

12 Steps for Developing a Policy Advocacy Campaign

I. SETTING THE GOALS

1. Choose and define a policy-related problem/issue to be addressed.

- 1.1. Establish the criteria for choosing an issue, such as the following:
 - The issue itself is of significant social value.
 - The problem affects a broad segment and is deeply felt by persons.
 - The issue is in accord with the mission of your organization.
 - There are personnel in the organization who are passionate about the issue.
 - The issue is effectively linked to future issues of interest.
 - There is a realistic possibility of success.
 - The required resources exist or can feasibility be obtained.
 - The issue is an apt means for strengthening the capacity of civil society and promoting broad participation in democratic life.
- 1.2. Analyze the causes of the problem, how they are interrelated and how they relate to public policy.
- 1.3. Based on a solid analysis and in agreement with the established criteria, choose and define the issue for the policy advocacy campaign.

2. Clarify the short-term objective(s) and long-term advocacy goal(s).

- 2.1. Clearly determine the goal (the desired state of affairs expressed in broad, general terms) and the objectives (desired futures expressed in specific, concrete terms) of the campaign.
- 2.2. Every campaign should seek to:
 1. Effect change in a problematic social condition by changing public policy relating to that problem: its formulation, enactment, and/or enforcement.
 2. Strengthen civil society's capacity for engaging in policy advocacy.
 3. Increase popular participation in democratic processes.

~ Success is measured by the degree to which all three are achieved. ~

II. ANALYZING THE REALITY

3. Research the policy context and the public institutions to be targeted.

- 3.1. Inform yourself about the general political context related to your issue.
- 3.2. Identify what institutions have the authority in relation to your policy issue:
 - at the pertinent levels (local, regional, national, international), and
 - in the pertinent institutions of government: legislative, executive, administrative, and judicial.
- 3.3. Clarify which phases of policy advocacy are involved:
 - Setting the policy agenda: Modeling, publicizing issues, public discourse.
 - Formulating policy: Proposing laws, contributing to their drafting.
 - Passing policy: Obtaining legislative votes and authorization of regulations.
 - Securing implementation: Obtaining the enforcement of laws enacted.
- 3.4. Research and inform yourself about the institutions to be lobbied: their structures, cultures, decision making processes, regulations and procedures, power structures, persons within the institutions, and the external forces which influence them.

4. Identify the stakeholders in the larger society, categorizing them as favorable, opposed, or undecided regarding the issue and assess their degree of power.

- 4.1. Make an "issue map" by drawing the social sectors, movements, organizations, and such which are interested in and/or have a stake in the issue: those who have something to gain or lose if the policy is changed.
- 4.2. Convert the map into a "power map". To do this note which have more influence directly on the targeted government institutions, and which have power indirectly by having influence with those in the first group.
- 4.3. Now categorize them according to their attitude regarding the policy position that you plan to pursue: in favor, neutral/undecided, or opposed, thus making a "force field analysis".

5. Clearly specify the policy position to be advocated.

- 5.1. Identify the principal policy positions already being considered or proposed, whether by government, the for-profit sector, or civil society.
- 5.2. Analyze each position in relation to the following: its soundness, the values it embodies, its probable benefits and costs, the risk of unforeseen consequences, and the sectors and organizations which actively support it.

- 5.3. Evaluate each position with respect to how it will contribute to your goals and objectives if it is achieved, as well as the likelihood that it can be achieved.
- 5.4. Adopt one of the positions currently being considered, or else define your own position explaining the rationale for it.
- 5.5. Determine the minimal fall-back position acceptable, in case during the process of negotiation it becomes necessary to compromise.

III. DECIDING THE STRATEGY

6. Develop alliances; join or form coalitions.

Develop alliances.

- 6.1. Referring to the “power map” and the "force field analysis", identify:
 - actors among the favorable with whom you can make committed alliances,
 - actors among the undecided whom you can possibly gain as supporters,
 - actors among those opposed whom you might be able to win over as "unexpected allies", who for that very reason would have significant weight.

Join or form coalitions.

- 6.2. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of joining coalitions, not only in respect to achieving the short-term policy objectives but also to the goals of strengthening civil society’s capacity for engaging in policy advocacy and increasing popular participation in democratic processes.

Advantages Coalitions increase the following scarce resources:

- Issue research, information, and analysis.
- The number of persons advocating for the issue.
- Contacts and access to persons within the institutions to be lobbied.
- Access to the coalition members’ constituencies and action networks.
- Enhanced visibility and credibility.

Possible Disadvantages

- Loss of autonomy and control of the advocacy campaign.
- Diminished reputation if other coalition members are perceived negatively.
- Becoming distracted from your organization’s other agenda and workload.

- 6.3. If an appropriate coalition already exists, join it.
- 6.4. If such a coalition does not exist, organize one.
 1. Identify organizations whose position on your issue are similar to yours.

2. Achieve clear and explicit agreement on: goals and objectives, institutions to target, level of commitment, division of tasks, and financing.
3. Decide on the leadership structure.
4. Establish a coordinating secretariat.
5. Keep the coalition members informed and engaged.
6. Attribute any successes to all organizational members.

7. Determine the gap between the public's knowledge of and attitude toward the issue and your own.

- 7.1. Identify key sectors of the public, especially those which have influence with policy makers and others in public life.
- 7.2. Develop research methods for obtaining objective knowledge of public opinion, especially the opinions of those opposed to your position. Use means such as opinion polls, scientific studies, news and entertainment media, focus groups, and information generated by public interest groups, both those favoring and those opposing your position.
- 7.3. Emphasize the underlying reasons for the opinion: the mentality, culture, way of thinking and analyzing, and values embodied.

8. Research the issue further and develop strategic information.

- 8.1. Determine what additional information is needed to close the opinion gap.
- 8.2. Develop the means for obtaining and systematizing the information.
- 8.3. Research the positions and information upon which they are based of the organizations opposing your position in order to address their arguments.
- 8.4. Construct a well informed, reasoned, and strategic case.
- 8.5. Balance structural analysis with information on the grassroots reality and human dimension.

9. Close the public opinion gap by means of a public education campaign.

Decide on the objectives of the campaign, the audiences, and the messages.

- 9.1. Formulate the specific objectives, the quality and level of information about the issue that you consider necessary for the public to be favorable to your position.

9.2. Strategically select the target sectors for the campaign, generally giving priority to those likely favorable to your position or undecided, as well as to those sectors which have influence with the institutions you intend to lobby.

9.3. Frame and elaborate the messages according to the needs of the distinct target audiences.

Produce and distribute your own means of communication.

9.4. Evaluate the advantages (control of the message, production and distribution) and the disadvantages (loss of control, lack of resources) of producing your own media.

9.5. Decide on the type of media and its means of distribution.

9.6. Obtain the required resources (funds, trained personnel, technology).

and/or

Establish relationships with existing media outlets and their personnel.

9.7. Analyze and evaluate the different media with respect to their reach and impact on the public, their accessibility, and how to relate to them.

9.8. Acquire personnel specialized in media relations or train your own personnel in the required competencies.

9.9. Keep in mind the wide range of media, both news (newspapers, radio, television, magazines, newsletters, web sites) as well as entertainment (movies, television sitcoms, magazines) in which to place your messages.

9.10. Remember that sometimes it is easier to reach the national media by beginning with the local outlets, while under certain circumstance it is even necessary to go outside of one's country to the international media.

9.11. Prepare to communicate with media professionals:
-Presenting your issue in a brief, clear, and comprehensive manner.
-Anticipating their questions.
-Providing details, statistics, concrete examples, names and dates.
-Giving references of independent experts and possible interviewees.
-Knowing opposing points of view and how to address them.

9.12. Consider a variety of ways to make contact with media professionals, including personal networking, press releases, and press conferences.

9.13. Cultivate and maintain good personal and professional relations with journalists, editors, columnists and other professionals, interesting them in and educating them about your issue.

10. Lobby the key policy makers.

10.1. Identify the key persons in the target institutions, that is, those who have some power of decision on your policy issue.

10.2. Familiarize yourself with these persons, their position and authority, their party affiliation, their interests, motivations and ambitions, and especially their position on your issue or related issues as expressed through their public statements but especially their actions and voting records.

10.3. Categorize them according to their position on your issue, and decide how to:

- Support your allies: information, contacts and resources, constituent votes.
- Persuade the undecided: argument, public opinion, constituent lobbying.
- Diminish the power of the opposition: public opinion, constituent votes.

10.4. Choose appropriate means of communication such as office visits, letters, telephone calls, invitations to conferences, and maintaining working relations with their staffs.

11. Activate constituents and mobilize grassroots support.

Activate the organizations' constituencies.

11.1. If an "action network" composed of organizational members, clients, or interested persons does not already exist, establish such a structure coordinated by a central office.

11.2. Organize systems of communication such as mailing lists, e-mail listservs. phone trees, newsletters, web sites, conferences and training workshops.

11.3. Provide the following on-going services to the constituents:

- Inform them about the issue.
- Educate them about the policy process.
- Train them in the fundamentals of advocacy and "outside lobbying".

- Provide them with specific, strategic, and timely information about the unfolding policy process as it relates to the issue.
- Use "action alerts" to call their attention to immediate opportunities for their engagement in lobbying or other timely advocacy actions.

11.4. Establish local or regional coordinators to fulfill the following functions:

- Maintain contact with the local network.
- Motivate local constituents to involve themselves in advocacy actions.
- Generate local media coverage and grassroots support.
- Keep the central office informed about local advocacy efforts and opportunities.

Mobilize grassroots support.

11.5. When it is necessary or advantageous, mobilize public support through public education and media campaigns, popular theater, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, or whatever means are considered appropriate.

IV. EVALUATING THE CAMPAIGN

12. Monitor and evaluate the campaign: outcomes, design, and process.

- 12.1. Establish objectively verifiable indicators for the goals and objectives.
- 12.2. Establish indicators for the activities in each of the prior eleven steps of the campaign.
- 12.3. Evaluate not only the results of the campaign, the process by which it was planned and managed, but also the beliefs and assumptions which it embodies.

© Charles Curry-Smithson, 2000
School for International Training