

THE WORK OF ADVOCACY

Amy Little, Chief Executive Officer, Idaho Nonprofit Center

TODAY I WILL:

- Discuss barriers to engagement in advocacy
- Define advocacy & why it matters
- Provide resources for getting your board on board
- Share a template for planning
- Touch on social media as an advocacy tool

OUR MISSION:

IDAHO
nonprofit
CENTER

TO EDUCATE, ADVOCATE & COLLABORATE IN
SUPPORT OF STRONGER NONPROFITS.

GREAT RESOURCES

www.bolderadvocacy.org

[Check the chart graphic](#)

[Amplify Your Voice: lobbying do's and don'ts](#)

[ACT Quick advocacy capacity assessment tool](#)

www.standforyourmission.org

<https://www.idahononprofits.org/policy--advocacy.html>

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/everyday-advocacy>

www.clpi.org (Center for Lobbying for Public Interest)

[Make a difference in three hours per week](#)

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO ADVOCACY?

(perceived or real: why don't we engage in advocacy)

ADVOCACY : WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT DO

Adapted from Stand for Your Mission:

"What You Need To Know: A Nonprofit Board Member's Guide to Common Questions about Advocacy"

What You Need to Know:

A Nonprofit Board Member's
Guide to Common Questions
about Advocacy

**STAND
FOR YOUR
MISSION**

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is often used as an umbrella term for many different types of policy and political engagement. That can make things a little confusing. So here's a quick cheat sheet about the types of advocacy that are a part of the Stand for Your Mission campaign.

Broad Advocacy

All types of nonprofits are allowed to educate policymakers, the media, and the public about issues that are important to their mission, as long as it doesn't include information about specific candidates or pieces of legislation.

It's this type of advocacy that is the primary focus of the Stand for Your Mission Campaign.

Legislative Lobbying

Lobbying means working for or against a specific piece of legislation or ballot measure. Most nonprofits are allowed to engage in a limited amount of legislative lobbying, which can be a very important way to advance – or protect – your organization's mission and impact.

When there's a big decision being made that will affect your mission, you have a right and responsibility to weigh in. Don't waste it!

Election-Related Activities

Nonprofit organizations may engage in nonpartisan voter registration, education and turnout activities.

However, supporting or opposing a specific candidate (or set of candidates or a political party) is never allowed for 501(c)(3) organizations,* and is **not what we're describing as advocacy in the Stand for Your Mission campaign.**

* 501(c)(4), (c)(5) or (c)(6) organizations are allowed to participate in electioneering activities, but only as a secondary activity.



THE SPEEDY FOUNDATION

thespeedyfoundation.org

As a TSF supporter and advocate, we recognize that you are all set to vote...please take some time to determine your stance on Prop 3 in Utah and Prop 2 in Idaho.

Access to healthcare directly impacts mental health and decreases the risk of death by suicide. TSF has endorsed both of these initiatives and ask you to learn more here:

<https://www.utahdecides.org/>

<https://www.idahoansforhealthcare.org/>



THE SPEEDY FOUNDATION

Phenomenal example of Legislative Lobbying done in support of advancing this organization's mission.

Nonprofits can and SHOULD consider engaging in legislative lobbying when decisions being made could impact their work.

CURRENT EXAMPLES:

BROAD ADVOCACY:

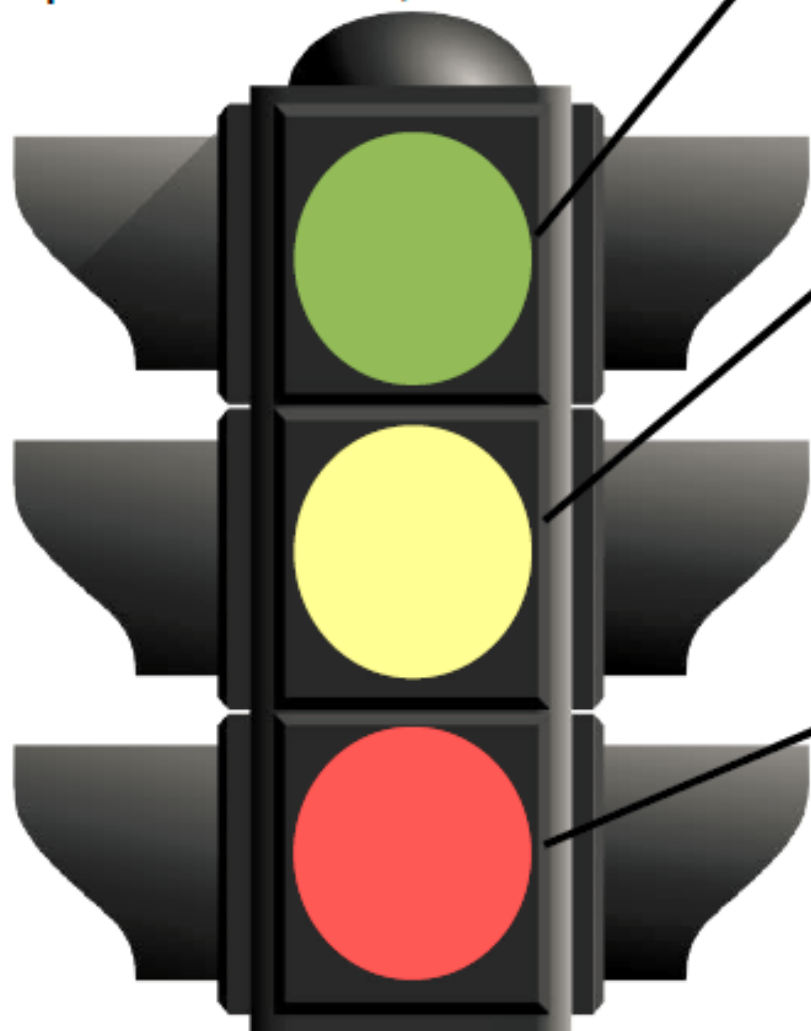
- Contacting elected officials to share what is happening in your current situation (not mentioning any specific legislation, but sharing how your mission work is being impacted by the current state of things)

LEGISLATIVE LOBBYING:

- Forwarding our INC communications to your board members and supporters and asking them to make phone calls regarding COVID relief legislation (you would also make the call or send the email)

More Guidance for 501(c)(3) Charities

(not private foundations)



Definitely OK

- Educating the public and decision-makers about your work in a nonpartisan way
- Sharing information about how public dollars positively impact your work and your community
- Communicating how broader issues impact your mission and the people that you serve

OK, But Check the Fine Print*

- Voter education, registration and candidate forums
- Naming legislators who support (or oppose) a specific piece of legislation
- Limited lobbying on behalf of the organization
- Lobbying and campaigning as private citizens

Definitely Not OK

- Organizational support or opposition of a candidate or set of candidates
- Spending federal grant funds on lobbying

*Or just call the [Alliance for Justice!](#)

FREE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
HOTLINE: 1-866-NP-LOBBY

From the Alliance for Justice

Advocacy is about your mission

Advocacy is all about your organization's work and what it will take to advance it. That is why advocacy looks different in different organizations. Here's what a coordinated advocacy strategy might look like for an anti-smoking organization:

Issue Education Tactics

- Conducting and sharing research on the dangers of second-hand smoke with policymakers and the public.
- Surveying the public to better understand public opinion on regulations related to smoking and second-hand smoke.
- Sharing success stories of other communities' efforts to reduce or eliminate smoking in public places.
- Sharing personal stories about the impact of smoking.

Lobbying Tactics

- Urging elected officials to support legislation that would ban candy-flavored tobacco.

That's advocacy?

Often, board members think that advocacy is about getting political or “off-mission.” But the reality is that advocacy could be absolutely vital to your organization achieving its mission.

Advocacy can be

- **appealing to the zoning board** to get permission to have a farmer's market in an underserved neighborhood
- **requesting a parking variance** to allow for a meal truck to serve homeless people in a central location
- **educating a legislator** about the value of a community program that requires public funding
- **partnering with public agencies** to repurpose an unused public building for a youth service agency
- **convening community leaders** at times of natural disaster or human crisis to develop solutions for the community and promote healing

The logo consists of a dark blue square with the words "STAND", "FOR YOUR", and "MISSION" stacked vertically in a bold, sans-serif font. "STAND" is in light blue, "FOR YOUR" is in green, and "MISSION" is in white.

Who should advocate?

If you care about an issue, then you can be an advocate. And as a nonprofit board member, you have a responsibility to advocate for your organization's mission.

That means communicating the importance of your mission to others. And helping others understand how larger issues or decisions in your community are impacting your organization, its work, and the community you serve.

As a board member with a passion for your organization's mission and work, you have what it takes to be an advocate.



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What if I'm not an expert?

You do not need to be an expert on advocacy to be an effective advocate. Here's what's most important:

- **Who You Are:** The reason that board advocacy is so powerful is because of who you are as a board member. You are an engaged and influential member of the community. And you vote. Make sure the person you're talking to knows it!
- **Make it Personal:** Share why you care about your organization and its mission. Do it in a personal way that makes it real for whomever you're speaking with. That's what they'll remember.
- **Connect the Dots:** Make sure that you explain how things are connected. Does the local, state, or federal government rely on your organization to provide vital service to the public? Is there a policy decision that could accelerate your impact? Is there an administrative regulation that is standing in the way of a good solution? Help them understand how they can help you.
- **Coordinate with Staff:** Your organization needs to be coordinated and consistent in its advocacy efforts. Make sure to communicate with your ED/CEO, so that you can strategize on the best approach, which may include doing things together.

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I don't have a lot of time. Can I still be helpful?

You don't need to make a major commitment of time to effectively engage in advocacy. In fact, the whole point of engaging as a board member, is that your community connections and influence may be really helpful in speeding up advocacy efforts and making them more successful.

Here are some examples of quick ways that board members can make a difference:

- **Get a Phone Call Returned:** If staff have been trying to get a decision-maker to respond, you might be able to call to someone you know (or who knows you) that will ensure that your organization is able to connect with the appropriate person.
- **Encourage Attendance:** If you're having an educational town hall or other event that would be helpful in educating decision-makers about your organization, your invitation might make a difference in getting them to attend.
- **Get a Meeting:** If you know a decision-maker, or even if you're simply a voter in his or her community, your participation in a meeting can make a huge difference in whether or not the meeting takes place or how it goes.

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WHAT DO WE NEED NOW?

- We need board members to both understand the importance of advocacy and participate in the process
- This might mean calling elected officials on behalf of the organization supporting COVID-19 legislation
- This might mean emailing elected officials for the same purpose
- This might mean connecting with like minded friends to ask them to do the same
- This might mean allowing your nonprofit to send information out about legislation and how it can help and asking your supporters to do the same

“ALONE WE CAN DO SO
LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN
DO SO MUCH.”

-Helen Keller

How much does advocacy cost?

Well, that depends. For some organizations, advocacy is a major part of their strategy, and they have dedicated the staffing and resources that they need to drive that work, just like they would for any other program.

But, for many other organizations, advocacy doesn't take a big investment, because it's integrated into all of the other things that they are doing.

Here are some simple, free ways that advocacy could make a difference:

- If you're hosting an educational session on your program for community members or donors, ***consider inviting a decision-maker who you want to educate about your work.***
- If you are talking with a potential donor, ***consider sharing how current policies make your work easier, or more difficult.***
- If you're at an event where an elected official or other decision-maker is present, ***consider taking a moment to thank him or her for supporting your organization's work.***

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RIGHT NOW...

Not engaging in powerful and collective advocacy to support the nonprofit sector could have meant that our entire charitable sector could have been left out of the Families First and CARES Act legislation. You can't put a price on the cost.

How do I know if it will work?

The short answer is: You don't. Just like with any program or fundraising strategy, there is no guarantee that your advocacy efforts will yield the results that you want.

But that's not the point. The point is that advocacy can help your organization consider solutions that would otherwise be impossible:

- Sustainable progress that alleviates the core challenges your organization seeks to address.
- Awareness of the challenges in the community and the commitment of your organization to dealing with them.
- Meaningful commitments to community needs and values.
- Resources and support for programs that the community relies on to serve its citizens.

Advocacy can deliver real, long-term solutions that enable our organizations to leverage limited resources to maximum effect.

**The potential is real.
And that's what makes it worth it.**

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Your Mission. Your Voice.

www.standforyourmission.org

#StandForYourMission

#AdvocacyNow

CREATING A PLAN

Adapted from *Bolder Advocacy*, How to Create a (c) (3) advocacy plan

SIMPLE STEPS

- Determine your goal/s
- Identify the strategies
- Look for other partner organizations – (c) (4)
- Identify expected outcomes
- Identify stakeholders
- Get to work

GOAL: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH

Strategies:

What activities will you engage in?

(ex: draft press release, hold public meeting, email volunteers, request meeting with elected official, etc)

Stakeholders:

Who is your audience for the specific strategy

(ex: the press, members of legislature, general public, etc.)

Expected Outcomes:

What does success look like to your organization?

(ex: what actions or beliefs are a result of your strategies for each stakeholder?)

QUICK SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

- Focus – hatch a goal that will make an impact.
- Grab Attention – stick out in an overcrowded, over-messaged, noisy world.
- Engage – make people connect with your goal.
- Take Action – empower others, enable them, and cultivate a movement.

(thank you Google)

SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

- Facebook – better for sharing factual info in nonpartisan manner
- Instagram – better for visual messages (think mission impact)
- Twitter – great for tagging elected officials by handle @yoursenator

- Better tools than just social media:
 - Build relationships with elected officials
 - Write letters
 - Make phone calls
 - Engage your support network to do the same

WHAT NOW?

- Right now the easiest thing you can do is keep an eye on our Legislative alerts.
- You can often forward our information and make it easy for your board and supporters to engage on your behalf.
- There are many other ways that you can engage your board in the future, but right now helping them understand the best way to support you is the best thing to do right now.
- There's a [link on our website](#) to a really long presentation with activities and generative discussion points to build a full policy with your board. Save that for after the pandemic.

OTHER GREAT RESOURCES

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THANK YOU

Amy Little, Idaho Nonprofit Center

alittle@idahononprofits.org