

ADVOCACY GUIDE

InterAction's Eight Steps to Strategic Advocacy

There are eight basic steps to any advocacy, whether it is legislative, grassroots, or communications advocacy:

Step 1: Pick Your Issue

All advocacy should be based on sound, well-researched information. What is the problem? What is the solution? How does it affect people? These facts are critical to get right. Well-documented problems that have easy-to-see impacts make for easier advocacy.

Step 2: Setting Goals

The next step in any advocacy effort is to clearly define what you want to achieve. Successful advocacy not only wins concrete improvements in people's lives, it builds stronger organizations. This means that every advocacy effort requires both advocacy and organizational goals. These goals need to be realistic, concrete, and measurable.

Step 3: Lay of the Land

The next step is to survey the lay of the land. What are your organizational strengths and weaknesses? Similarly, who are your allies and opponents? How are they likely to respond to you?

Step 4: Identify your Targets

Who is the decision maker(s) who has the power to achieve your advocacy goals? Be specific. Influencing elected officials frequently requires public pressure. No organization or coalition has the capacity to persuade everyone, so be specific -- what segments of the public will you persuade to support you?

Step 5: Communications

Once you have identified to whom you are talking, you need to determine what you will say. Start by learning about your target audience(s) so you can begin where they are. Then develop a message and a story that clearly explains what you want, why it is necessary, how to achieve it, and why your target audience(s) should get involved.

Step 6: Tactics and Timeline

Once you have clearly defined what you want and whom you need to persuade, it is time to look at how you can make that happen. Start by brainstorming possible tactics, events, actions, or media coverage, then go back through your ideas, placing the most effective tactics into a timeline. Be sure to assign responsibility for each item.

Step 7: Resource Management

Estimate how much each of your tactics will cost in terms of time and money. Does your organization have or have the capacity to raise the resources required to make your plan a reality? Do not underestimate the power of your supporters to help you achieve your campaign goals.

Step 8: Evaluation

Periodically, every six months or once a year, Take a step back with everyone involved in creating the campaign and evaluate how you are doing. Are you on track to meet the concrete, time-bound measurable goals you set in step two? If not, why not? Should you change what you are doing? Did you set unrealistic goals? Starting again at step one and proceeding through step eight, do you all still agree that your campaign plan is the best way forward?