

Legislative Toolbox



Implementing an effective plan of action

by Becca Pryse, Valerie Dosland and Dave Dederichs

Plan the work and work the plan is an old saying, but it rings true for organizations looking to be effective in their lobbying and advocacy activities. It is important for organizations to put together a clear idea of their legislative concerns, what they want to do and how they want to accomplish their goals. A well-thought out plan allows you to clearly define the issue and possible solutions. It also makes it easy to get more people involved and brings together elected leaders interested in your issues and who want to implement your policies.

The key to implementing an effective plan includes analyzing your issues, gathering information about your concerns, and determining the likely constituencies and the decision-makers you need to involve. Once you've done this, your plan should include goals, strategies, timelines and then an evaluation of your success. Keys to putting together an effective plan include:

- Clearly defining what you want to change, how to change it, setting clear and reasonable goals. If you don't know the best way to address an issue, involve others who may have those answers. It is important to clearly state your issue and discuss possible solutions. If you don't give elected officials a clear sense of what you want them to do, you run the risk of getting solutions you may not like, which may make the problem worse or even create new problems.
- Determining the easiest and best place to seek solutions to your problems. Before seeking legislative solutions, you should be ready to answer the questions which legislators will doubtlessly ask: "Are there other ways to solve your problem? Have you tried them? What happened?"
- Defining who in your community or organization you need to engage. Think through other possible people or organizations who share an interest in your issue and make plans to include those people or groups.
- Finding elected officials to engage and who are most likely to support your position.
- Determining which elected officials and groups are most likely to oppose your position and why.
- Developing a timeline. When do you need to have things in place to move forward? When do you need to communicate with key elected officials? When do you need to engage supporters and volunteers?
- Preparing information and key-facts to provide supporters and legislators information on your legislative plan.

A good plan paves the way to success. Remember, some of the changes you are seeking may not happen overnight. Policy changes often happen incrementally but a well-thought out and realistic plan helps educate elected officials on your issues and will eventually lead to the solution you are trying to reach.