fast: Be sure to take your time and use your voice pattern to emphasize parts of your story and ask. Speaking too fast will negatively affect the impact of the meeting.
- Being confrontational: Our meeting should be a time to educate and empower, not berate. Do not be aggressive toward the elected official, use attacking language or disagree with them. If there is tension during the meeting, refocus on educating and make sure you are using the opportunity to build relationships.
- Being greedy of time: While meeting with elected officials, we may want to share our personal stories, perspectives or agenda. Be sure to keep your personal story short, stay on message and focus on the agenda at hand and that you allow all to speak. Provide space for the elected officials to ask questions and engage and respect their time limits.



How to Create and Execute a Postcard Campaign

What is a Postcard Campaign?

A postcard campaign is an advocacy effort where individuals write and send postcards to elected officials, decision-makers, or stakeholders to express their opinions, share personal stories, or urge action on a specific issue. These campaigns are personal, tangible, and impactful, showing officials that their constituents care deeply about an issue.

Why Are Postcard Campaigns Important?

- They Provide:
- Personal Touch: Unlike emails or calls, postcards offer a physical reminder of your message, making it harder to ignore.
- Visibility: A stack of postcards on an official's desk creates a powerful visual representation of public concern.
- Ease of Participation: Postcard campaigns are simple, accessible, and easy for a wide range of people to join.
- Collective Action: When done in large numbers, they amplify voices and demonstrate widespread support for a cause.

Steps to Create and Execute a Postcard Campaign

1. Define Your Goal

- Be clear about the purpose of your campaign. Are you advocating for a specific bill, policy, or action?
- Example: "Encourage Senator X to support the Clean Energy Act."

2. Identify Your Audience

- Determine who needs to receive the postcards. This could be:
 - Local, state, or federal elected officials
 - CEOs, board members, or other stakeholders in your cause
 - Community leaders or decision-makers

3. Craft a Clear Message

- Keep the message concise, respectful, and impactful. Include:
 - A brief introduction (e.g., "I'm a constituent from [City, State].")
 - Why the issue matters to you (personal story or data point)
 - What you want them to do (specific action or vote)

Example Message:

"Dear [Name], as your constituent in [City], I urge you to vote YES on the Traumatic Brain Injury Reauthorization Act. This act provides vital services to the brain injury community and ensures that state-level services can continue and national surveillance and research preserve. The brain injury rely on the programs in the Reauthorization Act and we need you to stand with us."

4. Design or Purchase Postcards

- Use eye-catching designs that represent your cause. You can:
 - Purchase pre-printed postcards
 - Create custom designs with your message and branding
 - Use blank postcards for handwritten notes

5. Gather Participants

- Recruit participants through:
 - Social media and email campaigns
 - Community events or advocacy meetings
 - Schools, workplaces, or partner organizations

6. Provide Clear Instructions

- Create a simple guide for participants:
 - What to write
 - Where to send the postcards (addresses provided)
 - Deadline for sending

7. Organize Postcard Writing Events

- Host in-person or virtual events where people can write postcards together.
- Provide materials (postcards, stamps, pens) and sample messages for inspiration.

8. Collect and Send Postcards

- Decide whether participants will mail their own postcards or if you'll collect and send them in bulk.
- If mailing in bulk, use a single address to gather all postcards, then send them to the intended recipients.

9. Follow Up

- Track your campaign's progress:
 - Share updates with participants.
 - Follow up with recipients to reinforce your message.
 - Celebrate milestones, like reaching a specific number of postcards sent.

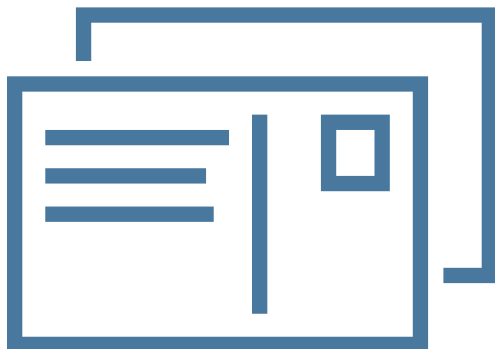
Impact of Postcard Campaigns

Remember: Your Voice Matters!

Postcard campaigns are a powerful way to bring people together, amplify your cause, and make sure decision-makers hear directly from their constituents. By organizing and executing a well-planned campaign, you can drive real change!

Ultimately a postcard campaign:

- Raises Awareness: Decision-makers become aware of the urgency and scope of the issue.
- Builds Pressure: A flood of postcards shows widespread public support, encouraging officials to act.
- Engages the Community: Participants feel empowered by contributing to meaningful action.
- Tangible Results: Postcard campaigns have influenced votes, changed policies, and sparked critical conversations.



How to Create and Execute an Email Campaign

What is an Advocacy Email Campaign?

An advocacy email campaign is a coordinated effort to send emails to elected officials, decision-makers, or stakeholders to advocate for a specific cause or policy. These campaigns are an efficient way to mobilize large groups of people to deliver a clear and unified message directly to those in power.

Why Are Email Campaigns Important?

- **Reach and Efficiency:** Email is quick and allows you to mobilize large numbers of people with minimal resources.
- **Personalized Messaging:** Each email can be tailored to share personal stories and specific concerns, making them more impactful.
- **Real-Time Advocacy:** Email campaigns can be executed quickly in response to legislative deadlines or urgent issues.
- **Trackable Results:** Digital tools allow you to measure engagement, such as how many emails are sent and opened.

Steps to Create and Execute an Advocacy Email Campaign

1. Define Your Goal

- Be clear about what you want to achieve.
 - Example: “Urge Senator Y to vote in favor of the Community Health Bill.”

2. Identify Your Target Audience

- Determine who needs to receive the emails:
 - Elected officials (local, state, or federal)
 - Key stakeholders or decision-makers
 - Boards or organizations

3. Develop a Strong Message

- Create a template with the following structure:
 - **Subject Line:** Short and compelling to grab attention (e.g., “Support the Community Health Bill Today!”).
 - **Opening Statement:** Introduce yourself and your connection to the issue (e.g., “As a resident of [City/State], I care deeply about [Issue].”).
 - **Core Message:** Explain the issue briefly, why it matters, and include a personal story or statistic.
 - **Call to Action:** Clearly state what you want the recipient to do (e.g., “Please vote YES on [Bill Name].”).

Example Email Template:

Subject Line: Support the TBI Reauthorization Act

Dear [Recipient's Name],

As your constituent in [City, State], I am writing to urge your support for [Bill Name/Issue]. The brain injury community relies on the state programs funded by the reauthorization act. Additionally, the Reauthorization Act funds surveillance of our community, a widely misunderstood and improperly tracked community. [Share a personal story or impactful data here.]

Please vote YES on [Bill Name] to ensure that the brain injury community has access to live changing programs.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

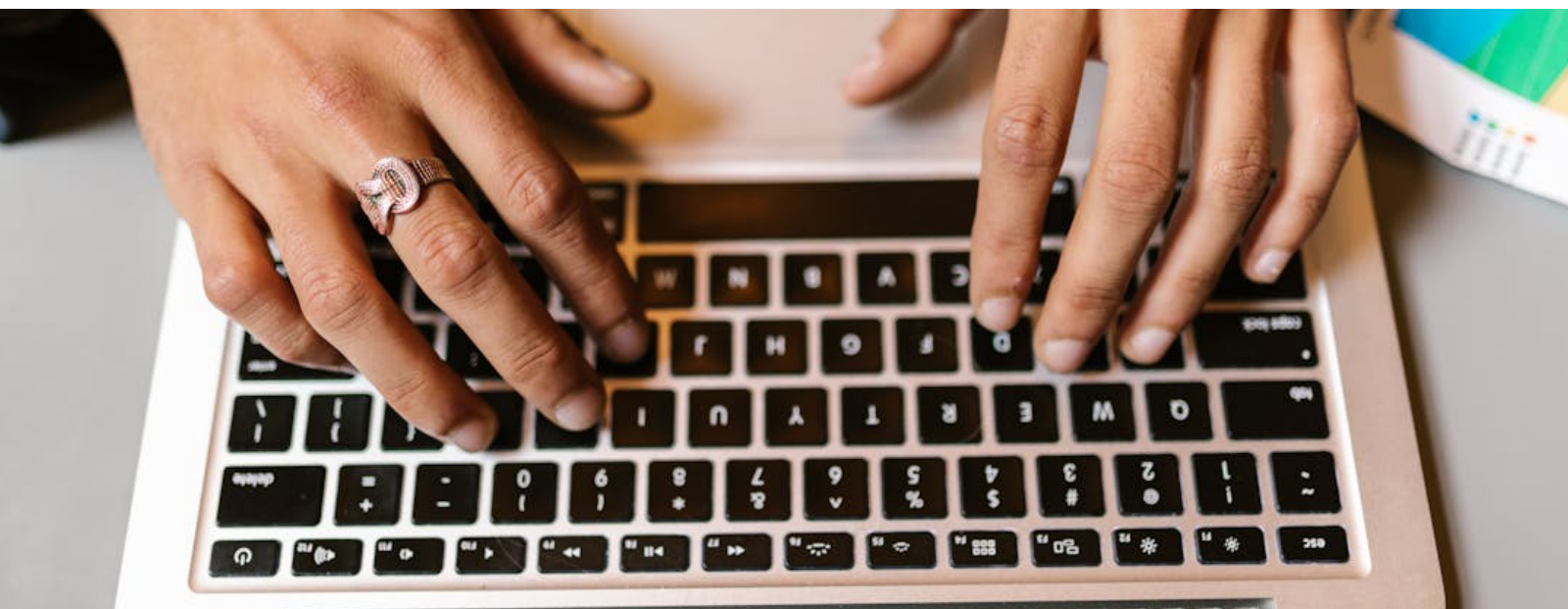
[Your Contact Information]

4. Choose Your Tools

- Use digital tools to make organizing and tracking your campaign easier:
 - Email Marketing Platforms: Tools like Mailchimp or Constant Contact for mass emails.
 - Advocacy Platforms: Platforms like Action Network, EveryAction, or Phone2Action for pre-filled email templates and one-click submissions.

5. Mobilize Participants

- Promote your campaign through:
 - Social media, newsletters, and organizational websites.
 - Events or community meetings.
 - Partnerships with other organizations.



6. Provide Easy-to-Follow Instructions

- Share clear guidelines for participants:
 - Include email templates or talking points.
 - Provide the recipients' email addresses.
 - Set a deadline for sending emails.

7. Personalize Where Possible

- Encourage participants to edit templates with their own stories and perspectives. Personalized emails are more likely to get noticed.

8. Follow Up

- Encourage participants to forward responses from officials and share updates about their actions.
- Send thank-you emails to participants and officials who take action.

Impact of Email Campaigns

- Increased Awareness: Educates decision-makers about the issue's importance to their constituents.
- Builds Pressure: A large volume of emails demonstrates public concern and urgency.
- Strengthens Advocacy Networks: Participants feel empowered by engaging in collective action.
- Drives Results: Email campaigns have successfully influenced votes, shaped policies, and brought attention to overlooked issues.

Final Tips for Success

- Be Polite: Even if you disagree with a recipient's stance, remain respectful.
- Be Specific: Focus on one issue or action per campaign to avoid confusion.
- Be Persistent: Follow up with additional emails or other actions if the issue is unresolved.

Remember: Email campaigns are a powerful, accessible, and impactful tool to advocate for change. Together, your voices can make a difference!

Everything's Political – How to Engage in the Political World?

Politics are a part of everything around us, from the rules made by governments to the decisions in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Politics decide how money and resources are shared, who gets to speak up, and what opportunities people have. They affect things like the roads we use, the healthcare we get, and the schools we attend.

Getting involved in politics is important because it lets people speak up for what they need, help make fair decisions and hold leaders accountable. Whether it's voting, joining local meetings, or working for change in your community, being part of politics helps make the world a better place for everyone.

Big "P" Politics means the big government stuff like laws and elections, while little "p" politics is about everyday decisions and power struggles in places like schools, workplaces, or neighborhoods.

The distinction between big "P" Politics and little "p" politics lies in the scope and focus of the term:

Big "P" Politics

This refers to formal, institutionalized political systems and processes, often at the national or international level. It involves:

- Governmental Structures: Legislatures, executives, judiciaries, and other branches of government.
- Policy and Legislation: The creation, implementation, and enforcement of laws and regulations.
- Political Parties and Elections: Campaigns, voting, and party platforms that influence governance.
- Public Power Dynamics: Relations between governments, political leaders, and international bodies.
- Examples:
 - Presidential elections
 - Debates over national healthcare legislation
 - UN negotiations on climate change

Little "p" politics

This refers to the informal power dynamics, relationships, and decision-making processes that occur in everyday life, often within organizations, communities, or workplaces. It involves:

- Interpersonal Dynamics: How individuals or groups navigate power, influence, and conflict.
- Local Issues: Decisions made in local government, school boards, or community organizations.
- Workplace and Social Contexts: Advocacy, negotiation, and coalition-building within smaller settings.
- Examples:
 - Office conflicts over leadership roles
 - Advocacy for a local park renovation
 - Coalition-building in a grassroots community campaign

Key Differences

Aspect	Big "P" Politics	Little "p" politics
Scope	National or global	Local or organizational
Actors	Governments, politicians, parties	Individuals, groups, communities
Formal v. Informal	Formal systems and structures	Informal, relationship-based
Focus	Governance, laws, policy	Workplace dynamics, local advocacy
Examples	Elections, treaties, legislation	Workplace dynamics, local advocacy



How Nonprofit Organizations Can Engage with Both Levels of “Politics”

Big “P” Politics

- Advocacy for Policy Change:
 - Lobbying for or against specific legislation.
 - Engaging with lawmakers and regulators.
- Public Campaigns:
 - Organizing voter registration or education drives.
 - Mobilizing supporters to contact elected officials.
- Partnerships:
 - Collaborating with political bodies or coalitions on shared goals.
- Compliance:
 - Staying within the legal boundaries of political engagement (e.g., restrictions on endorsing candidates for 501(c)(3) organizations).

Little “p” politics

- Grassroots Organizing:
 - Building coalitions to address local issues.
 - Hosting town halls or forums to engage community members.
- Community Advocacy:
 - Partnering with local leaders to push for change at the city or county level.
 - Empowering stakeholders to voice concerns directly.
- Relationship Building:
 - Navigating internal power dynamics to align diverse stakeholders.
 - Engaging local influencers or community champions.

Why Should Nonprofits Engage with the Level of “Politics?”

Big “P” Politics

- Influence Systemic Change:
 - Laws and policies enacted at higher levels have wide-reaching effects.
 - Nonprofits can drive meaningful societal change by shaping policy.
- Amplify Impact:
 - Advocacy at the national or state level can scale local initiatives.
- Ensure Representation:
 - Engage to ensure that underrepresented groups have a voice in policymaking.

Little "p" politics

- Build Grassroots Momentum:
 - Local actions often lay the foundation for broader change.
 - Communities are more likely to engage with visible, tangible issues.
- Foster Collaboration:
 - Addressing local power dynamics and forging alliances strengthens an organization's ability to act collectively.
- Solve Immediate Problems:
 - Local political engagement often yields quicker results on issues directly affecting communities.

By engaging with both big "P" Politics and little "p" politics, nonprofit organizations can maximize their influence, address challenges from multiple angles, and work toward sustainable, systemic change while staying rooted in community needs.