BU Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health

BEYOND 2025

ACTION

TOOLKIT

CONTENTS

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"I am only one,
   But still I am one.
   I cannot do everything,
   But still I can do something;
   And because I cannot do everything,
   I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

— Edward Everett Hale
(American author, historian and Unitarian Minister; 1822-1909)

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CENTER FOR INNOVATION IN SOCIAL WORK & HEALTH

Our Mission

The Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health (CISWH) at Boston University School of Social Work (BUSSW) drives transformative solutions, amplifies the profound impact of social work, and boldly reimagines traditional approaches to advance equitable health, mental well-being, and quality of life worldwide.

Our Team

Our multidisciplinary team comprises experts in social work, public health, health policy, business, and communications, all working collaboratively to drive meaningful change. Through partnerships with BUSSW faculty and community leaders, CISWH ensures its initiatives are both deeply relevant and highly impactful, bridging the gap between research, practice, and policy to create a more just and equitable future.

WHAT WE DO

At the heart of CISWH's mission are three intersecting labs that promote innovation in social work research, training, and practice.

Powerbuilding & Leadership Lab

The Powerbuilding & Leadership Lab strengthens and shares the influence of social work across public health, health, government, community-based research, academic, and other practice settings through leadership development, network building, training, and policy change.

Health Equity Research Lab

The Health Equity Research Lab conducts rigorous research across all areas that drive health and well-being. Impact-focused research aims to identifying root causes, study the impacts of new interventions, and inform policy change to address health disparities globally.

Social Work Innovation Lab

The Social Work Innovation Lab is central to our discovery ecosystem where we co-create and test new tools, models, and solutions for society's most pressing challenges impacting health, well-being, and quality of life.

About the Beyond 2025 Action Hub

Like many of you, we are concerned about the far-reaching changes in social service, healthcare, economic, and governance systems proposed in "Project 2025", the "America First Agenda", and other policy platforms. The 119th Congress and the next administration are already taking steps to enact these and other policy plans.

The team at CISWH has been developing strategies to address the profound impacts these policy changes are likely to have on human dignity, health, and mental well-being—especially for the most marginalized among us. Many of us are experiencing disbelief, fear, anger, and anxiety in response to these changes. Early on, we recognized that others were feeling similarly uncertain about how to protect our communities. Beginning in December 2024, we delved into the content of "Project 2025" and the "America First Agenda" to better understand what lies ahead and to identify ways to help others prepare and take action.

The result of this work is the Beyond 2025 Action Hub, a bold initiative designed to provide information and tools to help you navigate proposed changes and connect with others to take meaningful action on the issues that matter most to you.

The Beyond 2025 Action Hub is comprised of three components.

Our first is a user-friendly, searchable database containing over 700 proposed policies and plans. The database is now publicly available at www.beyond2025.com, allowing you to explore "Project 2025", the "America First Agenda", and other policy plans and actions without sifting through thousands of pages of text.

Critical Conversations, our second component, is a series of ongoing virtual convenings that equip social workers, residents, public health practitioners, and others with skills to navigate policy, funding, and practice changes. The series also fosters community-building and collective action to drive change. You can stay informed about future convenings through www.ciswh.org.

And finally, the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit is a practical companion to the database and virtual convenings, offering a curated collection of action planning resources, tools, and tutorials to help you learn more about key social change concepts and identify areas of interest for participating in collective action.

We hope the Beyond 2025 Action Hub serves as a valuable resource to help you prepare, plan, and take action in addressing the significant disruptions facing our economic, political, health, and social service systems. Looking beyond 2025, we will work together to build the conditions that support equitable health, mental well-being, and quality of life.

Tami Gouveia and Meg Comeau
The Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health
Boston University School of Social Work

INFORM

Introducing the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit

Welcome to the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit!

We have designed this suite of tools to provide social work leaders, public health and other practitioners, residents, faculty, students, and all those who value justice, equity and human dignity with the foundational resources they will need to effectively respond to "Project 2025" and the "America First Agenda's" stated policy objectives.

These foundational resources were created by well-established and trusted organizations outside of CISWH. We have curated and assembled this initial selection of resources for your convenience, given the urgency of the moment. We will add other existing and original resource materials to the toolkit as the policy environment evolves.

EDUCATE

Fundamental Social Change Concepts, Knowledge, and Tools

As a user of the Beyond 2025 Action Toolkit, you cannot do everything on your own. It is our hope that as you are called to respond to the moral imperative to do something based on your strengths, opportunities, and resources, that others will also be called to work collectively to make an impact.

The following original and curated materials have been gathered to help you think through where and how to make your own unique and valuable contributions.

This section of the toolkit offers information and resources on the following critical elements of social change, as well as tools and strategies for determining your areas of interest and spheres of influence:
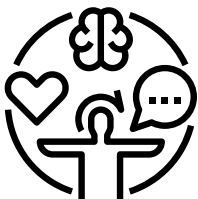
Social Change, Your Role & How to Implement It
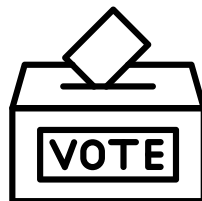
U.S. Civics 101

Media Literacy 101

What Is Social Change and How to Implement It

Social change can happen on a number of different levels, in a number of different ways. While many people think of highly visible methods such as demonstrations or protests, there are many other effective social change actions and methods. There are the things that happen on the individual level, in the way we think or behave. There are those which happen in the context of relationship, whether personal or professional. One-on-one conversations, volunteering, fundraising, voting, community-building, and raising awareness through social media also have important roles to play in the array of activities and efforts that make up social change.

Just as there is no one perfect way of working towards social change, there is no one perfect type of person to engage in social change efforts. We each have unique skills, talents, and other assets that we can contribute. The impact of all of us working together is greater when we take the time to think about and then apply what we do best.

The following resources (pages 8-12) created by Seed Coalition, an organization that supports civic and community engagement in higher education in the Midwest, can help you identify where and how you can make your most meaningful contributions.

Social Change Wheel 2.0 Toolkit
Take it for a spin. What inspires you?

Imagine the wheel below rotating around the center of anti-racism, equity, and co-creation, offering a variety of alignments between its inner and outer rings. The outer ring offers a range of social change approaches happening in and outside of higher education. The inner ring offers a range of campus-based strategies used in the work of civic and community engagement. We hope the Social Change Wheel 2.0 toolkit inspires reflection, new ideas, and an affirmed commitment to a strong democracy.

WAYS TO WORK TOWARD SOCIAL CHANGE

CAMPUS-BASED STRATEGIES

Outer ring:
- Socially Responsible Daily Behavior
- Deliberative and Reflective Dialogue
- Community Organizing
- Advocacy and Raising Awareness
- Community Building
- Social Innovation and Enterprise
- Fundraising, Giving, and Philanthropy
- Community and Economic Development
- Protests and Demonstrations
- Voting and Formal Political Activities
- Mutual Aid and Informal Association
- Volunteering and Direct Service

Inner ring:
- Civic-Minded Career Readiness
- Community Building and Partnership
- Student Involvement and Leadership Development
- Information, Digital, and Media Literacies
- Cultivating Lifelong Learners and Global Citizens
- Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education
- Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Research
- Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning

Center: Anti-Racism, Equity, and Co-Creation

Definitions, Examples, and Ideas:
Ways to Work Toward Social Change

Below are definitions to use as a jumping off point as you work through the outer ring of the Social Change Wheel 2.0. Definitions are listed starting at the top of the wheel and moving clockwise. Examples are provided, as is space for you to write your own.

Socially Responsible Daily Behavior

Acting on one's values and civic commitments in one's personal and professional life.

- Noticing and naming problematic language
- Understanding the local and broader impacts of your daily routines, habits, and purchases
- Educating yourself about the people and history of your institution and community
- _____

Deliberative and Reflective Dialogue

Exchanging and evaluating different ideas and approaches around particular issues in a public setting. Learning about the experiences and stories of others by listening fully and actively.

- Organizing ongoing dialogues or story circles
- Creating space for all who wish to speak
- Facilitating with a National Issue Forums guide
- _____

Community Organizing

Bringing people together to act collectively in their shared interest or toward a common goal.

- Mapping the skills, interests, relationships, and other assets of residents to inform work on particular issues
- Using Gans' public narrative model to surface stories and commitments to a common cause
- _____

Advocacy and Raising Awareness

Supporting an idea or cause through public and private communications, and collecting evidence to support one's position.

- Sharing research or a video that highlights inequities in your community on social media
- Calling and writing letters to elected officials
- Telling your peers why an issue matters to you
- _____

Community Building

Strengthening the capacity of local residents and associations to work together by supporting opportunities for interpersonal connection.

- Creating local history projects profiling both long-time and new residents
- Organizing neighborhood clean-ups or National Night Out activities
- _____

Social Innovation and Enterprise

Social innovation focuses on fairer and more sustainable solutions to social problems. Social enterprises are organizations using market-based solutions to address social problems.

- Creating a business with a "triple bottom line"
- Designing affordable products that purify water
- Developing an app with a clear social benefit
- _____

Fundraising, Giving, and Philanthropy

Donating money to increase the well-being of humankind, advance another social good, or support non-profit or community organizations.

- Holding a fundraiser for a local nonprofit
- Giving cash or in-kind donations yourself
- Boosting online days of giving on social media
- Participating in fundraising phone banking
- _____

Community and Economic Development

Acting to provide economic opportunities and improve social conditions in sustainable ways.

- Developing marketing plans, websites, or other supports to help small businesses grow
- Offering microloans to aspiring entrepreneurs
- Supporting community-owned businesses
- Partnering with community business leaders
- _____

Protests and Demonstrations

Expressing public, visible disagreement with a situation or policy, often in a large group setting.

- Participating in rallies or marches in support of a cause or to bring awareness to injustice
- Creating public visual or performance art intended to draw attention to an issue
- Taking a knee during a national anthem
- _____

Voting and Formal Political Activities

Mobilizing others to participate in and influence public policy through formal political channels – and participating yourself!

- Organizing a voter registration drive
- Running for public office or working or volunteering on a candidate's campaign
- Sharing resources about state voting laws
- _____

Mutual Aid and Informal Association

Unpaid, collaborative work and/or sharing of resources by people seeking to improve their collective quality of life.

- Using digital platforms to connect people with a network of support to share resources such as money, clothing, food, or services
- Opening your home to a displaced person
- _____

Volunteering and Direct Service

Addressing immediate needs by providing assistance, often through churches, schools, social service agencies, and nonprofits.

- Helping weekly as a tutor at a local library
- Distributing donated food at a food bank
- Cleaning up debris after a disaster or crisis
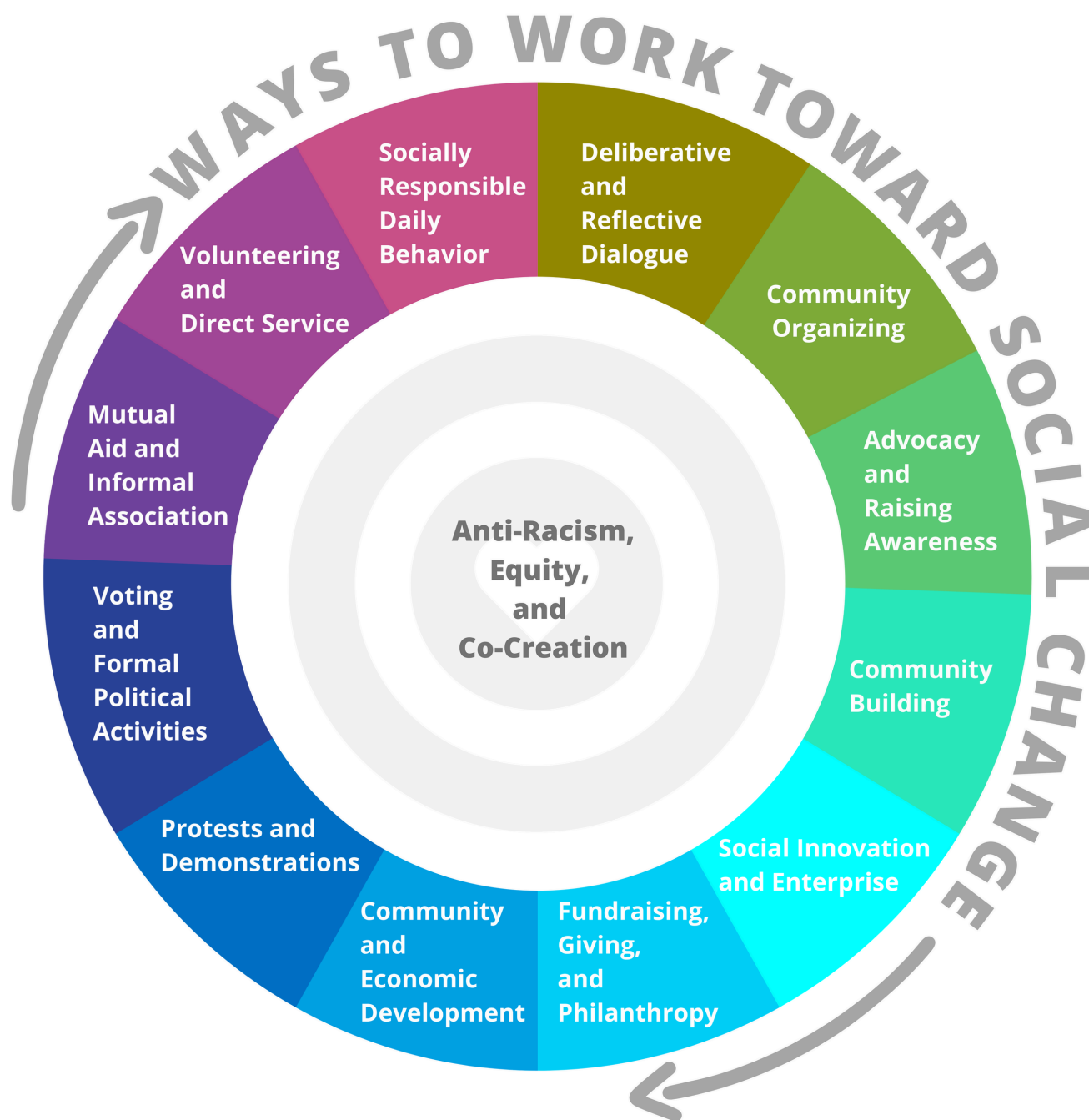- Registering participants at a blood drive
- _____

✎ Additional Notes

Reflection and Discussion Questions:
Ways to Work Toward Social Change

- ❓ Which part(s) of the wheel are you drawn to the most? Why?
- ❓ What ways to work toward social change do you have experience with? What ways to work toward social change have you seen others use effectively? How?
- ❓ Which part of the wheel do you find most challenging or unappealing? Why?
- ❓ How could an "around the wheel" approach be activated to address enduring social problems and systemic inequities? Why might a multifaceted approach be valuable?

WAYS TO WORK TOWARD SOCIAL CHANGE

Socially Responsible Daily Behavior

Deliberative and Reflective Dialogue

Community Organizing

Volunteering and Direct Service

Advocacy and Raising Awareness

Mutual Aid and Informal Association

Anti-Racism, Equity, and Co-Creation

Community Building

Voting and Formal Political Activities

Social Innovation and Enterprise

Protests and Demonstrations

Community and Economic Development

Fundraising, Giving, and Philanthropy

Reflecting on Campus-Based Strategies:
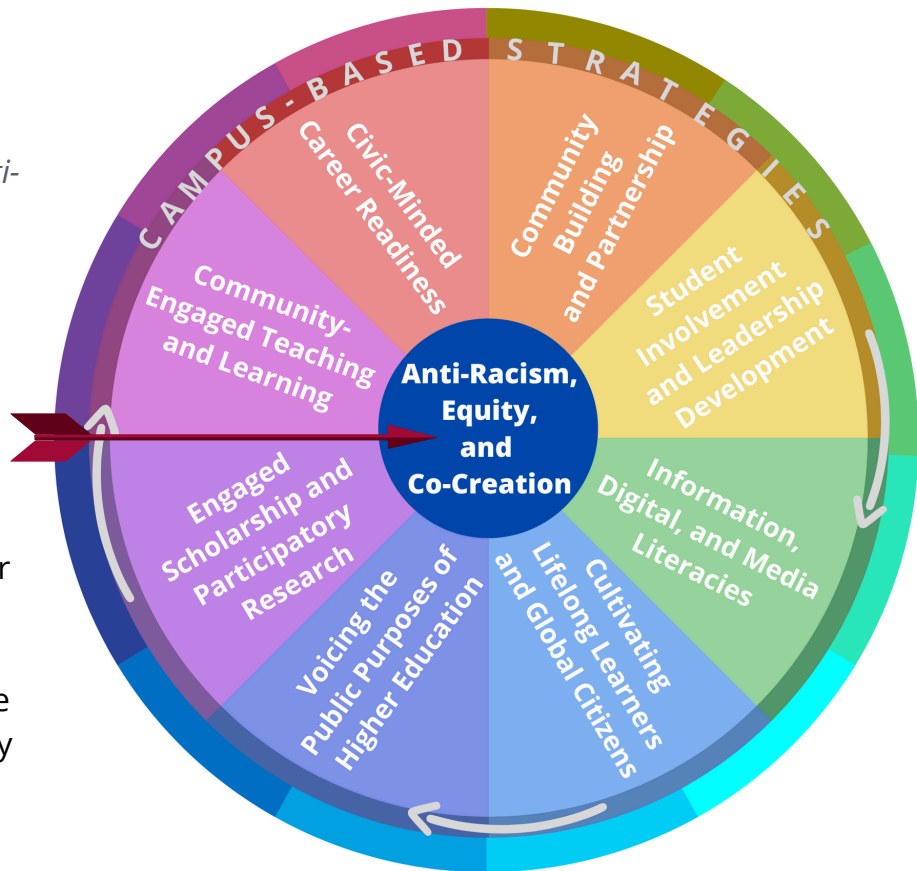## In Your Work, On Your Campus, With Your Community

Starting at the Center

"The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward" – Ijeoma Oluo (@IjeomaOluo, July 14, 2019)

How do or can you practice anti-racism in your work? How is anti-racism practiced on your campus? With your community?

How is equity defined and practiced in your work, on campus, and with community?

How does co-creation align with the culture and values on your campus? Who regularly sits at your planning table? How can you check which voices have been excluded?

CAMPUS-BASED STRATEGIES

Civic-Minded Career Readiness

Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning

Community Building and Partnership

Student Involvement and Leadership Development

Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Research

Anti-Racism, Equity, and Co-Creation

Information, Digital, and Media Literacies

Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education

Cultivating Lifelong Learners and Global Citizens

Mapping Current Practices, Imagining New Possibilities

- Civic-Minded Career Readiness
- Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning
- Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Action Research

- Voicing the Public Purpose of Higher Education
- Community Building and Partnership
- Student Involvement and Leadership Development

- Information, Digital, and Media Literacies
- Cultivating Lifelong Learning and Global Citizenship
- _____

Who makes the map and holds the compass for civic and community engagement on your campus?

Where are the strategies above located on your campus? What other strategies are on your map?

Which of these strategies are currently on the outskirts, or on a completely different map? Why?

With whom on and beyond your campus could you partner to reflect on the current terrain and embark on new pathways?

Your Role in Social Change

Whether you are an experienced activist who has been involved in multiple social change and movement building efforts, or you are new to learning about how you can leverage your strengths, values, and resources for collective action, the tools included in this section offer an opportunity for reflection to make your efforts more effective and collaborative.

We begin with the Social Change Map developed by Deepa Viyer (see pages 14-21).

You can read more about the Social Change Map in Deepa's interview with Erin Segal, a social worker and writer at Thick Press, here.

To learn more about the framework, watch Deepa's interview with Student Affairs Now here.

Mapping Our Roles in Social Change Ecosystems (2020)

In our lives and as part of movements and organizations, many of us play different roles in pursuit of equity, shared liberation, inclusion, and justice. And yet, we often get lost and confused, or we are newcomers to ongoing social change efforts and don't know where to start, or we are catalyzed into action in the midst of a crisis in our community.

This is a framework that can help individuals, networks, and organizations align and get in right relationship with social change values, individual roles, and the broader ecosystem.

What you're reading now is the most current version of the social change map, developed in 2020. Below you'll find a *Frequently Asked Questions* section. Following that are the three components: the map, the description of roles, and a reflection guide.
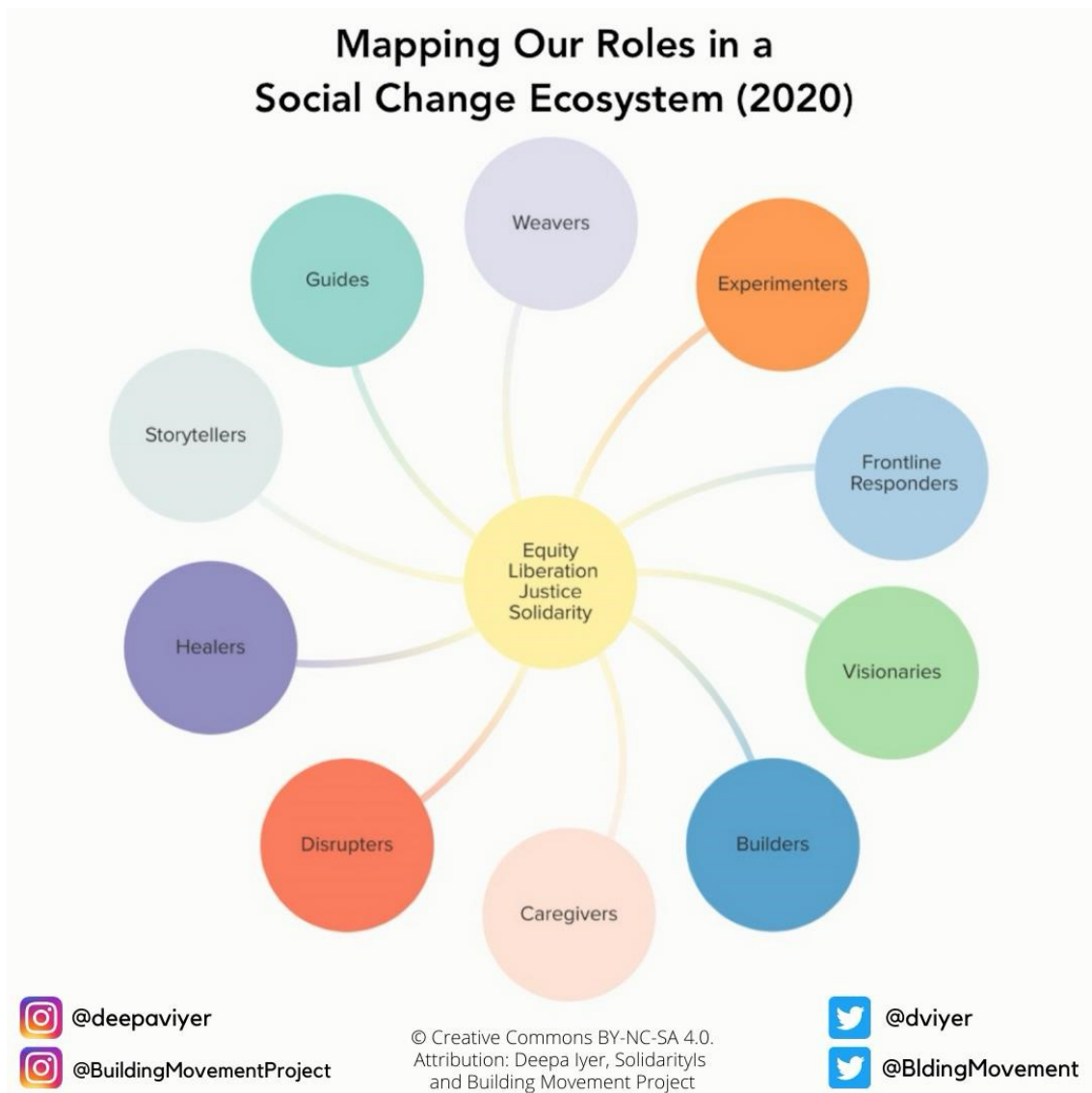
Frequently Asked Questions

Who developed the framework?

My name is Deepa Iyer, and I'm a writer, strategist, facilitator, and activist. Learn more about the original concept [here](#). As I utilized the framework with others, it began to evolve; see more about that [here](#). This is the most current version of the framework.

What are the components of the framework?

The map, the description of the roles, and the reflection guide can all be found in this document. If you'd like to access individual components, you can find them [here](#).

How do I use this framework?

It's a three-step process: (1) identify your values and context in the middle circle; (2) map your roles and those played by your ecosystem; and (3) reflect, observe, and plan.

Who can use this framework?

Anyone. Individuals can use it to reflect, assess, and plan. Organizations can use it at staff and board retreats, team-building meetings, orientations, and strategy sessions. Workplaces can use it to assess their effectiveness. Coalitions and networks can use it to clarify different lanes.

When should this framework be used?

As an individual, you can use it when you need a re-set, when you feel stuck, or when you feel confused. I use it often when there is a community crisis and I don't know how to respond. For example, people have been using the framework to figure out their roles during COVID-19 and the struggle for Black liberation.

What are the permissions and restrictions on using this framework?

The framework is copyrighted and licensed under [Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0.](#) The original material may be copied, redistributed, and shared with attribution. In addition, it may be adapted as long as it stays true to the original content *and* provides attribution. No commercial use is permitted. ***Attribution should read***: Deepa Iyer, SolidarityIs and Building Movement Project. Questions? Please contact Deepa via email (diyer@buildingmovement.org), on Twitter (@dviyer), or on Instagram (@deepaviyer).

Mapping Our Roles in a Social Change Ecosystem (2020)

The Roles

Weavers: I see the through-lines of connectivity between people, places, organizations, ideas, and movements.

Experimenters: I innovate, pioneer, and invent. I take risks and course-correct as needed.

Frontline Responders: I address community crises by marshaling and organizing resources, networks, and messages.

Visionaries: I imagine and generate our boldest possibilities, hopes and dreams, and remind us of our direction.

Builders: I develop, organize, and implement ideas, practices, people, and resources in service of a collective vision.

Caregivers: I nurture and nourish the people around me by creating and sustaining a community of care, joy, and connection.

Disruptors: I take uncomfortable and risky actions to shake up the status quo, to raise awareness, and to build power.

Healers: I recognize and tend to the generational and current traumas caused by oppressive systems, institutions, policies, and practices.

Storytellers: I craft and share our community stories, cultures, experiences, histories, and possibilities through art, music, media, and movement.

Guides: I teach, counsel, and advise, using my gifts of well-earned discernment and wisdom.

Reflection Guide

- Reflect on the values in the middle of the map. Circle the ones that connect with you and/or add more. You can also choose to write in a particular issue, campaign, or crisis that calls to you to take action (i.e. COVID-19, solidarity with Black communities, campaign to center immigrants).

_____

_____

_____

- Locate yourself on the map and put your name inside the circles that you find yourself playing most frequently. Add other circles if needed and label them with roles (not job titles). Recognize that you can be playing multiple roles, and that these roles can even shift depending on the context.

- What role(s) do you feel comfortable and natural playing, and why? What role(s) make you come alive, and why? Are there any differences between these two responses for you to explore?

_____

_____

_____

- What is the impact of playing these roles on you - physically, energetically, emotionally, or spiritually? What/who sustains you?

_____

_____

_____

- In your role(s), how often do you vision and dream? What is the effect of repetition and redundancy, or compromise and sacrifice in the roles you play?

_____

_____

_____

- How does your role connect to your privilege and power? For example, are there roles where you might be taking too much space (or not enough)? Which roles provide positional authority and power and what are the effects?

_____

_____

_____

- What story emerges about you when you review the map and your reflections?

_____

_____

_____

- How could you stretch yourself? Where can you take bolder risks?

_____

_____

_____

My Ecosystem

- Who is in your ecosystem? What roles do they play? Start with your immediate ecosystem (usually your organization), and then zoom out to include mentors, supporters, and colleagues outside of your organization. You can also do this part of the exercise through the lens of an organizational ecosystem by first identifying your organizational role(s) on the map, and then placing allies and partners in different circles.

- The middle circle in the map identifies the values of the communities and the world we seek to create. Which resonate with your ecosystem and why? How does your ecosystem create the conditions for justice, liberation, solidarity and inclusion to be realized?

_____

_____

_____

- What observations emerge about your team, organization, network, or movement when you review the complete ecosystem, and your role in it?

_____

_____

_____

- An effective, healthy, and sustainable social change ecosystem requires people playing diverse roles. Is your map imbalanced in any way? If so, how could the ecosystem provide support, alter objectives, or course correct?

_____

_____

_____

- Often, social change ecosystems are prone to maintaining cultures of overwork, productivity, and performance at the cost of individual well-being and long-term sustainability. Does the mapping process provide insights into the culture of your ecosystem? Are there roles that need to be strengthened in order to cultivate a more sustainable culture?

_____

_____

_____

Alignment and Aspirations

There are times when we all feel confused and lost about the roles that we should play, especially during community crises. When you don't feel in alignment with my roles, how can you re-set? Who can you turn to for guidance? When you are in right relationship between your roles and values, how do you feel?

_____

_____

Based on the reflections above, set 2 goals for yourself to try out before your next check-in. Identify 1 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) goal and 1 B-HAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious) goal. Check in every quarter to reflect on what's changed, and if possible, work with a partner, coach, or team-member for accountability and momentum.

U.S. Civics 101
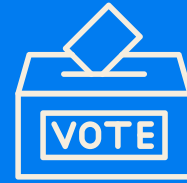
A thorough understanding of how policy proposals become laws in the U.S., as well as how the budget process works, to help you become more effective in your efforts. The following (pages 23-24) was developed by the non-partisan League of Women Voters and provides links to a number of topical educational resources.

League of Women Voters Presents – Civics 101

Historical Documents:
- [A summary of the Constitution](#)

- Find the Charters of Freedom: Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights **here**

Branches of [Government](#)

1. Major differences between the two houses of [Congress](#)
   - [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#)
   - [Official records of Congress](#)
   - [Current Legislative Activities](#)
2. [The President of the United States](#)
   - [Presidential Election Process](#)
   - [Electoral College](#)
   - [Popular Vote](#)
   - [National Popular Vote](#)
   - [Gerrymandering](#)

Budget:
- [The Federal Budget](#)
- [Current and past budget information](#)

Federal vs. State Government Powers

Civil Rights
- [14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Civil Rights (1868)](#)
- [Civil Rights Act (1964)](#)

Contact:
- [How to Contact your Elected Officials](#)

Policy Issues
Political Glossary
Voting and Elections

History:
- [15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Voting Rights (1870)](#)

- 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Women's Right to vote (1920)
- Voting Rights Act (1965)
- 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Minimum voting age (197)

How to Vote, Requirements, Elections and Dates:

- How to Vote
- Cómo votar

- Voter, Registration, Requirements and Deadlines
- Absentee and Early Voting

- Midterm, State and Local Elections
- Find My State and Local Election Office Website

- Research Who to Vote For

    o How to Judge a Candidate
    o Election Information You Need
    o On-line Voter Guide
    o Campaign Finances

Major Political Groups

    o Democrats
    o Republicans
    o Libertarian
    o Green

Non-partisan groups that can help – LWV – Local, State and National Chapters

American Government: Cliff Notes ®

Charters of Freedom

The Charters of Freedom include three documents critical to United States history. The Charters of Freedom outline the philosophy, framework, laws, and ethics that provide a foundational structure for the United States government. Subsequently, this shapes the daily lives and experiences of everyone living in the United States. Below is a brief description of each document.

Declaration of Independence
- The Declaration of Independence was a powerful document written to inspire unity, revolution, and independence from Britain in 1776
- It begins with encouraging principles of equality, freedom, solidarity, and the right to rebellion
- The right to rebel is supported through a list of 27 grievances against King George III
- The conclusion ends with the declaration that the United Colonies are separate and independent from Britain and the King

The United States Constitution
The Constitution was written in the summer of 1787 and provides a framework for the structure and systems that encapsulate the United States federal government. The Constitution is divided into a preamble and seven articles that articulate how different facets of the government operate.

Articles 1-3 outline the structure and responsibilities of the federal government and the system of checks and balances[2] to provide oversight of each branch.

- Executive Branch
- Legislative Branch
- Judicial Branch

Articles 4-6 outline the relationships between the state and federal governments. This includes processes to ratify and amend the Constitution as well as the Supremacy Clause.

Supremacy Clause
When legal conflict arises, the U.S. Constitution and federal laws take precedence over state laws[1]

Article 7 outlines process for states to ratify the Constitution.

Bill of Rights
The Bill of Rights are the first ten amendments made to the Constitution and are additional rights and protections we hold

Amendments 1-10
1: Freedom of religion, speech, press, and peaceful assembly
2: Right to bear arms
3: Troops cannot stay in homes during peacetime without consent
4: No unreasonable searches or siezures
5: Due process for criminal prosecutions, right to not testify
6: Right to speedy, public trial by jury
7: Right to civil jury trials in federal civil cases
8: No excessive bail or cruel and unusual punishment
9: Unlisted rights are not inherently denied
10: Powers not delegated to the U.S. by the Constitution are reserved to the states

1 See *Overview of the Federal Government* for information on branches
2 See *Processes of the Federal Government* for more information on checks and balances

Federal Government Overview

The Constitution's Articles 1-3 outline the division of the federal government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Below is an outline of the structure of these three branches, the parts they're composed of, and information about the responsibilities of key players.

Executive Branch

This branch is responsible for executing the law and is composed of the following:

President
- Heads executive branch of government
- Has power to sign, veto, and execute laws as well as nominate federal judges, create treaties and issue executive orders
  - Executive Order: Presidential directive that, depending on certain limitations, may be enacted as law without Congressional approval
- Other roles include head of state and Commander in Chief of U.S. Armed Forces

Vice President
Breaks ties in Senate votes and may periodically preside over the Senate

Cabinet
- Serves as advisors to the president
- President nominates cabinet members and Senate confirms them

Executive departments, independent agencies, and other boards, commissions and committees
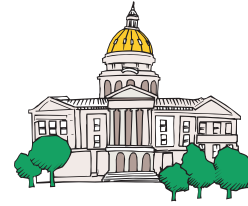
Legislative Branch

This branch is responsible for drafting and passing proposed legislation, controlling federal spending and budgeting, confirming presidential nominations (Senate only), and has the authority to declare war. The Legislative Branch includes:

Congress
Comprised of representatives from each state, and is structured into two chambers

Senate
- 100 members
- Rotating six-year terms

House of Representatives
- 435 members
- Two-year terms

Special agencies and offices supporting Congress

Judicial Branch

This branch is responsible for interpreting, applying, and evaluating the law, and the has the power to find laws unconstitutional or executive actions unauthorized. It includes federal courts and the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court
- Heads of the Judicial Branch of Government
- Justices of the Supreme Court are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate
- They have the power to overturn unconstitutional laws, including executive orders

Structure of the Federal Government

Checks and Balances

The purpose of establishing Checks and Balances between branches of the United States government was to separate powers and prevent one branch from having too much power. Below are the ways in which each branch of government provides oversight to the other.

Judicial Branch (JB)

- The Supreme Court can declare laws made by EB unconstitutional
- The Supreme Court can declare executive orders signed by the President as unconstitutional
- This branch interprets laws written and approved by the Executive and Legislative Branches

Executive Branch (EB)

- The President can veto laws submitted through LB
- The President can sign executive orders
- The President nominates Supreme Court justices, court of appeals judges and district court judges who evaluate the law on the JB

Legislative Branch (LB)

- Congress can override a veto with enough votes
- The LB has the power to approve Presidential nominations, control the budget, and can impeach the President
- The Senate confirms the President's nominations for judicial positions and can impeach any of these judges

The Federal Budget

The Federal Budget outlines federal government revenue, spending, borrowing, and debt.

- The fiscal year runs from the beginning of October until the end of September the following year
- The federal government uses revenue to cover spending costs, and borrow money to finance deficits that revenue will not cover
- The national debt is the amount of money the federal government has borrowed over time but not yet paid back
- There are two types of spending:
  - Discretionary: This accounts for 35% of all federal spending
  - Mandatory: This accounts for 65% of all federal spending and is automatically applied. This spending includes entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare and SNAP

BUDGET PROCESS

First Monday in February
The President's proposed budget is sent to Congress

February 15
Congress examines proposed budget; hearings are held on proposals

April 15
The President, Budget Director and Cabinet resolve needed changes to proposals

June 30
House completes action on Appropriations

July 15
President transmits Mid-Session Review of Budget

October 1
Fiscal Year begins

Congressional Lawmaking

Process for How a Bill Becomes a Law

Any new law begins as a bill introduced as legislation in the <u>Legislative Branch</u> of government. Proposed legislation can come from legislator engagement with constituents from the states they represent.

Member of Congress introduces proposed legislation in the form of a bill

The bill is sent to the appropriate committee(s) for review

Legislation is sent to the floor to be reviewed by both chambers, consisting of a debate and vote on the bill

Once the bill has gone through both chambers of Congress, there are three possible outcomes:

A different bill from the original is passed

The bill goes to a Conference Committee, made up of members from each house, to resolve differences in the bill

The bill is not passed by both the House and Senate

The bill is passed by both the House and Senate

The House and Senate approve the report of changes

The House and Senate do not approve the report of changes

The bill dies

The bill goes to the President for review

Once a bill is sent to the President:
- The bill will become a law if signed by the president, or if not signed within 10 days and Congress is in session
- If the president vetoes the bill, the chamber that introduced the legislation can attempt to override the veto by a vote of two-thirds of those who are present

Civic Engagement

"The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything."

— Albert Einstein

Civic engagement is an action that is designed to address issues of public concern, and can take many different forms. Below are some ways to be civically engaged.

How to Become Civically Engaged:

- Find ways to get involved in your community
  - Volunteer for an organization whose values mirror those you are passionate about, such as indivisable.com
  - Join a group, particularly social justice-oriented groups list in SharePoint
  - Get involved in a protest: see here for things to know before going to a protest and protest safety
- Get involved in government
  - Familiarize yourself with how the United States government works: see here for a breakdown
  - Call, write, or email your congress person and senator to demand change: find who your congress person and senator is along with their contact information here
  - Attend city council meetings, community forums, and town halls to express your concerns and stay up to date on what is happening in your community
  - Volunteer your time for a political candidate you support
  - Vote – learn the steps to voting here
- Most importantly be informed
  - Learn about the pressing issues that affect your community
  - Stay up to date with the evolution of the policy proposals that impact the issues you care about in the Beyond 2025 Action Hub Database (Link)
  - Be deliberate and intentional about where you purchase your goods: buy from small businesses and businesses whose values align with yours
- Still not sure where exactly to start? Start small with some ideas from dosomething.org

How Presidential Elections Work

Presidential Election Process

Becoming elected as President of the United States is a multi-step process that involves meeting certain eligibility requirements and engaging in election activities beginning a year prior to the Presidential Election Year. The Presidential Election takes place every four years.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be a natural-born citizen of the United States
- Must be at least 35 years of age
- Must be a resident of the United States for at least 14 years

Electoral College

The Electoral College is a body of citizens selected by the people, who are responsible for casting the final votes in the Presidential Election. To win the presidential election, a candidate needs to receive a majority of 538 votes (270 or more) from the Electoral College.

ELECTION PROCESS

Before Election Year

Spring
Candidate registers with Federal Election Commission and announces intention to run for president

Summer–Spring of Election Year
Primary caucus debates take place

Election Year

January–June
States hold presidential primaries and caucuses

July–Early September
Parties nominate presidential candidates, who will also announce their vice presidential running mate

September and October
Candidates participate in presidential debates

Early November
Election day (first Tuesday after the first Monday)

December
Electors cast their votes for President in the Electoral College

Early January
Congress counts electoral votes

January 20th
Presidential Inauguration Day (unless falls on Sunday, then January 21st)

Facts about the Electoral College

- Each state is allotted electoral votes equivalent to that state's Congressional delegation (2 Senators + the number of Representatives).
- If a presidential candidate wins the state's popular vote, they receive all the state's Electoral College votes. However, Maine and Nebraska use a different process: one electoral vote is awarded to the popular vote winner in each congressional district and the the remaining two electoral votes (representing the Senate seats) go to the statewide popular vote winner.*
- The winner of the presidential election is officially declared on January 6th in a joint session of Congress.

* Popular Vote: The majority of an aggregate of votes from all states.

How Elections Work - Congress, State & Local Elections

Congressional Elections and Midterm Elections

Elections that occur every 2 years:
- During this time 1/3 of the Senate seats and all of the seats in the House of Representatives are up for election.
- Members of House of Representatives serve 2 year terms.
- Senators serve 6 years terms.
- The president of the United States serves up to two 4 year terms.
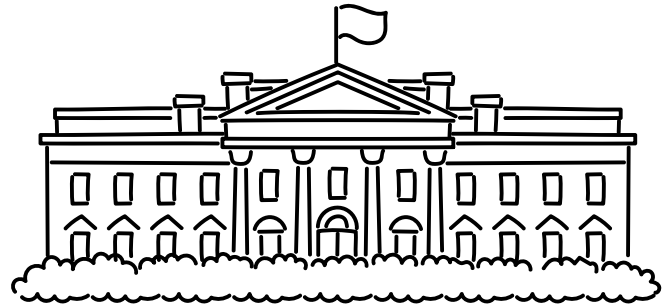
State and Local Elections

- Similar to the federal government, state and local governments often include legislative, executive, and judicial offices.
- Local government often also has a city or town council where members are voted to serve. To learn more about what these offices can entail, click here.
- These elections can also include ballot initiatives about proposed changes to state or local laws.
- These elections take place any year at various times throughout the year. Click here to find out when the next election is in your state.

How to Vote
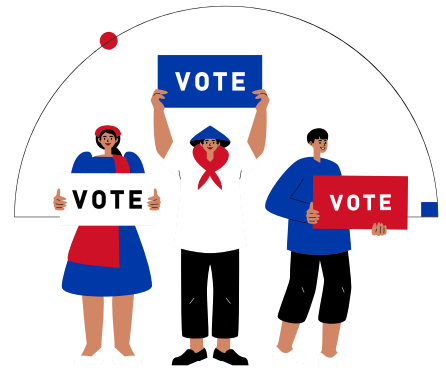
Casting your Ballot

Early voting
1. In person: Check if your state allows early in-person voting.
2. Mail and absentee voting have been shown to make it easier for people to vote, which increases voter participation. Check to see if you're eligible to vote by mail in your state.
    a. Return a mail in ballot through the mail: completely fill out the return envelope and check to see if a postage stamp is needed to send it or if postage is included
    b. Return a mail in ballot to a ballot box: drop your ballot, which does not need to be stamped, at your nearest ballot box which can be found here local election office.

Voting in person on Voting Day
   a. Know your polling location as well as the opening and closing times for voting here.
   b. Ensure you have the proper identification to vote here.
   c. Ensure you have any notes or documentation that will help you to make your decision. You can bring your notes, voter guide, or a sample ballot to the voting booth so you do not have to memorize your choices. Some polling places restrict cell phone use, so bring paper copies. Also, check the rules with your local election office before you go.
       i. Know your voting rights:
            1. No one can threaten or intimidate you during the voting process
            2. Voting after the polls if you are in line prior to closing
            3. No one can deny or restrict voting rights because of a citizen's race, color, or membership in a language minority group
            4. For voters with disabilities, states must ensure that they have a full and equal opportunity to vote
                a. If any of these rights are denied, you can report a complaint to the DOJ

How to Vote

Before Casting Your Vote

Register to vote

Each state and territory sets its own rules for voter registration.

You may be able to:

- Register online: Most states offer online registration. Select your state or territory to find out if you can register online.
- Register by mail: You can download and print the National Mail Voter Registration Form for use in every state except New Hampshire, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The form is available in many languages.
- Register in person: You can register in person at your state or local election office or your state motor vehicles office.

In some states, you must register to vote 30 days prior to Election Day, while others you can register on Election Day. You can find voter registration deadlines in your state.

How your vote aligns with values and affects your community

- Decide which issues you care about and the qualities that you want in an elected official. This can include things such as the positions they take on the issues you care about as well as the experiences and qualities they bring to office (LWV).
- Then see where candidates and their parties stand on these issues and how they align with these characteristics by:
  - Using VOTE411.org to see races and candidates on your ballot as well as detailed information on candidates and ballot initiatives.
  - Examining campaign websites, social media content, and materials including endorsements and campaign contributions.
- Learn where the candidates' parties stand:
  - Democratic Party
  - The Republican National Committee
  - Libertarian Party
  - Green Party
- Voter guides provide background information on candidates and ballot measures. Find online voter guides by home address nationwide.
- Sample Ballots show you the elections, candidates, and ballot measures that would be printed on your actual ballot
  - You can bring your notes, voter guide, or a sample ballot to the voting booth so you do not have to memorize your choices. Some polling places restrict cell phone use, so bring paper copies. Also, check the rules with your local election office before you go.

Civil Rights

Civil rights are personal rights guaranteed and protected by the Constitution and federal laws passed by Congress. They protect people specifically from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, age, religion, and sex in settings like housing, the workplace, school, voting, business, healthcare, public spaces.

14th Amendment

Section 1: Anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen of the United States. The State cannot deprive a person of life, liberty, property, or equal protections of the law without due process of the law.

Section 3: No one can run for office that has engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the country or has aided enemies of the country, but Congress may vote to allow this person to run for office.

The Civil Rights Act (1964)

- Prohibits discrimination in public spaces
- Required schools and other public facilities to integrate, threatening to withhold federal funding if states did not comply
- Made employment discrimination illegal on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or age

The Americans with Disabilites Act (1990)

- Prohibits discrimination against people with a wide variety of disabilities
- Guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities in everyday activities such as employment, purchasing goods and services, and participating in government programs by requiring locations open to the public to comply with ADA requirements

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Staying Safe in Uncertain Times

The next few pages include a curated selection of strategies for promoting physical, psychological and relationship safety given our current context. Also included are important tips for personal protections, so you and loved ones can take steps to mitigate the risk of harm.

Ensuring and cultivating safety can be complex and varies depending on your social position in relation to your social context. Accessing resources and safe spaces can present barriers to safety for some, and safety for a community will look different than taking steps to ensure the safety of an organization or an individual

Political tension can be a pervasive force that can impede our daily experiences by perpetuating feelings of frustration, fear, uncertainty, and desperation. If not managed effectively, exposure to this type of prolonged stress can have a significant impact on your mind and body. These impacts can extend beyond ourselves, and over time may begin to influence our relationships, work, and other domains of life. During times of political uncertainty, it can feel as though our individual and collective futures are out of our control. It can be helpful to remember that we still hold the power to support ourselves, our community, and those we care about.

Many of the foundational political, social, and cultural contexts we have come to rely on in the history of the United States are currently being transformed or attacked. It is normal to feel concerned for the safety of yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

This section aims to provide strategies for promoting safety in different domains so that together we can implement strategies to sustainably navigate this difficult time while also engaging in social change.

We define safety as the condition of being protected from harm. Harm can take many forms and can be explicit or implicit. Under an administration that aims to normalize oppression and the dehumanization of large groups of people, this harm can present physical, psychological, and relationship challenges.

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Strategies to Promote Safety

Psychological

- Identify the boundaries that work for you about how much time you spend focusing on the news and social media and implement limits
- Actively find ways to feel hope and joy
- Actively make time for in-person activities or time outdoors away from the news and social media
- Focus on what you can control and/or influence
- Find time to identify sources of hope or inspiration that you connect to
- Put your feelings into action through advocacy
- Use coping skills when needed to manage overwhelming emotions
- If your emotions are impacting how you function in your daily life, reach out for help whether it be to a friend, a relative, religious leader, and/or mental health professional. If none of these options are available to you at the moment, call, text, or chat online with the 988 Crisis Hotline which can be reached 24/7. There are options for Veterans, Spanish language speakers and the deaf or hard of hearing as well.
- You can find a therapist here.

Physical

- Get a good night's rest
- Eat nutritious food and drink plenty of water to fuel your body and brain
- Move your body everyday
- Be aware that stress can take a toll on your physical health and take precautions to limit this stress

Relationship

- Set boundaries about having conversations about current events
- Although conversations about current events are important, an abundance of arguments and distressing topics are not helpful for relationships, limit them when necessary
- Connect with other people who are experiencing similar issues/worries
- Connect with people in your community through social activities, classes, groups, etc.

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Technology and Personal Information

- Set passwords and limit biometric logins. Turn off location sharing for sensitive apps, especially period trackers, immigration help apps, or organizing platforms.
- Minimize your digital footprint by removing personal identifying information, such as address and birthdate from social media accounts
- Take steps to protect your privacy by learning how to mitigate possibility of becoming a victim of doxxing. Learn more here.
- Use messaging and other applications that use end-to-end encryption, such as Signal which you can download for free from the app store. It also has group chat functions, desktop app, and video conferencing for small groups.

Safeguard Critical Documents

- Obtain an official paper copy of your birth certificate and other documents such as marriage and death certificates from your state's registry of vital records or health department.
- Have important identification documents such as your birth certificate, passport, and social security number on hand and stored somewhere safe but easily accessible.
- Download and file personal online information such as student loan records, Social Security earnings, and income tax returns

Birthright Citizenship

- Obtain U.S. birth certificates or passports
  - If your child was born in the U.S., apply for their passport immediately to document status
  - If there is a delay in getting a birth certificate, follow up with the Department of Health or local vital records office
- Consult an immigration attorney if you are in a mixed-status family

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Immigration

- Secure or renew legal status
  - If you are eligible, apply or renew DACA, TPS, asylum, or your green card
  - Identify a local immigrant rights organization and save their contact information in case of emergency
  - Gather and securely store documents such as your passport, ID, employment history, and school records
  - Submit applications before any executive order rolls back protections
- Create an emergency family plan. Here is an example.
  - Include: power of attorney, school pick up plan, and custody arrangements for children in case something happens to the parents
- Know your rights
  - Learn and teach "Know Your Rights" material, such as not opening the door if ICE agents arrive, asking for a warrant signed by a judge, and understanding your right to remain silent
  - Carry a "Know Your Rights" red card with your rights in multiple languages

Student Loans

- Track and save documentation
  - Keep copies of payment history, Income-Driven Repayment confirmations, and Public Service Loan Forgiveness records

Social Security and Retirement

- Create a MySocialSecurity account
  - Check your earnings and make sure your records are accurate
  - Download and/or print a copy

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Health Insurance and Healthcare

- Document medical needs
  - Keep records of diagnoses, prescriptions, and doctors in case you need to appeal lost coverage.

LGBTQIA+ Rights

- Update legal documents
  - Change name/gender on passports, driver's licenses, and Social Security while current policies still allow
- Know your state laws
  - Some states have strong protections even if federal ones change
- Connect to LGBTQIA+ Legal Networks
  - Lambda Legal and Transgender Law center offer toolkits and representation
- Support and know local networks
  - Abortion funds and legal defense organizations can help if laws change quickly

Housing and Unhoused Rights

- Know your local tenant rights
  - Research eviction laws, rent control rules, and legal aid hotlines in your area.
- Apply for affordable housing
  - Sign up for alerts from housing authorities and nonprofit developers.
- Create a documentation folder
  - Include ID, lease, utilities, and rental payment history - this is helpful for future housing applications

Civil Rights and Policing

- Record interactions with law enforcement
  - Use apps such as "Mobile Justice" or keep your camera ready
- Know local legal aid resources
  - Memorize or write down contact information for public defenders or legal clinics - don't rely on your phone contacts list

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Child Welfare and Education

- Request your child's IEP and 504 plan
    - Keep hard copies and digital scans in a secure file
    - Learn how to advocate for your child's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- For families with mixed-status
    - Create an emergency family plan for ICE intervention or appearance at school.
    - Refer back to the Immigration safety section above for specifics on what should be included in the family plan
- Track school changes and speak at board meetings
    - Organize with parent groups or join local education coalitions
    - Ensure teacher and support staff know about policy changes that impact students' support services received
- Know alternative education options
    - Identify inclusive charter schools, homeschooling pods, or co-ops that align with your values if local policies become harmful

Mental Health Services

- Get evaluations and diagnoses documented now
    - This helps in qualifying for support services later.
- Find sliding scale or peer-led support networks
    - Build relationships with local clinics, therapists, and mutual aid mental health collectives.
- Understand emergency rights
    - Know your rights under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) and how to advocate during a crisis.

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Climate and Environmental Justice

- Join or support local environmental justice groups
  - Especially in frontline communities (Black, Indigenous, low-income, immigrant)
- Install air and water quality monitors if possible
  - Track data to document environmental harm (especially near polluting industries or fracking).
- Stay informed on local hazards
  - Subscribe to alerts for wildfires, air quality, and water safety.

Disaster Response and FEMA Aid

- Create a household emergency plan
  - Include evacuation routes, supply kits, and communication trees
  - Write down contact information of family members, attorneys, and other key numbers will you need if you don't have access to your phone
- Stock up on food, medication, water purification straws, and other supplies you may need if supply chains are disrupted and purchase solar chargers
- Register for local emergency alerts
  - Go to your city or county's emergency management website.
- Make copies of legal ID's and insurance information
  - Keep them waterproof and ready to go in case of an emergency
- Pack a Go-Bag with medication, copies of important documents, toiletries, and extra clothing, cash, and credit cards, extra battery and cell chargers, etc.

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

More on Digital Safety

- Create strong passwords and store them safely
- Choose a password manager to manage multiple complex passwords
- Utilize two-factor authentication when possible
- Choose fictional answers for security questions
- Make a habit of using encryption methods to protect your device and data. End-to-end encryption can defend you against surveillance by bad actors
- Create a secure device to store your most sensitive data
- Use a secure browser such as Firefox or Brave
- Use end-to-end encryption platforms like Signal to communicate with others
- Share digital safety tips with others

Developing a Data Security Plan

- Identify and make a list of information you value and want to protect (examples include emails, photos, text messages, etc.)
- Identify what adversaries you want to protect this information from (examples include individuals, government, corporations, etc.)
- Understand the risk of threat against your identified assets
- Identify your resources such as encryption methods, for mitigating threats to assets and reducing risk

Staying Safe in Uncertain Times
Personal Protections

There are many practices that can be used to enhance safety through personal protection and decrease the risk of harm imposed by ill-intentioned actors.

Social Media Safety

- Do not use your legal name if you do not want to
- Do not provide more information than necessary when registering for social media accounts
- Anything you post on social media is data that can be tracked. Be aware of metadata your posts may contain as this provides additional information about you.
  - Metadata is data that describes a piece of information, apart from the information itself. An example of this would be the time and place a photo was taken, which is separate from the photo itself.
- Be careful about what you post on social media and your profile picture
- Choose a strong password
- Enable two-factor authentication
- Choose false password recovery answers. Honest answers might be identified through gathering information from social media.
- Be aware of your social media's privacy policy
- Change your privacy settings to match the level of security you need
- Keep different account identities separate, by using photos you have not used anywhere else

Protecting your digital privacy is essential to keeping your personal conversations, online activity, and daily habits out of the hands of those who might use them to harm, target, or track you. Simple steps like using strong passwords, turning on two-factor authentication, and only installing trusted apps and software can go a long way in keeping your devices and accounts secure from hacking or surveillance. It's also important to be cautious about what you share on social media—information like your location, contacts, or political beliefs can be quietly collected and misused by the government or others acting in bad faith.

Resources

Below are some resources to find more information about civic engagement and personal protections.

Civic Engagement

- The Importance of Civic Engagement
- Get Out the Vote: Cultivating Civic Engagement in Youth and Adults
- 5 Ways to Be an Engaged Citizen (Besides Voting)
- Citizen University
- The All-America Conversations Toolkit
- Positive Health Effects of Being Civically Engaged
- The Importance of Civic Engagement
- Activism 101 from Simmons University
- Attending a Protest
- Know Your Rights under the Bill of Rights
- U.S. is Added to Human Rights Watchlist Article
- Know Your Rights Red Card
- Civil Unrest Resources

Personal Protections

- Can Border Agents Search Your Electronics?
- Privacy for Students
- Digital Security Checklists for Activists
- Electronic Frontier Foundation
- Stress Effects on the Body
- The Cost of Daily Politics
- The Impact of Election Stress: Is Political Anxiety Harming Your Health?
- Practicing Self-Care During Uncertain Times
- Tips for Preparedness, Peaceful Protesting, and Safety
- Politics Stressing You Out? Five Steps to Feel Better
- Trevor Project - LGBTQ+ Support and Community Building
- Politics Seep into Daily Life, Negatively Affecting Mental Health
- Not Fake News: Toxic Consequences of the Trump Stress Effect
- USCRI Know Your Rights and Safety Planning
- Election Self-Care Kit
- Community Care Post Election Toolkit - Wake Forest University
- Resource Hub for Higher Education
- Mass Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

Media Literacy 101

For social change makers, media literacy, including digital media, is a critical skill, both in holding well-informed opinions about policy proposals and in influencing others. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has created the following fact sheet (pages 47-48) about media literacy and online critical thinking.

Media Literacy & Critical Thinking Online
Tools and Resources

Overview

Digital media literacy (also known as online critical thinking skills) is vital to the safety, security, health, and well-being of individuals and communities. The proliferation of social media and applications has increased the volume of information we are exposed to everyday. With the public health measures imposed as a result of COVID-19, individuals are spending more time online – increasing the risk of being exposed to false or misleading information. Becoming digital media literate can help individuals build resiliency and reduce the risk of radicalizing to violence.

Digital media literacy addresses three types of online content:

True / False

?
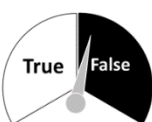
Misinformation *is false, but not created or shared with the intention of causing harm.*

Malinformation *is based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate.*

Disinformation *is deliberately created to mislead, harm, or manipulate a person, social group, organization, or country.*

Creating or spreading this type of online content can undermine public confidence in our system of government and its institutions. However, communities and individuals can equip themselves with effective tools, knowledge, and resources that do not impede the free flow of reliable information – a cornerstone of a healthy and functioning society. Every individual plays an important role in recognizing and building resilience to false and harmful narratives.

Key Steps for Digital Media Literacy

Modern technology continues to make the spread of propaganda and the manipulation of information easier. Social media and traditional news media sources can be both victims and perpetrators of spreading misinformation and disinformation. There are, however, basic steps that every individual can take to identify and mitigate these harmful narratives.

Consider the source	Is this a well-known or trusted news outlet, and are they reputable for the subject at hand?
Triple check the source	Sites designed to spread false information often try to mimic legitimate news sources. Check the name, logo, and "About" section to verify.
Identify the author	Misleading and false articles often do not include authors. If authors are listed, do a quick search to see if they are trusted sources.
Inspect the URL	Webpages that notoriously spread disinformation often have odd web domain names that try to imitate real sources (e.g. nbcnews.**com.co**)
Examine spelling and punctuation	Webpages with misspelled words, unnecessary ALL CAPS, poor grammar, and excessive punctuation are often unreliable.
Seek alternative viewpoints	Search for other articles and sources on the same topic. If there are limited or no results, or you find contradicting information, you may want to do further research and fact-checking.
Think before you share	Damaging disinformation spreads quickly via shared posts. Emotional and sensitive topics are often used to manipulate readers into sharing without thinking. Review the above steps and be wary of content that seeks to sow discord and provoke audiences.

Media Literacy & Critical Thinking Online

Resource	Description
DHS Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA): **COVID-19 Disinformation Toolkit: "We're in This Together. Disinformation Stops With You."**	This resource is designed to help State, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) officials bring awareness to misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories appearing online related to COVID-19's origin, scale, government response, prevention and treatment. Each product was designed to be tailored with local government websites and logos. https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/SLTTCOVIDToolkit_FINAL_508.pdf
Center for Disease Control's: **Social Media Toolkit**	Using social media tools has become an effective way to expand reach, foster engagement and increase access to credible, science-based health messages. This resource provides an overview of social media features, strategies, and an evaluation worksheet to promote best practices in digital messaging. https://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/pdf/socialmediatoolkit_bm.pdf
The Department of Education's **Teaching Skills that Matter: Digital Literacy**	The Department of Education's Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) hosts a suite of resources on digital literacy to include best practices, lesson plans on social media and workplace safety, and project- and problem-based learning templates. https://lincs.ed.gov/state-resources/federal-initiatives/teaching-skills-matter-adult-education/digital-literacy
DHS Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA): **"Think Before You Link"**	This resource recognizes that memes and headlines on social media can provoke passionate responses and provides guidance on how to reevaluate before sharing potentially harmful or misleading content. https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_1115_cisa_nrmc-Think-Before-You-Link_1.pdf
DHS Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA): **"Resilience Series Graphic Novels"**	First in the series, Real Fake demonstrates how threat actors capitalize on political and social issues (especially around election cycles) to stealthily plant doubt in the minds of targeted audiences and steer their opinion. https://www.cisa.gov/cfi-resilience-series-graphic-novels

The following sources are provided for informational purposes only as examples of digital literacy information that colleges and universities may also provide. There may be comparable information and resources offered by your local or state college or university.

Stanford University's "Civic Online Reasoning"	The Civic Online Reasoning (COR) curriculum provides free lesson plans and assessments to help teach students how to effectively evaluate online information. https://cor.stanford.edu/
American University's Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era: A Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization	This comprehensive guide for parents and caregivers teaches readers what online radicalization is, how to recognize warning signs that a child may have been exposed to harmful content, how to engage with children and mitigate online risks, and where to find additional help.https://www.american.edu/centers/university-excellence/upload/splc_peril_covid_parents_guide_jan_2021_1-2.pdf

Additional Sources: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ia/ia_combatting-targeted-disinformation-campaigns.pdf

ENGAGE

Advocacy Strategies and Tools for Social Change

Advocacy is a critical tool for working towards social change and it requires skills and knowledge to leverage effectively. The following materials (pages 29-82) were developed by Philabundance, a non-profit hunger relief organization. While the primary intervention focus of the Agency Advocacy Toolkit is hunger relief, the strategies, tools and educational materials can be applied more broadly.

Agency
ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

PHILABUNDANCE

ENGAGE

Advocacy Strategies and Tools for Social Change

Advocacy is a critical tool for working towards social change and it requires skills and knowledge to leverage effectively. The following materials (pages 51-103) were developed by Philabundance, a non-profit hunger relief organization. While the primary intervention focus of the Agency Advocacy Toolkit is hunger relief, the strategies, tools and educational materials can be applied more broadly.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

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

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

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

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS TOOLKIT

THIS TOOLKIT IS DIVIDED INTO FIVE MAIN SECTIONS:

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

2. **Food Aid Legislation**
   A summary of the major pieces of food aid legislation at the national and state level.

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

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

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

ADVOCACY 101

ADVOCACY 101

WHAT IS ADVOCACY

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

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

DON'T BE
Silent

WHAT DOES ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

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

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

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

---

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

ADVOCACY 101

FAST ADVOCACY

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

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

YOU HAVE THE
Time!
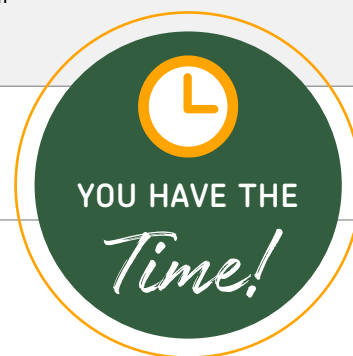
[1]Adapted from "Advocating For Advocacy" by Josh Blair

ADVOCACY 101

WHY SHOULD I ADVOCATE?

1. ADVOCACY IS EFFECTIVE

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

Bar chart legend: ■ A LOT OF POSITIVE INFLUENCE ■ SOME INFLUENCE

Categories (top to bottom):
- IN-PERSON VISITS FROM CONSTITUENTS
- CONTACT FROM A CONSTITUENT WHO REPRESENTS OTHER CONSTITUENTS
- INDIVIDUALIZED POSTAL LETTERS
- INDIVIDUALIZED EMAIL MESSAGES
- PHONE CALLS
- COMMENTS DURING A TELEPHONE TOWN HALL
- VISIT FROM A LOBBYIST
- NEWS EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENT OF AN ISSUE
- INDIVIDUALIZED FAXES
- FORM POSTAL LETTERS
- FORM EMAIL MESSAGES
- POSTCARDS
- COMMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES
- FORM FAXES

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

> " All legislation should be informed by constituents, whether directly through advocacy or indirectly through their experiences. In my office, everyone answers the phones, everyone interacts with constituents who walk in the door, and I personally respond to my own emails. If we hear the same story over and over from constituents, that means there is a systemic problem that needs a legislative response. "
>
> *-Hon. Donna Bullock, PA House Representative, District 195*

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

ADVOCACY 101

WHY SHOULD I ADVOCATE? (CONT.)

2. CUTS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS WOULD BE DEVASTATING

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

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

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

3. WE HAVE SEEN ADVOCACY WORK

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

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

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

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

> "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
>
> — Margaret Mead

ADVOCACY 101

ARE NONPROFITS ALLOWED TO ADVOCATE?

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING VS. CAMPAIGNING

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

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

1. **Direct Lobbying** - Any form of communication with a member or staff of a legislative body that is intended to influence legislation. To be considered direct lobbying, a communication needs two parts:

    • Reference to specific legislation.

    • Reflect a view on the legislation.

2. **Grassroots Lobbying** - Essentially, efforts to encourage the general public to participate in direct lobbying. To be considered grassroots lobbying, a communication needs three parts:

    • Refer to specific legislation.

    • Reflect a view on the legislation.

    • Include a "call to action" - meaning anything that instructs someone to contact a legislator, provides the contact information for a legislator, or provides a mechanism to contact a legislator, such as a webform or a postcard.

TAKE AWAYS

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

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

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

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

ADVOCACY 101

EXACTLY HOW MUCH LOBBYING CAN I DO?

ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING VS. CAMPAIGNING

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

1. **Default - Insubstantial Part Test** - The IRS guidelines for nonprofit organization states, "no substantial part of a charity's activities…be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation." What "substantial" means has not been clearly defined, but includes staff time, budget, volunteer time, and other activities. Most experts recommend 3-5% of an organization's activities can safely be devoted to lobbying actions.

2. **501(h) Election** - Using the 501(h) election, nonprofits with budgets under $500,000 can spend up to 20% of their budget on lobbying purposes, and 25% of their allowed lobbying budget can be used for grassroots lobbying. The percentage allowed decreases as the organizational budget increases, with the maximum allowed lobbying budget set at $1,000,000. Under the 501(h) election, only monetary expenses are counted towards your lobbying budget, meaning volunteers or other non-expense resources can be used without limit.

   • Taking the 501(h) Election - In order to be held to these more specific lobbying restrictions, you need to file a very simple form: "Form 5768 - Election/Revocation of Election by an Eligible Section 501(c)(3) Organization to Make Expenditures to Influence Legislation" (https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f5768.pdf)

   • After filing the 501(h) form - You are required to keep track of the total amount of money you spend each year on lobbying efforts, and report your totals on IRS form 990, Schedule C (https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990sc.pdf)

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

LOBBYING LIMIT EXAMPLES

ADVOCACY 101

WHO ARE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS?

FEDERAL

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

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

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

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

STATE

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

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

LOCAL

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

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

ADVOCACY 101

YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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

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

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

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISTLATION

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION: THE FARM BILL
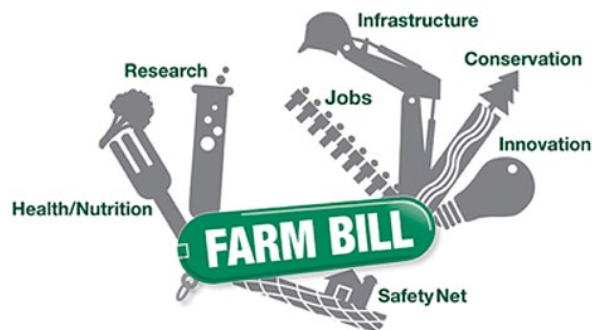
"It's like a Swiss Army knife."

Image courtesy of the USDA
- President Obama 2/7/14

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

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

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

Image Source: USDA, https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/16058392545

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

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

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

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

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION

PENNSYLVANIA SPECIFIC

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

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

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

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

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

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORIES & DATA

BUILDING YOUR CASE

BALANCING STORIES & DATA

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

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

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

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

CENTERING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

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

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

STORY COLLECTION

WHY COLLECT STORIES?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORY COLLECTION QUESTIONS

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

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

- What is your name? What is your age and gender? Where do you live (state, city, neighborhood)?

- Can you tell me about yourself and your household? Who lives with you? What is the employment status of household members? What are their ages? How is their health? Are they veterans or in the military?

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

- Do you receive SNAP each month? If so, how long have you been receiving SNAP for?

- Is this the first time you've needed SNAP? What events happened in your life that led you to seek food assistance? What alternative sources of help did you seek first before seeking SNAP?

- What would happen to you and your family is SNAP was not here to help? Where would they go for assistance (church, family, friends), and would that assistance be available?

- Are your SNAP benefits enough to feed your family? Do they last all month or do they run out during the month? How do you fill the gap if SNAP isn't enough (food pantries, church, friends, family, etc.)? How long do your benefits last each month?

- How has participation in SNAP helped you/your family? Does it mean you are able to pay other bills? Has it impacted the foods you choose to eat?

- What would you say to lawmakers who are considering cutting SNAP and other food assistance programs in order to balance the budget?

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

Adapted from Feeding America's "SNAP Client Stories Best Practices"

BUILDING YOUR CASE

STORY COLLECTION BEST PRACTICES

✓ BE RESPECTFUL

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

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

✓ AVOID REINFORCING STEREOTYPES

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

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

✓ CONSENT AND PERMISSION FORMS

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

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

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

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PHOTO RELEASE FORM

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

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

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

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Phone #: _____

Parent or other Legal Guardian Printed: _____

Parent or other Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____   **Date of birth:** _____

BUILDING YOUR CASE

USING DATA

MATCHING DATA TO STORIES

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

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

12x

SNAP provides 12 times more meals than food banks

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

BUILDING YOUR CASE

RELIABLE DATA SOURCES

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

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

1. **Feeding America** - Feeding America annually releases their Map the Meal Gap study, which provides food insecurity estimates by state, county, and congressional districts.

   http://map.feedingamerica.org

2. **Food Research Action Center (FRAC)** - FRAC publishes data related to many different food aid programs, including SNAP and child nutrition programs, as well as tools to visualize the data easily.

   http://frac.org/research

3. **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)** - CBPP publishes detailed analyses of state and federal policies that impact poverty and hunger.

   https://cbpp.org

4. **Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger** - The Coalition Against Hunger publishes data about the impact of the SNAP program by county or congressional district in Pennsylvania. They include information about the economic impact of SNAP, as well as who is being reached by the program.

   https://www.hungercoalition.org/ProtectSNAP/

5. **U.S. Census (American Community Survey)** - The U.S. Census annually publishes data covering a huge array of topics, including information about poverty and SNAP participation by demographic group in various geographic areas.

   https://factfinder.census.gov/

6. **USDA - Food Access Research Atlas** - The USDA publishes data and visualization tools to show food deserts, or areas with large low-income populations and low-access to places to buy food.

   https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/

7. **Your Organization/Coalition** - If your organization has surveyed clients, or if you are a part of a coalition with other organizations that have surveyed or collected data related to your services, consider including that data in your advocacy efforts.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PENNSYLVANIA HUNGER & SNAP DATA

PENNSYLVANIA HUNGER & SNAP					
Data	Bucks	Chester	Delaware	Montgomery	Philadelphia
Population[4]	626,399	516,312	563,402	821,725	1,567,862
Food Insecure Population[5]	55,120	42,990	73,940	78,540	325,940
Food Insecurity Rate[5]	8.8%	8.4%	13.2%	9.7%	21%
Child Food Insecure Population[5]	17,950	15,020	18,540	22,650	72,310
Child Food Insecurity Rate[5]	13.2%	12.4%	14.6%	12.6%	20.9%
# of SNAP Recipients[4]	37,742	25,606	71,676	52,541	485,241
# of Child SNAP Recipients[4]	13,988	11,430	29,298	21,593	182,009
# of Senior SNAP Recipients[4]	6,404	3,528	8,681	8,038	69,144
Average Monthly SNAP Benefit[4]	$122.42	$118.72	$125.89	$123.51	$133.67
One Month Total SNAP Dollars (March 2017)[4]	$4,620,340	$3,039,899	$9,023,269	$6,489,257	$64,862,229
Annual Economic Activity Generated by SNAP (2016)[4]	$96.8 Million	$64.4 Million	$186.1 Million	$138 Million	$1.4 Billion

[4]March 2017 data, Coalition Against Hunger - Protect SNAP.
[5]Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2017.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

PENNSYLVANIA POVERTY DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

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

[6]U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
[7]U.S. Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics

BUILDING YOUR CASE

NEW JERSEY HUNGER & SNAP DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

NEW JERSEY HUNGER & SNAP				
Data	Burlington	Camden	Gloucester	Salem
Population[4]	449,619	513,095	291,238	65,149
Food Insecure Population[5]	47,210	64,650	30,580	8,730
Food Insecurity Rate[5]	10.5%	12.6%	10.5%	13.4%
Child Population	99,520	120,127	67,266	14,595
Food Insecure Child Population[5]	12,440	18,860	9,350	2,700
Food Insecurity Rate (Children)[5]	12.5%	15.7%	13.9%	18.5%
Total Households[6]	12.5%	185,722	104,762	24,255
Number of Households Receiving SNAP	9,060	23,725	8,808	3,022
Percent of Households Receiving SNAP[6]	5.5%	12.8%	8.4%	12.5%

[4]March 2017 data, Coalition Against Hunger - Protect SNAP.
[5]Gundersen, C., A. Dewey, A. Crumbaugh, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2017: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2017.

BUILDING YOUR CASE

NEW JERSEY POVERTY DATA

Poverty Related Data by County

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

[6]U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
[7]U.S. Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics

BUILDING YOUR CASE

THE POVERTY LINE

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

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

2018 POVERTY LINE (PL) BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE					
Household Size	**Poverty Line**	**138% PL**	**150% PL**	**185% PL**	**200% PL**
One	$12,140	$16,753	$18,120	$22,459	$24,280
Two	$16,460	22,715	$24,690	$30,451	$32,960
Three	$20,780	$28,676	$31,170	$38,443	$41,560
Four	$25,100	$34,638	$37,650	$46,435	$50,200
Five	$29,420	$40,600	$44,130	$54,427	$58,840
Six	$33,740	$46,561	$50,610	$62,419	$67,480
Seven	$38,060	$52,523	$57,090	$70,411	$76,120
Eight	$42,380	$58,484	$63,570	$78,403	$84,760

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

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

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

REQUEST/SCHEDULE THE MEETING

- Make your appointment 3-4 weeks in advance. On your elected official's website, they will either have a contact form, or information about scheduling a meeting. If you have a contact at the official's office, try reaching out to them to assist in scheduling a meeting.

- While scheduling the meeting, inform the staff of who you are, what organization you are representing, and what topic you are hoping to discuss with them.

- Be flexible! Try to make it easy for your elected official to meet with you, and be prepared for delays or cancellations.

- Consider whether you might know someone - a board member or volunteer maybe - who already has a relationship with the elected official and can make an introduction for you, and possibly attend the meeting.

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

- Invite other advocates! Bringing a coalition of diverse voices and experts on the issue can communicate the scope of the issue you are meeting about. Try to include people who use your program and have personal experiences with the issue you are meeting about. Because your time at the meeting will be limited, avoid bringing more than 4-5 other people.

- Write out your talking points, and practice them. You don't have to be a flawless public speaker to convey your message, but writing out the main points you are trying to get across can help you feel more prepared and get the most out of the meeting.

- If possible, send materials about your program and issue in advance, including data, stories, and fact sheets.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL (CONT.)

AT THE MEETING

- Bring printed copies of the materials you sent in advance.

- Don't be surprised or offended if you meet with staff rather than the representative. Staff meetings are incredibly valuable - they are the people the representative goes to before a vote!

- Be on time for your appointment. Be prepared, be polite, and be brief - you might only get fifteen minutes with the representative.

- At the beginning of the meeting, state who you are, who you represent, what you want to discuss, and what you want your elected official to do.

- Don't be surprised if your elected official does not know about your issue or program. Elected officials have to know about many issues and may specialize in areas unrelated to your work. Avoid overwhelming the elected official with information and detail.

- If you do not know the answer to a specific question, offer to find the answer and then forward the information to the elected official after the meeting. You want to emphasize that you are a resource for the elected official.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE MEETING

- If you feel comfortable, ask your elected official for some sort of commitment. If you are meeting before a vote, clearly ask them to vote the way you would like them to.

- Leave behind any materials about your issue or program, summarizing your points, ideally including your key points and ask. Make sure you leave either a business card or your contact information.

- Share any program information that might be helpful for their constituent services staff, such as information about your food distribution times and locations.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Follow up the meeting with a thank you note or email, thanking the elected official for their time. Be sure to re-state your position in this note.

- If the elected official asks for more information, get this information to them as soon as possible.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

HOSTING ELECTED OFFICIALS

WHY HOST AN ELECTED OFFICIAL?

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

SETTING UP THE EVENT OR PROGRAM

- **Inform attendees -** Try to give everyone, including staff, volunteers, and other attendees, advanced notice that an elected official is going to be attending the event or program. They may want to consider questions they would like to ask, and should be informed that there may be media and others present, which may impact whether they would like to attend. If there are people with experiences related to the issue, such as clients of your program or people with experience with food insecurity, ask if they would be comfortable talking to the elected official.

- **Invite others -** Having people representing a few different organizations present, even just to introduce themselves and show that they also care, can enhance the impact of a visit. These could be your traditional partners or other stakeholders that care about your issue but have a different perspective (e.g. health care providers, educators, grocers).

AT THE EVENT

- **Make Introductions -** If there are specific attendees at the event or program who you know are skilled at talking about a particular issue, or have a powerful and relevant story to share, try to introduce them to the visiting elected official. One of the biggest benefits of hosting an elected official is the opportunity for them to speak directly with people who would be impacted by legislation, rather than hear their stories indirectly.

- **Explain the context -** If you are hosting an elected official at a food distribution, for example, be prepared with information about how the program operates, which programs provide food or funding, and information about food insecurity in the area. If there is legislation or an upcoming vote that would impact the people at the event or the ability of the program to operate, make sure you inform them of this.

- **Have something prepared for them to do -** If there is a volunteer opportunity at the event, such as handing out or sorting food, be sure to extend an offer to participate. They may or may not accept, or may only participate for a few minutes and take photographs, but they should have the opportunity to take part at any time, as they may not be able to attend for very long

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

ABOUT SCHEDULING

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

U.S. Senate - Dates in Home District 2018	
DATES	
February 19-February 23 (Presidents' Day)	July 2-July 6 (Independence Day)
March 26-April 6	August 6-September 3 (Labor Day)
April 30-May 4	October 29-November 12 (Veterans Day)
May 28-June 1 (Memorial Day)	November 19-November 23 (Thanksgiving)

U.S. Senate - Dates in Home District 2018	
DATES	
January 22-January 26	July 30-August 31
February 19-February 23 (Presidents' Day)	September 17-September 21
March 26-April 6	October 15-November 9
May 1-May 4	November 19-November 23 (Thanksgiving)
May 28-June 31	December 17-December 21
July 2-July 6 (Independence Day)	

https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2018_schedule.htm

https://www.majorityleader.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/18-Monthly.pdf

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

WRITING TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

GENERAL TIPS

1. **Personal or form letters?** - Writing a personalized letter is significantly more impactful than signing on to or reproducing a form letter. Taking the time to write down a personal story about why you care about an issue can be much more persuasive than a form letter covering the basics, though form letters are still worth sending if that is what you have time for.

2. **When should you write a letter?** - Generally, the most important time to write a letter to a legislator is before a vote on a bill, so your input can be taken into consideration. However, it is also worthwhile to write to a legislator to either thank them or express concern after a vote, depending on which way they voted.

3. **Keep it brief** - Keep your letter under one page. Your letter will most likely be read by a staff member and summarized for your legislator. Focusing on a few brief points ensures that your purpose for writing is clear.

KEY POINTS TO INCLUDE

1. **Who are you writing to?** - Open your letter with a greeting. If you are writing to a Senator, "Dear Senator ____" will work. If you are writing to a Representative, "Dear Representative ___" will work.

2. **Who are you?** - Identify yourself early on in the letter as a constituent of the person you are writing to. If you are representing an organization or an agency, identify yourself in this way as well.

3. **What are you writing about?** - Try to be as specific as possible. If you are writing about a specific bill or piece of legislation, include the name or bill number in the first paragraph of your letter. Asking a legislator to "fight hunger" gives them leeway to interpret your ask many different ways, but asking a legislator to, for example, vote for "The Improving Child Nutrition Integrity and Access Act of 2016" can only be interpreted one way.

   If you are writing after a vote to express thanks or concern over the way a legislator voted, the same applies. Be as clear as possible in what you are thanking or criticizing them for.

4. **Why is this important to you?** - How will this bill positively or negatively impact you or your community? If you can, include both data and a story.

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

EXAMPLE LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

LETTER

_____ (Date)

Dear Senator _____ (or Rep. _____)

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Your name,
Address
Phone Number
Email Address

EXPLANATION

1. Today's date

2. Who you are writing to

3. What you are writing about

4. Who you are

5. Why this is important to you

6. A personal connection to the issue.

7. Clearly restating your ask

8. Formal farewell

9. Your name and contact information

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CALLING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

GENERAL TIPS

1. **Keep it brief -** Your call should be somewhere between 30 seconds and one minute. Your goal is to state who you are, what issue you're calling about, why you care about it, and what you would like the person you're calling to do. Limiting yourself to one to two sentences on each of these points will help you keep the call clear and on topic.

2. **Be kind -** Most likely, you are going to be speaking with a staff member at the office who takes calls from constituents all day. Yelling or making their job unpleasant can get your call discounted. Be polite but firm with your requests.

3. **Write out a script -** Writing down what you're planning to say, or even just a few bullet points about the subject, can be very helpful to make sure you and the staff member get the most out of your call.

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. **Federal -** To reach a member of Congress via phone, you can call the United States Capitol switchboard at: (202) 224-3121. You will be connected to a switchboard operator who can connect you to your requested elected official's office.

2. **State:**

   - **For Pennsylvania**, you can find contact information for your representatives at: http://www.legis.state.pa.us/ cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/#address

   - **For New Jersey**, you can find contact information for your representatives at: http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/ members/legsearch.asp

SAMPLE SCRIPT

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

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

Thank you for your time and attention."

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

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

MAKING YOUR PERSONAL CALL SCRIPT

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

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

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How does this legislation or issue affect you personally?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Adapted from "Call The Halls" by Emily Ellsworth

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

GRASSROOTS AND GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY	GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY
One of the most effective and often underused strategies available to nonprofits is grassroots advocacy. Generally defined as "the basic source of support from the ground up," grassroots advocacy includes organizing, mobilizing, and engaging the public to advocate for themselves. The value of this form of advocacy is that it is driven by the people. It is grounded in the belief that people matter and that their collective voices are powerful in influencing elected officials and in shaping policies at all levels of government.[4]	Grasstops are activists or members of an organization or geographic area that have a high professional and/or public profile, may be part of the "political family" for a decision maker, and can raise public attention or influence decision makers through established connections. For example, an organization's board members and founders, community leaders, and nationally recognized individuals (including experts, professionals, etc.) constitute potential grasstops advocates. Grasstops advocates can reinforce grassroots action, move an issue into the spotlight, and carry a message between the general public and more powerful targets. [5]

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

ENGAGING GRASSTOPS ADVOCATES

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

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

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

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[4]http://www.gih.org/files/usrdoc/Grassroots_Advocacy_Sunflower_Foundation_November_2010.pdf
[5]https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/Tip-Sheet-for-Working-with-Grasstops.pdf

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

GRASSROOTS AND GRASSTOPS ADVOCACY

SOCIAL MEDIA

Does your organization have a Facebook page? Or Twitter? Or Instagram? All of these, and other social media pages, can be excellent tools to engage those around you in advocacy. One post with relatively little effort can reach a wide audience that may not otherwise know about the issue or how they could take action.
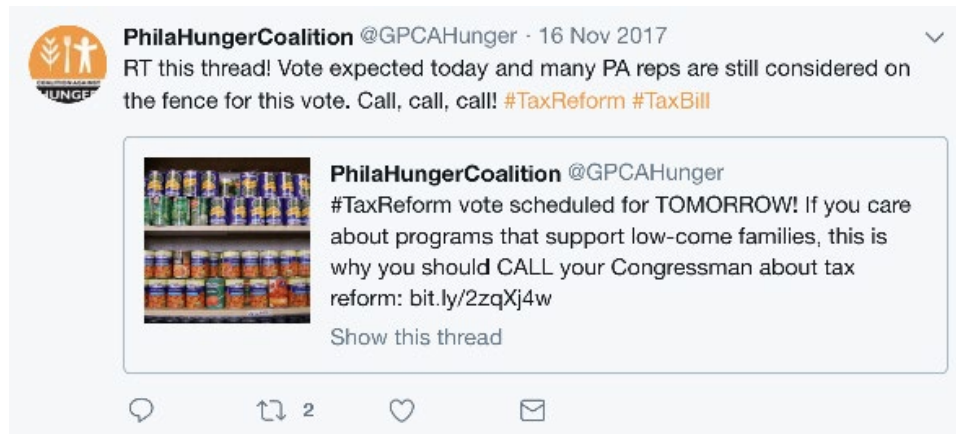
This tweet from the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger shows how short and simple an effective call to action can be. Consider sharing content from other organizations as an easy start.

BUILDING A MAILING LIST

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

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

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

WHEN IN DOUBT, REFER!

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

philabundance.org/advocate/#advo-alerts

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

ADVOCACY CONTACT LIST SIGN–UP

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

Contacts		
NAME	**EMAIL ADDRESS**	**Phone Number**

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

WHY ENGAGE CLIENTS IN ADVOCACY?

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

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

HOW CAN WE ENGAGE CLIENTS IN ADVOCACY?

• Talk to people who use your program about the issues they care about. Advocacy efforts on behalf of your organization should be representative of the interests of the people you serve.

• Encourage people who use your program to directly contact legislators, and offer to pass their stories or comments to legislators if they would rather not do it themselves. If they would like to contact a legislator but aren't sure how, provide them with relevant instructions. If you are meeting with a legislator or their staff, consider inviting someone who uses your program to attend with you and share their thoughts.

• Ensure that your advocacy efforts are communicated in a way that your clients will receive and understand them. This could mean putting together a flyer to put in food packages, talking to people directly, or sending out an email, depending on who you serve. If possible, strive to make information or materials available in whatever languages are commonly spoken by people at your program.

• Seek and encourage feedback. Are your clients happy with your advocacy efforts? Are there ways they would like to be involved that haven't been provided? By openly talking about your advocacy and being available to receive feedback you can work to make sure your advocacy efforts best represent the people you serve.

---

[6]Pedulla, David. Advocating for Change

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

VOTER REGISTRATION

WHY VOTER REGISTRATION?

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

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

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

STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE VOTING

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

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

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

• https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx

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

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

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

SHOULD I DESIGN MY OWN ADVOCACY PLAN?

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

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

Philabundance
- http://www.philabundance.org/advocate/\#advo-alerts

Feeding America:
- http://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/

Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger
- https://hungercoalition.salsalabs.org/advocacyalerts/index.html

Food Research and Action Center
- http://frac.org/subscribe-to-enews

New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition
- https://cfanj.org/njahc-home/enewssignup/

DESIGNING YOUR OWN PLAN

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

There is no one size fits all plan for advocacy!

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

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

SET A SMART PLAN

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

ADVOCATING WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION

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

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

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

• **Organization Leadership** - Do you have a board of directors, and are they active in decision making? What about an executive director or CEO? Depending on their level of involvement, they may want to sign off on an official advocacy plan, or participate in setting organizational advocacy priorities. Working with leadership on developing an advocacy policy can also encourage them to get involved, and they could potentially be strong allies in your efforts.

• **Funders** - If you are an organization that relies on donors or outside funding to operate, you need to consider what impact taking a stance could have on your organization, and if you will alienate any current or potential donors. If you have staff or volunteers leading fundraising or development efforts for your organization they should be involved in conversations about potentially controversial advocacy topics.

• **The People You Serve** - As an organization that addresses hunger and food insecurity, be careful that you don't lose sight of the people who you serve in favor of appealing to leadership or funders. Advocating within an organization can be a balancing act, but the needs of the people you serve should be central to your organization's advocacy efforts.

• **You** (**Or Whoever Will Be Leading Advocacy Efforts)** - Don't bite off more than you can chew with your plan. If you will be the one taking the actual advocacy actions laid out in the plan, make sure it accounts for your schedule and other responsibilities. If you can divide the efforts among several people, you might be able to take on a more ambitious plan.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

DEFINING YOUR ADVOCACY AREAS

WHY SET ADVOCACY AREAS?

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

SETTING ADVOCACY PRIORITY AREAS

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

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

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

The outer ring encompasses policies that are either unrelated or unclearly tied to your organization's mission. Issues in this area should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If you choose to advocate about something that falls into this category, you should have a very clear explanation for why your organization is taking action and how it relates to your mission.
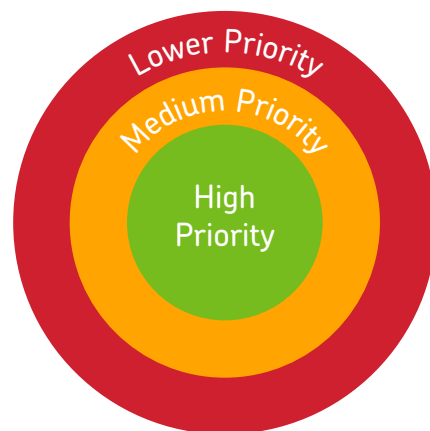
You can use different criteria for what falls in high, medium, or low priority, but be clear in how you are deciding which issues go in which categories. Consider checking out Feeding America, FRAC, and Philabundance's policy priorities as a guide.

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

DRAFTING AN ADVOCACY POLICY

"IF/THEN" ADVOCACY STATEMENTS

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

- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the high priority category, **THEN** you can actively participate in advocacy efforts, including encouraging others to advocate, creating informational materials, and setting up meetings with legislators, without seeking approval from the board of directors or organization leadership.

- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the medium priority category, **THEN** you are able to sign on to petitions, letters, and make statements about your organization's position without seeking approval from the board of directors.

- **IF** leadership determines that an issue falls into the low priority area, but you believe your organization should advocate about it, **THEN** you can present information and justification to the board of directors (or a subset of the board of directors), who can approve or deny whether the organization should publicly take a position on the issue.

- **IF** the advocacy plan has not been evaluated in a year, **THEN** we will discuss and decide if revisions are needed at the next board meeting.

- **IF** Philabundance publicly takes a stance on an issue or asks your organization to take action, **THEN** you will advocate about the issue.

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

MAKING IT OFFICIAL

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

ADVOCACY FLOW CHART EXAMPLE

RELEVANT POLICIES & PROGRAMS

LEAD

START HERE
Does the issue directly impact our resources (food/funds)?

YES → Full persmission to make advocacy decisions and actions, including directly contacting legislators, creating advocacy materials, and speaking publicly about the issue (including press).

CSFP, PASS, SFPP, SNAP, food recovery laws, donation tax incentives

NO

SUPPORT

Does the issue directly impact food insecurity in our service area?

YES → Can freely participate in advocacy activities, following the lead of national anti-hunger organizations

SNAP, TEFAP, school meals, WIC, summer meals, after school meals

NO

CONSIDER

Does the issue indirectly impact our resources?

YES →

NO

Does the issue impact the financial security of the people we serve?

YES →

NO

Does the issue impact the government's ability to fund nutrition programs?

YES →

NO

Don't participate in advocacy efforts.

Board Advocacy Committee consultation required. Committee can approve, send to full board for discussion and approval, or dissaprove.

FULL BOARD NEEDED →

Board Advocacy Committee defines parameters of participation in advocacy efforts.

APPROVE

Discuss with full board for approval

DISAPPROVE

Living wage, health care, budgets, taxes, organic waste recycling laws

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

PHILABUNDANCE'S ADVOCACY AREAS

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

1. **Lead - Issues that directly impact Philabundance's resources (food/funds).** We strive to take a leading or co-leading role in advocacy efforts related to these issues, and will devote time and effort to encourage others to advocate.

2. **Support - Issues that directly impact the food security of people in our service area.** We support other anti-hunger organizations in advocating about these issues, through letter sign-ons, showing up to events, and other efforts.

3. **Consider - Issues that relate to the economic wellbeing of the people we serve, the government's ability to fund nutrition programs, or indirectly impact Philabundance's resources.** We will carefully and thoughtfully consider on a case-by-case basis whether to participate in advocacy efforts about these issues, and will discuss with leadership, the development department, and the Board Advocacy Committee before taking action.

LEAD	Can advocate freely and strongly about these issues, and encourage others to do so as well.	• CSFP • Donation tax incentives • Neighborhood Assistance Program -Charitable Food Pro-gram (PA)	• Food recovery laws • PASS (PA) • SFPP (PA)
SUPPORT	Can freely participate in advocacy efforts and express support.	• SNAP • The Emergency Food Assistance Program & TEFAP Bonus • WIC	• SFSP & CACFP • National School Lunch Program & School Breakfast Program
CONSIDER	Discuss the topic with Board Advocacy Committee and development department before taking action.	• Living wage • Affordable health care • Predatory lending • Affordable housing	• Waste recycling laws • Childcare and worker benefits • Budgets • Taxes

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

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

What is your organization's mission?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who are the key people involved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Why should other people care?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR RESOURCES AND ASSETS

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

EXPANDING YOUR RESOURCES AND ASSETS

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

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

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR ADVOCACY ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

How much effort should be spent countering your opposition?

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

CREATING AN ADVOCACY PLAN

YOUR SMART ADVOCACY PLAN

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

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