

ALA American Library Association



The **Advocacy**
Action
WORKBOOK

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Acknowledgments

This guide is a project of ALA's 2021–2022 [Committee on Library Advocacy](#) (COLA) and updates the 2009 Advocacy Action Workbook, developed by the American Library Association and United for Libraries.

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3. Identify **trends** impacting the community and informing library service.

4.

STEP 2

Build Your Team



Advocacy is a team sport, bringing together the perspectives and strengths of multiple players within and, perhaps, beyond your community for greater reach and impact. The team ensures that advocacy efforts are on track, tasks are delegated, and communication is ongoing.

Who is on your advocacy team?

Name	Representing [constituency]

Name	Representing [constituency]

As you establish your team, decide:

1. Who will serve as **chair or coordinator**?

2. Who will **recruit** additional members?

3. **When** will the group meet?

The composition of your team will vary depending on the type and scope of your project. Here are some stakeholder groups

STEP 3

Set Your Goals

What brings you to this workbook? Are you fighting a budget cut? Trying to maintain or increase a budget? Proposing a referendum or millage? Building a new library or addition? Advocating for state or national legislation?

Whatever your aim, the [Core Values of Librarianship](#) inform your professional practice as rooted in service to the community. Awareness of the core values of libraries in combination with the specific purpose of the advocacy campaign you are building here supports a strong collaboration among your team.

Once you have gathered the core members of your team, together you can set your goals. What are you trying to achieve? Whether you intend to improve awareness of library impacts on the community or to convince voters to support a bond issue, be as specific and focused as possible. Consider what you learned from your community analysis. How

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1. What are the **key issues** that inform this advocacy effort?

2. What is your **priority issue**?

3. **What does successful resolution of that issue look like?** Hopefully, your measures of success will be more than "We won!", and will include details that point to ongoing advocacy that builds on this success.

4. What is your **GOAL**?

5. What **objectives or incremental steps** will help you reach that goal?

6. How will you **measure** progress along the way?

Additional Resources

Steps 1 & 2 of the ALA Ecosystem Initiative [Ecosystem Agenda Building Tool](#) ready you to narrow your focus to the one overarching goal to be achieved as the result of this advocacy effort. This tool may help you see how best to embed the intersecting needs of your stakeholders into a single goal.

STEP 4

Develop Your Message



Understanding your audience is critical to developing effective messages. Who are you trying to persuade—voters? Policy makers? The local business community? *Your audience may shift or expand during each stage of the process.*

1. **Name your primary audience.**

Who makes the decision?

Who influences this audience?

2. **Name your secondary audience(s)** [if applicable].

Who makes the decision?

Who influences this audience?

3. **Why does achieving your goal matter** to them and their constituencies?

What are the most important things you want others to know, delivered in terms

Tips for Telling an Effective Story

- Keep it simple, brief, and personal
- Center community impact
- Position library as solution

Develop Your Talking Points

What data, examples, and stories support your key messages? Anticipate questions or comments and use the talking points to elaborate on your key messages. As you develop your talking points, be aware of your audience, their priorities, and how these talking points connect your messages to issues they care about. You may choose to emphasize certain talking points with specific audiences.

Talking points:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Prepare

Work individually and with your team to practice delivering your key messages, packaged with talking points and supporting stories.

Additional Resources

Create an “elevator speech.” An [elevator speech](#) is a brief, persuasive speech that you can recite to convey your message in the amount of time an elevator ride takes, hence the name. Be prepared to make your case quickly and effectively!



station and tell them about what the library has to offer and why it matters to everyone in the

dedicated accounts are created around events or advocacy efforts. Know which channels are used by key stakeholder groups and audiences that you need to reach. Then:

Build your social media communities organically by connecting and interacting with social media accounts from other libraries/library organizations, non-profits, education and cultural institutions, businesses, and government agencies in your area.

Interact with your online communities by asking questions, replying to followers and similar organizations, and providing a space for people to engage with each other on various topics of relevant interest.

Make sure the information you post is on message, accurate and without errors.

For important or special announcements, you can pay to promote your post on some social media platforms. This can help you distribute your message widely across and beyond your online communities.

Appoint a person to monitor your sites and communication. While the bulk of the feedback or comments received is generally positive, be aware that negative and inflammatory comments may arise and have a plan for handling them.

Be sure to post follow-up information, such as the results of your campaign, photos from an event, and progress towards your goals with your advocacy effort.

Identify social media outlets to be engaged for this campaign. Consider:

Outlet name

Type of engagement

Primary communicator

Support, including graphics

Other Media



Website: Make it easy for supporters to know how they can help advance your advocacy goals by including specific and easily accessed information on the very front page of your site, if it is allowed by policy and law. Possible actions can include:

- Signing up as an advocate or taking action on a specific advocacy request (e.g., call your councilors, legislators, write the mayor).

- Volunteering for a committee or to help with the campaign – provide contact information.

- Writing a letter to the editor – give the newspaper's address, along with talking points to help advocates make the case.

- Turning out to vote. Make sure your organization follows applicable elections laws.

Organization Newsletter: Your newsletter gives you the power of the press to communicate with stakeholders not just about news and events, but also advocacy priorities and their impact on the community. It also is an opportunity to reinforce the library's or organization's branding and key messages.

Direct Mail: Although expensive, there are times when direct mailings are a constructive way to reach your audience (e.g., during a referenda campaign).

Promotional Materials: Bookmarks, book bags, program flyers, membership renewals, direct mailings for membership drives – all of these materials are opportunities to get your message out. Be creative and consider other options as well:

- Leave branded bookmarks with your key messages at high traffic sites and places where people go and wait, such as doctors' offices.

- Ask the local grocery store to put your message on their bags for a given length of time.

- Ask your utility company if you can include a bookmark or insert that contains information about your organization in a citywide mailing.

- Send a selected list of new business resources at the library to members of the Chamber of Commerce and be sure to include how the library benefits all businesses in your city.

Presentations: Nothing is more effective than personal contact. That's the upside. The downside is that you can't reach as many people at once with your message. You'll need to create and train a cadre of volunteers – board members, volunteers, retirees, to get the message out in person.

Civic groups such as the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc. always welcome guest speakers. Your volunteers may belong to other clubs and organizations as well. Make a list of all the opportunities there are in your community, prioritize them, and begin scheduling speaking engagements to get your message out. Remember to know your audience. Make sure when you talk about the importance of the library and its services, you are tailoring your comments to what is of interest to your audience. If you are talking to physicians, for example, talk about the link between health and literacy and all that the library does to support literacy.

Strategize

Consider the following when deciding which strategies to use:

1. **Who** is your audience?

2. **What** is the best way to convey the information to the target audience? What kind of image do you want to project? Will it be an effective part of your total communication effort?

3. **When** is the deadline? Will your message be distributed in time to be effective?

4. **How** much will it cost? Is this the most effective use of available funds?

5. **Why** is this the best strategy for this audience?

STEP 6

Put It All Together

By this point, you have identified:

- Community priorities
- Advocacy team members and sub-groups
- Metrics for success
- Target audience(s)
- Key messages
- Talking points
- Messaging strategies

Be prepared to move quickly and pivot as needs arise.

Create a timeline for your campaign:

Activity	Volunteers Involved	Start Date	End Date

Additional Resources

You can build a more detailed timeline using the [advocacy planning matrix](#). Also visit the example available in the [year-round advocacy checklist](#).

Cycle

Learn the election and legislative cycles for all the groups who make law or policy for your organization. **Do not wait until the legislative session starts.** Legislators and policy makers are extremely busy at this point and you need to have made your case before bills are introduced so that all you have to do is send short reminders or points to consider. Before your issues come up they should know you and your issues well.

Remember that all legislators and policy makers have aides who do most of the research and work. Get to know them and help them understand your issues or requests and why you are asking for certain things. Make them an ally so when the legislator needs reminding on how to vote they can help direct them.

Evaluation

Annually (or semi-annually) evaluate your advocacy efforts to see what could improve.

1. Did you get what you needed?

- 2.

APPENDIX 1

Guide the Conversation: Bridge, Hook and Flag

These are three techniques for guiding a conversation so that you are sure to get the main point or points that you want to be remembered across to your target audiences.

Bridge. This technique will allow you to move from an area in the conversation that you don't want to discuss or that has the potential to sidetrack the issue and get the conversation back to your message. If the legislator says, for example, "Why shouldn't we be supporting a policy that will help software companies? Isn't a good economy good for libraries?" Rather than getting into a discussion about the economy and whether or not new legislation will help the economy overall, you can use this as a platform for your point by saying: "I think the real question is, and go back to your main point. For example, I think the real question is t

APPENDIX 2

Checklist for Library Advocates



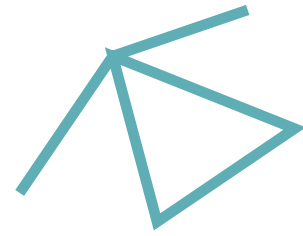
Invite your elected officials to a library event. If they are not invited, they definitely won't come.

If your state library association holds an annual legislative day, attend that and network with others that share your passion for advocacy.



APPENDIX 3

Advocacy Contact List



Constructive working relationships with stakeholders and decision makers is foundational to your advocacy work.

Keep track of the names/websites/emails/phone numbers for the key contacts that you may need to include in advocacy efforts. Tip: update this list annually to keep it current!

Federal

Senators		
Staff contact		
Key committees		
Representative(s)		
Staff contact		
Key committees		
Agency contacts		

State



Media

A