



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

LEVERAGING OUR VOICE ADVOCACY CHAMPION TOOLKIT

Indiana Alliance of YMCAs
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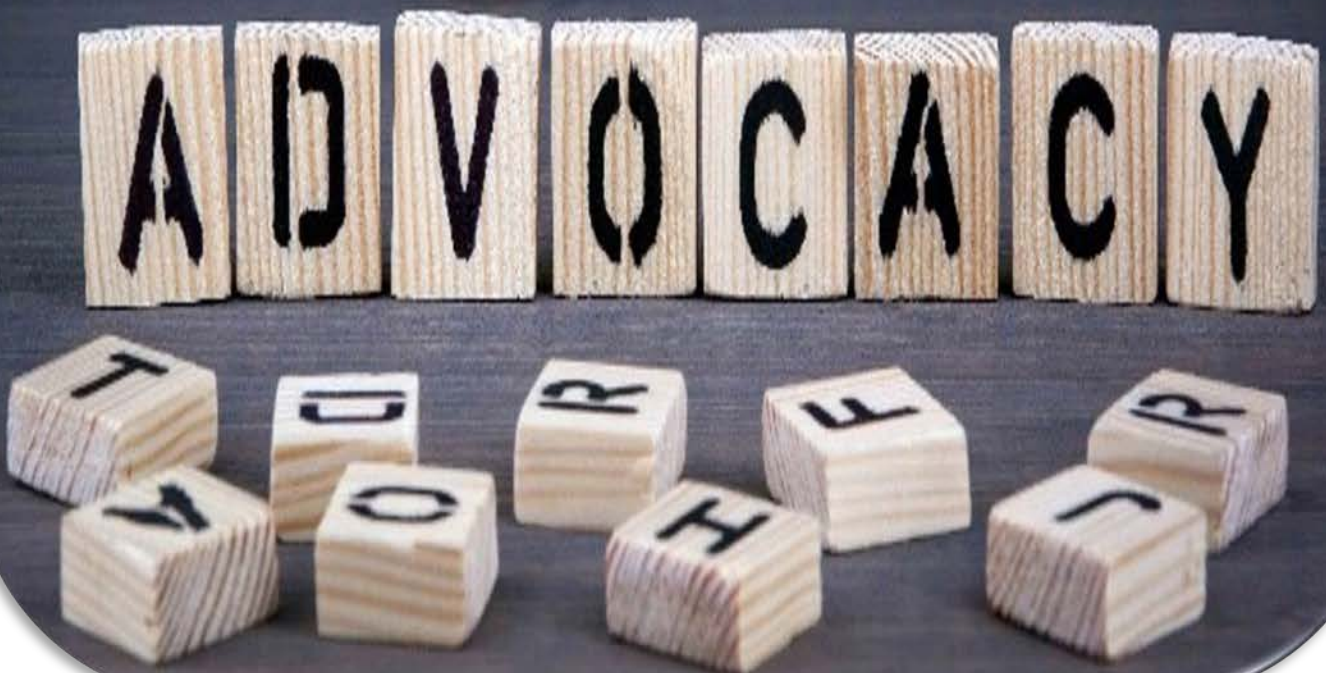


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INTRODUCTION

One of the most common refrains from YMCA staff and volunteers is the YMCA does not tell its story enough. At the Alliance, we agree, and we believe the effort to tell the Y's story has direct implications on the number of opportunities on which Ys are able to capitalize, the resources the organization can draw, and the Ys' stature in the community.

Telling our story is *advocacy* and there is an urgency to act. Never has it been so important for public leaders to understand the impact of work Ys perform on behalf of their communities. History has shown the Y's most revered advocates are its volunteers. No one can articulate the value of the Y better than a board member.

With an actionable strategy for articulating value, Ys will be heard and seen as a relevant non-profit, which in turn will effectively build our capacity to safeguard and advance the work of the YMCA. Only with strong intentional efforts on the part of each local YMCA will we be able to tell the story of the YMCA. When we tell our story, our collective voices will influence and shape environments that support the YMCA's work.

This toolkit is designed to provide resources to help you move your board of directors forward in its advocacy efforts. It has been divided into the following sections:

1. Advocacy 100 – Beginner Level – If your Y has rarely participated in advocacy work, this is where you begin.
2. Advocacy 200 – Intermediate Level – If you've engaged in 100 Level work successfully, and are looking to enhance your advocacy efforts, this is where you pick back up.
3. Advocacy 300 – Advanced Level – If you are competent in 200 level work and want to embed advocacy in your board's and organization's culture, this is how you move forward.
4. Addendums – Included to provide a deeper dive into advocacy concepts.

In addition to this toolkit, the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs staff team stands ready to support you moving advocacy forward. As a result of your leadership, the Y will grow and be more impactful. It is time to tell the story of your Y!

SIMPLIFYING ADVOCACY

The thought of engaging with public officials can be intimidating so it is important to break down the work of advocacy into its simplest form.

Best Practices – There are several good practices that will help you become an effective Y Advocate. These practices can be broken down into four main areas: preparation, communication, documentation or note taking, and follow-up. It is important to remember what you may need to do as a Y Advocate may depend greatly on the issue or situation. Some situations will be more difficult and trying. They may require action over a period of weeks, months, or sometimes years. Other situations may be resolved more easily and therefore require less effort. You can find these in detail in Addendum 1.

Civic Engagement – Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. You can find these in detail in Addendum 2.

Congressional Recess (August Recess) – Each year, Congress recesses for the month of August. It is during this time that many members return home and make time to spend with constituents.

Grassroots Advocacy – the process of communicating with the general public and asking them to contact their local, state or federal officials regarding a certain issue. In contrast to direct lobbying, grassroots advocacy is citizen-based activism. You can find these in detail in Addendum 3.

Indiana General Assembly – The legislative branch, of the State of Indiana. It is a bicameral legislature that consists of a lower house, the Indiana House of Representatives, and an upper house, the Indiana Senate.

Lobbying – Activities that try to influence legislators to pass laws that are favorable or overturn laws that are unfavorable to the YMCA's cause. You can find these in detail in Addendum 4.

Long session – The first session of every new Indiana General Assembly can last up to 61 working (session) days. Beginning in early January, this session cannot extend beyond April 30th. Occurring in odd-numbered years, the first regular session is often called the "long session" due to the legislative approval process of Indiana's biennial budget.

Public Policy – Governments are constantly writing and rewriting laws and policies for the perceived good of the public. YMCAs establishes public policy agendas to highlight areas of importance to the YMCA. You can find these in detail in Addendum 5.

Share the mission – A willingness to communicate what the YMCA's business purpose is and why it has value to you and your community.

Short session – Occurring in even-numbered years, the second regular session ("short session") can extend for up to 30 working (session) days, but not beyond March 15th.

ENTRY POINTS TO ADVOCACY

YMCAs' proficiency with advocacy vary across a spectrum. Therefore, this toolkit breaks advocacy down into 3 levels in which all YMCAs can find themselves.



ADVOCACY 100



*If your Y has rarely participated in advocacy work, this is where you begin.

- Identify an Advocacy Champion to lead the board's efforts
- Form a taskforce to organize advocacy week
- Take initial steps toward implementing advocacy as part of your Y's work
- Research/review materials provided to prepare for Alliance advocacy events
- Participate in biennial Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week/Statehouse Day
- Respond to any alliance request for action alerts

Outcome: Your YMCA will have taken initial steps toward advocacy.

ADVOCACY 100 TOOLKIT SUMMARY

Welcome to the wonderful world of advocacy! If you are here in Level 100, it's because advocacy is new to your board work or your board is not formerly engaged in it. Therefore, this section is designed to get you started by familiarizing you with the concept of advocacy and helping you to get your feet wet with some preplanned activity.

100.1 IDENTIFY ADVOCACY CHAMPION

The Alliance is working with each local YMCA CEO to strategically choose a board leader who would champion that Y's ability to tell its story and to elevate advocacy as an important board function. Advocacy Champions will help Indiana Ys to leverage our collective voice to speak about the impact we have in our communities and how proposed policy changes can affect our ability to have an impact.

100.2 FORM AN ADVOCACY TASK FORCE

Since your YMCA is only at the beginning of its advocacy efforts, start small. Recruit at least two more board members (influential board members, staff, advisory board members, teens from your youth programs, and/or dedicated Y members) to kick off your Advocacy Task Force. In the beginning, the task force will be a planning body for your association's Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week event. Additionally, it will work to understand the public policy issues and opportunities facing the Y.

100.3 GET PREPARED

Before the YMCA invites elected officials to visit, your Task Force working with the board to anticipate the types of questions you may be asked as well as the type of information you want to share. Your impact will be strongest if the Y volunteer board, not the CEO, can convey the work of the Y. A few examples are:

- Detail how your Y is represented in the statewide Community Benefit Report.
- What specific programs and activities are offered at your Y to impact the community?
- What specific stories do you offer as evidence?
- What are the hidden gems your Y offers but may not be widely understood?
- How many strategic partnerships is your Y engaged in to leverage community resources or make a significant impact?
- Who are your strategic partners?
- How many military families does your Y assist?
- What are the greatest needs in your community and how is your Y responding?

- Review materials sent to you by the Alliance and research past Alliance policy efforts.

You should be able to give apples-to-apples comparison of the state Community Benefit Report compared to the local Y's work. Preparation is critically important for you and your volunteers to speak factually and with confidence. Lack of preparedness can have an opposite consequence. You can find these in detail in Addendum 6.

100.4 ENGAGE THE BOARD

Here are a few great ways to connect and engage the board in advocacy work.

- This is more than just the CEO; let this process grow organically among the board. Just keep reminding the board members this is important work only the board can do!
- Discuss Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week and the toolkit in an upcoming board meeting.
- As a result of the board discussion, develop an Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week plan of action.
- Task Force charges board members to write letters to the editor (or blogging, Twitter or Facebook).
- Individual board members invite elected/appointed officials for a tour and conversations about the Y's work in the community and ways in which the Y can serve the elected/appointed official.
- Board members host Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week events and discussions at the Y.
- The board brainstorms other ways in which it can develop advocacy at a higher level for the Y. For example, invite your local government leaders to see specific Y programs in action so they are aware of opportunities related to uses of resources like the Community Development Block Grant.

100.5 PLAN FOR ADVOCACY WEEK

At some point, we have all asserted the Y is often the best kept secret in town. Historically, though, we have not spent enough time spreading the news about the good work we do on behalf of our community. An Advocacy Week campaign provides your Y with an opportunity to tell its story as Indiana Ys collectively engage local, state and federal government leaders during its biennial Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week, held in August during the Congressional Recess. During Advocacy Week, every association develops a one- or multi-day event to engage with local, state, and federal government leaders within their communities.

Advocacy week is important to your Y because it:

- Positions the Y as a relevant community partner with policy makers
- Engages your board members in meaningful work
- Develops deeper and more meaningful relationships with elected officials
- Proactively protects the Y's tax-exempt position
- Aids elected officials in understanding and valuing the work of the Y
- Positions your Y for advancing to the next level of advocacy

This toolkit's Addendum (Addendums 7-13) provides many resources that you can use to prepare for your event, including sample itineraries, press release template and a suggested planning timeline.

100.6 ALLIANCE ACTION ALERTS

As you prepare for Advocacy Week, keep an eye out for Legislative Alerts from the Alliance. Such alerts are sent to Y Advocate to keep them informed about what is happening in The State Capitol and on Capitol Hill. The alerts also advise the membership on important legislation or regulations that have been introduced or published in the Indiana Code and Federal Register, respectively. The alerts should help to inform you Advocacy Week and agenda.

100.7 CONSIDER PARTNERING WITH NEIGHBORING YS

Note that you do not have to plan and host the Advocacy Week event alone. If preferred, you can partner with other Ys in your Congressional district to host a regional event(s). This would allow federal officials and statewide leaders to meet with more of their constituency at one time.

100.8 ATTEND INDIANA YMCAS STATEHOUSE DAY

The biennial Indiana YMCAs Statehouse Day alternates with Advocacy Week. The former affords YMCA Advocates an opportunity to meet with their state-level elected officials to:

1. Learn how YMCAs can partner with the State to effect greater community impact,
2. Advocate in relation to policy issues important to Indiana's YMCAs, and
3. Share about the important work of YMCAs throughout the State.
4. Demonstrate volunteers' commitment to Y's work to elected officials.

This half-day event is ideal for local C-Suite staff, volunteers and Youth and Government delegates.

Due to Indiana's legislative calendar, Statehouse Day occurs only 7 short months after Advocacy Week. After a successful Advocacy Week, begin strategizing for your Y's participation in Statehouse Day.

REMEMBER...

LOCAL ADVOCACY

The most impactful advocacy efforts are local. Indiana YMCA Advocacy Week affords you the opportunity to engage legislators away from the hustle and bustle of the Statehouse. This is your chance to engage them as neighbors and share about the work your Y is doing in your community.

VOLUNTEER-DRIVEN

Indiana YMCA Advocacy Week can be a means for making board membership worthwhile. Allow the development of your local event(s) to be board-driven. Allow your volunteers and members, especially youth, to tell your Y's story. If Indiana Ys are going to drive this into a sustainable culture-shifting exercise, it must be driven by volunteers.

NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATION

Some legislators represent numerous YMCA service areas. Be sure to work with your Alliance regional neighborhood to coordinate invitations and legislative visits.

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Local advocacy is relationship-building. The aim is not to oppose or support any particular legislation. Rather, it should be used as an opportunity to discover how your Y can better serve legislators and the State.

SHARE

As you develop your Indiana YMCA Advocacy Week event, be sure to share your ideas with your fellow Y leaders. Doing so will generate enthusiasm.

See Addendums 21 and 22 for ideas for enhancing your advocacy work and useful resources and links.

ADVOCACY 200



*If you've engaged in 100 Level work successfully, and are looking to enhance your advocacy efforts, this is where you pick back up.

- Participate with and/or coordinate with the Alliance's Public Policy Committee
- Identify issues the Y wants to address locally
- Develop local campaign to address those issues
- Coordinate stakeholder response to local issues important to the YMCA
- Educate and invite stakeholders and allies on issues of importance to YMCAs
- Research the local, state, and national issues for which you are advocating

Outcome: Your Y will have built its advocacy muscle by engaging in local advocacy efforts, as well as statewide efforts, working with the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs' Public Policy Committee.

ADVOCACY 200 TOOLKIT SUMMARY

Now that your Y has its task force established and an Advocacy Week campaign under its belt, it's time to move forward in the journey to building your Y's advocacy muscle. The topics in this section are to help you make advocacy specific to your Y, outline how to work with the Alliance and Y-USA, to develop local partnerships in support of advocacy, and to conduct research that supports advocacy.

200.1 ENGAGE WITH THE INDIANA ALLIANCE OF YMCAS' PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

As you identify the issues of importance to your Y and the greater community, it's important you understand the issues of the state. For our voices to be heard, there needs to be alignment in our messaging. Engaging the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs Public Policy Committee (PPC) will help your association to understand the landscape in which Ys are collectively working. Additionally, engaging the PPC will allow your Ys to align their public policy agendas, working from a common template to highlight common issues and leverage our collective voice for greater impact.

To learn more about the PPC, please contact Brent Wake at brent@indianaymcas.org or refer to Addendum 14.

200.2 IDENTIFY KEY ISSUE(S) FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

You probably already have a good idea about the local, state and federal issues that are important to your community. Think about the conversation you've had on the health rankings of your community, your Y's tax-exempt status, or access to quality child care. You probably also know something about the history of these topics and what promoted them to the forefront. That is great! You have a head start. Perhaps, there are other important issues that have not risen to the forefront, though. This is where additional research will come in. Connecting with the community to discover these unrealized issues will also be important. Finally, before you face the world in a big-time (or even small-time) advocacy campaign, you will need to be armed with quite a lot of extra knowledge about the background of the issues you choose to address, as well as the way they affect your community.

Why Do You Need a Thorough Understanding of the Issue?

Imagine that your YMCA is located just beyond an overpass, and there is no sidewalk leading to it. Also, imagine that on the opposite side of the overpass is a school. How will the children safely get to your association after school? This can be an important issue for your Y to address, but before doing so, it must obtain a thorough understanding of the issue. Which level of government is actually responsible for constructing a sidewalk on an overpass? Is that government agency already planning to address the issue? Knowing the answer to these questions will help you campaign to be relevant and save your advocates embarrassment. Additionally, having a thorough understanding of the issues is important because:

You will need to have arguments at your fingertips that can convince the greater community that the issue is important and to keep them fired up.

- You will need to persuade allies to join your cause by presenting them with facts they will not be able to ignore or refute.
- You will need to know why your opponents are taking the side they take, and what financial or other interests they may have in continuing to take that side.
- With research, you will know better what needs to be done to correct a situation. Furthermore, you'll know which of the necessary steps are fairly easy to take, and which may be a major stretch for your organization.
- You will know what strategic style is likely to work best, whether you're going to run an "in your face" type of initiative, or act behind the scenes, or something in between.
- When and if the dispute becomes public—as you may want it to do—you will have the answers. If a reporter asks you for a reaction, or shoves a microphone in your face, you will be sure of your facts.
- You'll be ready with facts any time you are challenged by your opponent, by the establishment (such as City Hall), or by the media.
- Because you'll thoroughly understand the status quo from the beginning of your campaign, you will be able to plan your progress logically and, at the end, know just how far you have come.

The bottom line is before your Y proceeds with the specific planning steps in the rest of this chapter, you will need a nice, solid, comforting layer of knowledge on which to base those plans.

RESEARCH

There is no doubt you must know the facts about your Y's issue. In fact, you cannot operate without them. But you will need much more than a basis if you are to be a successful advocate:

- You will need to know how people feel about the issue, and what they believe.
- You will need to know how the issue links or divides different segments of the community.

- You will need to understand who is pulling the strings to make your opponents take the line they do.
- You will need to know what forces might be at work in the local political scene to make officials drag their feet or even jump in to oppose you.
- You might need to know what it will take to make people give up the old way of doing things and try something else.
- You might need to know the belief systems of people who oppose you on ideological grounds.

But how will you learn that? Where will you start. Perhaps, you have your own ideas and proven strategies, but If you would like assistance in research consideration, please see this Toolkit's Addendum 15.

200.3 DEVELOP A LOCAL PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

There are no step-by-step rules or established set of parameters your Y can follow to ensure success when seeking public policy change. What it can do, though, is develop a policy agenda—a set of issues or problems aimed at gaining the attention of policymakers and decisionmakers—sometimes known as the “policy ask”. It is a tool used to educate policymakers and others about the work and impact of your Y, and it fits specific policy goals into a consistent broader context. Setting a public policy agenda involves many components, including identifying the issue, forming a clear goal or goals, framing the issue, and creating conditions for success.

Policy advocacy work is best as a year-round focus, not just a one-off activity, which is critical in preparing for expected and unanticipated opportunities to bring a policy agenda forward. Just as the mission of your Y doesn't fluctuate year after year, your agenda should be framed so that it is steady and focused. While specific legislation sought may vary from year to year, they all should help to move your organization closer to accomplishing its mission. Though one agenda can be developed with all levels of government in view, it may be advisable to either develop a specific agenda for each level of government or to be clear within one document about which agenda items pertain to which level of government.

For a detailed walkthrough of putting together your public policy agenda, see the Toolkit's Addendum 16.

200.4 EDUCATE STAKEHOLDERS & ALLIES

Stakeholders and allies (herein referred to only as “allies”) are people, or groups of people, who have the same interests as you, or the capacity or resources to help you. They are important because you will accomplish much more if there are people who believe in the cause supporting you than if you are working alone. Allies may be willing to share their

resources and information with you to achieve a common goal, and the community is more likely to pay attention if there are more people working towards that goal. In other words, the more help and support you have, the more you can get accomplished.

The easiest way to start recruiting allies is to determine if there are already groups in the community either working on your Y's issue, or working on similar issues, who might be interested in working with you. For example, if your Y's issue is improving the nutritional value of school lunches, the American Heart Association might be interested in helping out --or they may already be working to have school cafeterias fry their food only in 100% vegetable oil.

One method to help identify these groups is a community resource inventory or directory. Many resource inventories are available through private organizations such as the United Way, or from local government organizations. Some other places you might find information on local resources are:

- The yellow pages
- Neighborhood assistance services
- Chamber of commerce
- City hall

If you can't find an existing resource directory for your Y's issue, you can always create your own. Some things you'll want to ask:

- Who is doing something about your issue in the community already?
- What are they doing?
- How is it going?
- Which strategies did they find effective?
- Is there some way we could collaborate with them?
- Who else do we know who might be interested in this issue, even though they may not be acting on it now?

To expand this list further, you can use the "snowball technique," by asking your known allies to list several other groups who are either already working on your issue or who might be interested in helping your group. This continues by asking each of the allies to identify more potential allies.

Another method might be for you and your group to write down various sectors of your community such as religious organizations, businesses and health care, and then identify organizations within each sector who might be potential allies. For greater insight in working with allies, see this toolkit's Addendum 17.

200.5 PUT YOUR AGENDA INTO ACTION

Now that you have developed your local public policy agenda and identified allies, it is time to act. As you do, it will be important to understand the difference between permissible and impermissible activities:

- Grassroots Advocacy (permissible)
- Lobbying (permissible to an extent)
- Political action (not permissible)

Understanding the differences between permissible and impermissible activities could be mean preservation of your 501c3 status. See this Toolkit's Addendums 18 and 19 for a more detailed exploration of permissible and non-permissible activities, as well as examples of how to put your public policy agenda into action for your community.

See Addendums 21 and 22 for ideas for enhancing your advocacy work and useful resources and links.

ADVOCACY 300



*If you are competent in 200 level work and want to embed advocacy in your board's and organization's culture, this is how you move forward.

- Integrate advocacy into strategic plan
- Develop local public policy agenda that considers the state public policy agenda
- Track progress on legislative issues
- Develop process to respond rapidly to policy developments
- Ensure Ys advocacy efforts are supported/aligned with Ys resources
- Move from task force to committee of the board (year-round vs temporary work)
- Proactively research local, state, and national issues for which you are advocating
- Determine how to use annual Community Benefit Report in advocacy efforts
- Attend annual National Advocacy Days

Outcome: Your Y has formally integrated advocacy as a strategic priority.

ADVOCACY 300 TOOLKIT SUMMARY

Now that you understand and have some experience in basic advocacy, it's time for your Y to add more muscle to its efforts. This section of the Toolkit will help you leverage one-on-one consultation with your volunteers and lead you to new challenges that expand advocacy at your Y.

300.1 ADVOCACY: THE LONG GAME

A lot of advocacy efforts are focused on the “short game”—what tangible, measurable wins can be obtained for a community in the here and now. As Y advances, we see the impatience for the long-game in two ways: 1) short-game vision means success in the short-term, and 2) short game vision prevents a necessary long-game strategy.

It has often been said that it takes 4 to 5 years to get a bill through the Indiana General Assembly. Moreover, on the federal level, citizens are almost surprised when anything makes it through the gridlock of Congress. Therefore, part of taking on a long game view means that a Y advocate must understand that legislative success may not come right away. Champions must be in the battle for the cause itself rather than the immediate results. Develop an agenda and stick to it. Remember: Legislators and allies alike will measure your Y's genuineness about an issue by how quickly it jumps off the advocacy train.

Looking at the long-term means having an ultimate goal and a series of lesser goals along the way. The achievement of each will bring you closer to your destination. Typically, what we consider to be a win are changes that are easiest to come by and that cause the least inconveniences to our neighbors' lives. For example, a “win” might be the attainment of public funding that allows a Y to run the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program (YDPP) for one or two more years (assuming that the government even has any money to give). However, that win may not achieve the long-term goal of your stated advocacy effort. Short-game players simply assume that the State will always have a significant population of prediabetic individuals, and they simply aim to be a provider of prevention care. Their vision is not compatible with a future in which a new reality is present. They have no way of dealing with their own success.

What would real advocacy success look like in the long game? It is not an established network for diabetes prevention. It is not funding for current DPP programs. It is not State-supported referral networks for existing programs. It is an Indiana in which the healthy choice is the easiest choice for Hoosiers whose communities' model and encourage healthy lifestyles that prevent the creep towards prediabetes. Looking at the long-term

means having an ultimate goal, and a series of lesser goals along the way, the achievement of each of which will bring you closer to your destination.

Y Advocates must be prepared to put that vision into practice, and that means taking the long view. It means doing some things that may seem inefficient now, but that will pay off in decades. It means taking advantage of the current situation. It means pushing for policies like convenience store restrictions and school lunch guidelines even if that upsets some potential short-term allies. It means pushing big spenders to spend big on grocery stores, even if they do not anticipate an immediate return on their investment.

300.2 INCORPORATE ADVOCACY INTO YOUR Y STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

Your organization's strategic plan describes how it plans to advance issues of importance to the association and the communities it serves. Accordingly, your Y utilizes and allocates resources, as well as utilizes and captures data to justify its strategies and measure its successes in accomplishing its plan. Your public policy agenda should also serve your strategic plan, serving as a compass that guides your advocacy efforts and keeps your Y driving toward your ultimate goal of serving your community.

Your board should be asking these questions to develop their strategy to embed advocacy in their culture.

- What long-term plans do you have to stay connected to elected officials?
- What is required of the board?
- What issues are you addressing – long and short-term?
- Through advocacy, how can your board increase its stature in the community?
- How can we use advocacy to recruit top notch board members?

All forms of strategy and reporting should be consistent (e.g., strategic plan, community benefit report, public policy agenda) to tell the story of your Y and its commitment to its strategic plan.

300.3 KEEPING ADVOCACY IN THE FOREFRONT

- Discuss at the board and staff levels, as well as with volunteers, how current laws, regulations, and external policies and practices affecting the work of your organization might be changed to help advance your mission and services.
- Use the three-part list of the laws, regulations, and external policies and practices that affect the work of your organization:
 - (1) those that are preventing you from advancing your mission
 - (2) those that could threaten your ability to advance your mission
 - (3) those that if put in place would leverage your work to help you achieve your mission—to engage your board, staff, and volunteers in a discussion of the

connection between key public policy issues and the needs of your constituents and programs.

- Review your mission statement and values. Develop a crisp and clear explanation on how advocacy and working on public policy issues connect to the beliefs and goals of your organization and will advance your mission.
- Form a small committee of staff, board members, clients, residents, and other volunteers to discuss and plan appropriate next steps in advocacy and public policy.

300.4 FUNDING RESOURCE PLANNING

- Identify part of your Ys's general operating support to be used for advocacy and set aside a portion for advocacy and related activities.
- Make sure your organization has taken appropriate legal steps necessary to simplify the compliance and reporting by electing to use the free and easy 501(h) expenditures test for 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits under the Internal Revenue Code.
- If you will be engaging in legislative lobbying, determine if you need to register as a lobbyist or file as an organization that lobbies with the appropriate state or local government office that regulates lobbying activities.
- Become familiar with the basics about advocacy and lobbying using foundation grant funds.

NATIONAL ADVOCACY DAYS

Every year, the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs sends Y advocates to join hundreds of their YMCA colleagues on Capitol Hill during YMCA National Advocacy Days (NAD). The event provides Y leaders with opportunities to engage in policy-focused conversations, learn about the Y's legislative priorities and attend breakout sessions on advancing the role of advocacy at the Y. During the visit, these participants also make time to educate policymakers on issues of importance to Indiana's Ys and recognize those legislators who are YMCA Congressional Champions.

Capitol Hill events like NAD represent an effective way for your Y to let elected officials know its views on issues through a personal meeting. It provides members of Congress and their staff with the information they need to make the best decisions for their constituencies. The information and education you can provide may be critical to the decisions they make on policy that affects your profession. Elected officials take heed to mass numbers. When a group of people from an elected official's district requests a meeting regarding an issue, the elected official wants to hear their point of view. Most elected officials want to make sure they understand the consequences and benefits of any piece of legislation on their constituency.

Because NAD can be so valuable in getting the Y's view known, your participation in NAD can be very important, and your Y's success will be based on how well you organize your participants. Remember, the appearance of power is power. The more effectively you plan for your Y's participation in NAD, the more seriously the elected officials will view it.

Here are a few suggestions to help you prepare:

- Place the issue on your Advocacy Task Force's agenda.
- Host district staff at your Y. On behalf of their local YMCAs and/or Ys within their regions, advocates will coordinate a visit by a federal elected official to a Y facility to meet with staff, volunteers, and members. The visits allow officials to learn about the work of the Y and allows local Ys to understand how they can collaborate with their government leaders.
- Budget appropriately for travel and meeting expenses.
- Keep your board updated.
- Follow up with your board afterwards (pictures and social media).

300.5 ACTION PLANNING

- Attend a coalition meeting with organizations that share your concerns to discuss the problem and plan how collectively you can work together to inform and better shape public policy.
- Schedule brief meetings with your city, county, state and federal legislators as appropriate to discuss the policy changes you and your coalition are seeking. Bring a board member and a person that benefits from your services with you.
- Follow through on next steps from meetings with legislators or other government officials. Keep the pressure on to schedule a meeting.
- Contact your state association of nonprofits for further assistance or to answer questions.

BUILD A RAPID RESPONSE SYSTEM

The reality is policy development oftentimes happens at a rate quicker than a local Y would like to move; therefore, it is imperative your Y develops strategies or quick responses to pressing policy needs. Such needs may include, but are not limited to:

- Posting a position statement of a policy
- Requesting a legislator sign-on to a letter generated by an individual, a committee, another organization
- Request for a letter of support
- Contacting your members of Congress regarding a specific piece of legislation
- Joining an advocacy coalition
- Sending a letter to a public official
- Responding to an Alliance Request for information

Below is a proposed process for developing a response system. It is intended to be a starting point to help your Y develop a process.

PROCESS

1. Local YMCA CEOs and Advocacy Champions will be the initial points of contact, who would forward the proposal to the chair of your Y's Advocacy Task Force.
 - a. The chair brings the proposal to the Advocacy Task Force for vetting. When the proposal is not time-sensitive it can be discussed during its next committee conference call. When it is time-sensitive the Rapid Response Procedure is implemented. The Advocacy Task Force must fully review all facts contained in the proposal.
 - b. The Advocacy Task Force will vote to determine if the proposal should be submitted to the Board of Directors.
2. Only the Board of Directors has the authority to endorse an action or officially adopt a policy position.
3. Proposals submitted to the Advocacy Task Force should include:
 - a. A brief description of the policy issue or request.
 - b. A brief explanation of the link between the policy issue and Y's mission and strategic plan.
 - c. The specific action(s) proposed, identification of the person(s) or group who will be asked to take action (Advocacy Task Force, Membership, Staff, Board), and a requested time frame, with the basis or justification for such timeframe (sign-on letter to a public official).
 - d. Any available web links to information regarding the policy and the people or organizations involved, or relevant data regarding the issue including any available position papers.
 - e. When available, arguments offered in opposition to the position recommended for the Y, including policy statements from others, data, and a list of opponents.
4. Rapid Response Process- when there is 96 or more hours.
 - a. The proposal is submitted to the Advocacy Task Force for an e-mail vote with a response time of 48 hours or sooner, if possible. The chair of the Advocacy Task Force and the local Y Executive put forth the e-mail vote. If the Advocacy Task Force approves the proposal via an e-mail vote, it is submitted to the Y Board for an e-mail vote with a response time of 48 hours or sooner, if possible.
5. Rapid Response Process – when there is 24 to 48 hours to respond.
 - a. The chair of the Advocacy Task Force, the CVO, and the Y Executive put forth the e-mail vote. The proposal is simultaneously submitted to the Advocacy Task Force and the Y Board as an e-mail vote.
 - b. Voting process:
 - i. A simple majority vote is required to vote a proposal up or down. Votes received after the deadline, but before the reports by the Advocacy Task

Force chair, are tabulated and are included in the final count. This practice reinforces the importance of voting. It also builds a culture for both the Advocacy Task Force and the Y Board to expect this participation.

- ii. All votes are via e-mail and “reply to all” for transparency; questions/comments can be shared so there can be a discussion if needed.
- c. The Y Executive reports the results of the e-mail votes via a follow up e-mail. The Advocacy Task Force chair provides a report during the next Advocacy Task Force call and the next Y Board call.

300.6 MONITORING ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Advocacy is a function of the board; therefore, your board should be monitoring your Y’s advocacy efforts. A number of reasons exist for doing so:

- To assess to what extent strategies are successful and to adapt accordingly to be able to respond to unpredictable events
- To provide regular opportunities for board members to participate in internal and external communications
- To ensure leadership level learnings from advocacy experiences
- To articulate advocacy results to donors, supporters, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Monitoring will involve collecting and reviewing information on pre-defined—or previously not defined—indicators as set out from the beginning of the campaign. Advocacy monitoring also involves constantly collecting and analyzing information on wider issues; therefore, it should be a topic of every board meeting.

For greater details regarding what your board’s monitoring efforts may look like, see this Toolkit’s Addendum 20.

300.7 STRATEGICALLY COMMUNICATING OUR WORK

Dollars alone can never communicate the complete story of how communities benefit from programs and services that YMCAs provide. Effectively communicating these efforts requires that Ys clearly describe their mission, summarize and highlight activities that benefit community residents—with special emphasis on the number of lives that have been touched—and report human-interest stories illustrating how programs and services have aided individual patients. Providing this type of information, in addition to financial information, will ensure that everyone in the community, along with policymakers at all levels of government, will gain a better appreciation of the value that your Y provides

While there are many avenues through which your association might communicate its advocacy work, perhaps one of the most important avenues is the tool that it uses to

annually communicate its work and impact. For some Ys, this is done through a Community Benefit Report (CBR), for others it is an annual report, and still for others it may be both.

Ensure that your CBR and/or annual report align with Ys advocacy efforts. Practically, speaking, this means that all of the issues included on your public policy agenda should be included in your CBR and/or annual report. When quantifying the contributions of your Y to its communities, consider several components:

- The service that your association provides to community members, regardless of their ability to pay (NOTE: Ys shoulder the burden of bad debt when members are unable to pay programs or membership)
- Financial assistance provided to those of limited financial means
- Work that directly AND quantifiably and measurable warrants the tax exemption your Y receives:
 - Relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged
 - Lessening the burdens of government
 - Combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency
 - Lessening of neighborhood tensions
- Community integrated health programs, especially those for which you Y receives Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, because reimbursement those programs often falls short of the actual cost of care.

When taken together, these components present a comprehensive picture of the value of services provided to and for the community. To help Ys report the cost of these components in a consistent fashion, the Alliance provides a template.

300.8 REVIEW AND EVALUATION

Whereas monitoring is an ongoing process, reviews and evaluations take place at a specific moment in time—either part way through a piece of advocacy work (mid-term review) or at its completion. In addition to the reasons cited for monitoring advocacy, reviews and evaluations enable your Y to:

- evaluate the progress of the campaign against its stated objectives,
- learn about what works well and what needs adapting,
- demonstrate innovative and effective strategies,
- demonstrate the results and impact to donors, supporters, policymakers and other stakeholders, and
- generate financial and political support for advocacy work.

Formal reviews or evaluations should ideally include representatives from all stakeholder groups, both internal and external. This would include staff and partners, but could also include other allies, those with whom the project will be advocating (duty bearers), and those who will benefit from successful outcomes (the rights holders). The review or evaluation can be internal or external. External reviews (which use external facilitators)

are useful in providing more objective views, but they can take time to arrange and are costly.

In addition to focusing on changes brought about by the advocacy campaign, any review or evaluation should concentrate on the lessons learned from the exercise, and how these can be applied in the future. These should be clearly documented and shared with the staff, partners, community members and donors as appropriate.

While the terms of reference for each advocacy evaluation will be specific to that piece of work, the main questions an evaluation addresses include:

- To what extent were the original objectives achieved? Or, were they the right objectives in the first place?
- How did objectives change and evolve throughout the advocacy campaign, and why?
- What impact did any change have on the lives of communities (if at all)?
- What factors contributed to success or failure?
- Which specific approaches worked, and which did not?
- What should have been done differently given hindsight?
- What needs to be changed in the future as a result of this evaluation?

See Addendums 21 and 22 for ideas for enhancing your advocacy work and useful resources and links.

ADDENDUMS

ADVOCACY

THE JOURNEY

A.1 ADVOCACY BEST PRACTICES

Becoming an effective Y Advocate may require learning about good advocacy practices as well as having a lot of patience and perseverance. Some people are naturally better at advocacy than others. Those who tend to be better advocates are not easily intimidated by difficult people or situations, or they may have little difficulty speaking up for themselves or others. Some people, however, learn to be good advocates over time (often because they feel they must be) to achieve good for their causes.

There are several good practices that will help you become an effective Y Advocate. These practices can be broken down into four main areas: preparation, communication, documentation or note taking, and follow-up. It is important to remember what you may need to do as a Y Advocate may depend greatly on the issue or situation. Some situations will be more difficult and trying. They may require action over a period of weeks, months, or sometimes years. Other situations may be resolved more easily and therefore require less effort.

PREPARATION

- **Information is Power.** The more you can inform yourself about a particular issue or situation, the better you will be able to speak on behalf of your cause.
- **Have Specific Goals.** Good preparation usually involves trying to be as specific as possible about what you want to achieve and, if possible, what specific actions you would like to see happen.
- **Know Your Key Issues.** Identify the key issues or problems your organization is encountering. Often, the barriers we face may result from other people's attitudes, a lack of effective supports and services, etc. When you can clearly identify the problems or barriers that may exist, you can focus your advocacy on what needs to be addressed.
- **Be Solutions Oriented.** Identify some possible solutions you see as workable. Sometimes, solutions may not be easily identified or can only be identified by talking things through with others.
- **Know What You are Willing to Accept.** Identify what you are willing to accept if you cannot get exactly what you want. This will require thinking about what you may be willing to compromise with. This is not always easy, but it is sometimes necessary. Having a "fall back" position will allow you to still negotiate for something that may be acceptable, even if it is not the perfect solution.
- **Get Help.** Identify people who may be able to help you. Often, advocacy is more effective if you have allies. This may be someone who agrees to attend a meeting with you to support your cause or to simply take notes. It may also be someone who has some particular expertise in the issue your Y is addressing. Remember, being a good advocate does not mean you must do everything on your own.
- **Know the Key Players.** Identify the people you need to talk with to achieve your desired results. These may be people who have some authority to make some

decisions or who can help make things happen. Depending on the circumstances, key people might include someone who works for government, a politician, someone from a service agency, an employer or a human resource manager in a company, and so on. If your key player is a legislator, understand how the issue impacts his/her home district.

COMMUNICATION

- **Be Clear and Concrete.** Make sure your messages or requests are stated as clearly and briefly as possible. If your message or request sounds confused, other people may not know what it is that you want. What is the most important information you need to convey? At times, other information may be useful to support your request. Too much information, however, may get you sidetracked on other issues not as important.
- **Be assertive.** When you communicate with others, they should understand you have expectations you expect to achieve. Assertive communication also means talking in a firm (but not harsh) tone of voice. In face-to-face meetings, try to keep your body erect but also relaxed and use eye contact. Remember, assertive communication is not aggressive.
- **Listen Carefully.** Listening is simply a respectful way to communicate. This means paying close attention to what people are trying to tell you and not interrupting when other people are talking. In addition, listening may also provide you with information or clues about how to solve a problem or get what you want for your Y or community.
- **Ask Questions.** If something is not clear to you, ask for a better or clearer explanation. Asking questions is also a good way to get valuable information that may assist you in your advocacy. Asking questions may also be a useful way to have a conversation with someone who may be able to help you. A key part of effective advocacy is building good relationships with people who are in the position to make decisions or to offer help. If possible, prepare the questions you want to ask before a conversation or meeting.
- **Use Stories & Personal Experiences.** Often, people remember personal or other kinds of stories more than anything else. Stories can be helpful in providing a sense of real-life issues at stake. They can also be helpful by providing examples of how situations or issues may be resolved.

DOCUMENTATION AND NOTE KEEPING

- **Record Your Discussions.** Keep notes to record your discussions. Whether you have talked with someone on the telephone or in person, it is important to keep track of the name, contact information and title or position of the person with whom you spoke. Also, record the date and any responses you have received. This information will be particularly helpful to you if you need to follow up or talk with someone else who is higher in the “chain of command” within an organization, government or company.

- **Keep a File within the Y.** Sometimes you will receive written responses to requests or will want to ask for a written response. It is important to keep track of these in case you need them in the future. Sometimes, people will say or promise things verbally. Having a written record of what was agreed to may be very helpful. Also, when a request is being refused, it is helpful to have the refusal (preferably with the reasons for the refusal) spelled out in writing. This may be particularly important if you are asking someone else to review the decision or have the opportunity to make an appeal.

FOLLOW-UP

- **Send a Thank You!** It is a nice touch and a relationship-building move to send a note to the individual(s) (including legislative staff) with whom you engaged during a campaign.
- **Don't Get Frustrated.** Try not to be too frustrated or intimidated if you are not getting the response or results you are seeking. Continue to follow up until you feel your issues have been resolved to your satisfaction.
- **Follow the Hierarchy.** Sometimes, following up on your issues may require you talk with a more senior person within the organization. This person may have more authority to make decisions or may have an interest in helping you resolve your issue.
- **Engage Others.** At some point, you may feel you have done all you can on your own. Following up on your advocacy may require that you involve other people to assist you. When dealing with government systems or agencies, you may need to contact elected officials. This kind of follow up should normally be done only when you have gone through all the regular channels in the government system.
- **Negotiate.** There may be times you are not successful no matter how hard you try. Remember, advocacy is about negotiation. What are the things you are willing to compromise with or settle for if you cannot get what you want or need? Sometimes, the next best solution is better than no solution at all.

A.2 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

YMCAs know when community members work together, the community can move individuals, families and the community itself forward. Therefore, the Y responds to society's most pressing needs by developing innovative, community-based solutions that help those in need reach their full potential. We are also committed to inspiring a spirit of service by uniting individuals from all walks of life to participate in and work for positive social change. By definition, this is *civic engagement*, and the Y accepts this challenge as its social responsibility.

Broadly speaking, civic engagement is individual and collective actions that focus on work for the common good and are designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as summer feeding programs, volunteerism efforts, serving on local and regional task forces, writing a letter to an elected official, or engaging in a *Get Out the Vote* campaign.

Whatever form that engagement takes, the Y's focus on social responsibility charges each association with identifying avenues for getting citizens engaged in the improvement of their local and statewide community.

A.3 ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL

What is grassroots advocacy?

Advocacy does not always take place in the halls of State and Federal capitols. In fact, it is local advocacy efforts, focused on all levels of government, that make it possible for all Y Advocates (staff, volunteers, and community members) to elevate their voices and impact the issues they care about. This is *grassroots advocacy*. At the core of effective grassroots advocacy are campaigns that build widespread support in order to shape political dialogue.

Grassroots advocates are defined as individuals who are willing to take action online, on the phone, or by mail to contact their elected officials. Through education and training, your Y's grassroots advocates can over time grow into grassroots advocates—those who take their cause to the halls of State and Federal capitols.

How does grassroots advocacy relate to public affairs?

A grassroots advocacy campaign is an important bridge your Y can build between it and elected officials. A successful advocacy campaign should have several key attributes that include growing your grassroots and having Y Advocates tell their personal stories. Your Y can implement these strategies through effective education that engages and empowers your Y Advocates.

Your Y should build a grassroots advocacy campaign with functional technology (e.g., website, apps, distribution lists, etc.) that activates Y Advocates in order to harness the influence of online advocacy tools. These tools make it more convenient for advocates—as every extra step an advocate takes will have a measurable impact on whether the advocates decide to take action.

A.4 ARE YOU LOBBYING?

The IRS defines lobbying as “carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation.” This means *activities that try to influence legislators to pass laws that are favorable or overturn laws that are unfavorable to one’s cause.*

Unfortunately, there is still a persistent misconception that nonprofits like the YMCA cannot lobby. On the contrary, for most nonprofits, lobbying is legal and recommended within the limits outlined below.

There are two categories of lobbying:

- **Direct lobbying** occurs when the organization contacts legislators or government officials directly.
- **Grassroots lobbying** occurs when organizations try to influence legislation indirectly by attempting to mold the general public’s opinion on an issue and includes a call to action for the public.

To be considered lobbying by the IRS, both direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying must refer to a specific piece of legislation, express a view or an opinion on it, or, in the case of grassroots lobbying, include a call to action.

What is not lobbying?

There are numerous activities that resemble lobbying but are not considered lobbying by the IRS because they do not fulfill the above-mentioned criteria. These activities, which include the following, are legal activities. They are not limited and can be extremely valuable to educate the public, the government, and administrative agencies about issues impacting your mission.

- Communication with the judicial or executive branch or administrative agencies
- Discussion of broad issues that does not refer to a specific piece of legislation
- Providing a strong opinion on a specific piece of legislation but omitting a call for action
- Naming legislators in favor of or against an action and omitting a request to contact them
- Preparing and distributing a nonpartisan analysis of a legislative proposal
- Testifying for or aiding a legislative committee after a written request
- Self-defense lobbying where the organization’s future is threatened
- Lobbying as private citizens and not as representatives of the YMCA

It is important for Y Advocates to understand the distinctions between these activities. While the IRS recommends nonprofits engage in all of these activities, it warns that they do so within specific limits:

- The IRS allows 501(c)(3) organizations to engage in lobbying if it is not a “substantial part” of their activities. As this definition is quite ambiguous, such organizations have an option to elect an expenditure test under Section 501(h). Please visit the IRS website¹ and the Stand for Your Mission website² for more information about this option.
- Federal grant funds may not be spent on lobbying.

As you build your advocacy coalitions, you should note private foundations may not engage in any lobbying activities or earmark funds specifically for a lobbying activity; however, they can and should support nonprofits that lobby and advocate on issues.

Naturally, an individual, even when associated with a YMCA, can participate in any legal activity as a private citizen.

A final note on lobbying: In order to minimize local YMCAs’ lobbying activity, the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs contracts with a lobbying firm that utilizes its vast resources to leverage the Y voice with those of its other clients to lobby at the State level. Additionally, the Alliance employs a registered lobbyist to coordinate state and federal lobbying efforts. While these two Alliance resources focus their lobby efforts on the collective good of all Indiana YMCAs, your Y should feel free reach out to the Alliance if it is seeking guidance on its own lobbying efforts.

¹ <https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits>

² <https://standforyourmission.org>

A.5 SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY³

Indiana YMCAs boast great influence in their respective communities. Such influence can be leveraged to shape what local government does or does not do about a problem that comes before it. Moreover, Indiana Ys can leverage their collective voice to influence the actions of state and federal government. The actions taken by public officials to address problems that come before them for consideration and possible action are *public policy*.

Public policy has several key attributes:

- Policy is made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention. Policy is what the government chooses to do (actual) or not do (implied) about an issue or problem.
- Policy might take the form of law, or regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern an issue or problem.
- Policy is made on behalf of the "public."
- Policy is oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem.
- Policy is ultimately made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public.
- Policymaking is part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed, revisited and revised.

There are many problems in our communities that need to be solved. Some problems may readily be dealt with by actions taken in the private sphere (individuals and families) or by our civil society (social, economic, or political associations or organizations).

Public policy problems are those that must be addressed by laws and regulations adopted by government. Quite often, these are problems that must be addressed by Y Advocates as a means of ensuring your association can continue to successfully help individuals achieve healthy spirits, minds, and bodies.

³ Center for Civic Education, Project Citizens. What is Public Policy. <https://www.civiced.org/pc-program/instructional-component/public-policy>

A.6 WHAT EVERY ADVOCATE NEEDS TO KNOW⁴

The Y is a powerful ally and advocate for our communities. Our experience and strong relationships in neighborhoods across Indiana mean we can organize grassroots efforts and influence public policy around a range of social issues related to our focus areas and operations. We know when we work together, we move individuals, families, and communities forward.

Across Indiana, YMCAs address the needs, misfortunes, and inadequacies of individuals and communities and even help individuals and communities aspire and dream for a better quality of life. Advocacy is the tool that helps us advance our mission, increase our funding sources, and solve community and societal problems to accomplish this work.

Advocacy is a broad concept and incorporates communication about the Y mission, lobbying for legal change, and even nonpartisan voter education. “Nonprofit advocacy is legal, needed, and easy,” to quote the National Council of Nonprofits.

However, it is very important for every Y to understand the differences between various activities associated with advocacy as well as what is and what is not allowed in relation to its tax-exempt status.

Sharing the Mission

The broadest form of advocacy is sharing and communicating your Y’s mission and activities, sometimes referred to as *ambassadorship*, which extends to all staff and volunteers. As such, each ambassador has a role in representing your Y in the communities it serves, articulating its mission, and supporting and defending its message. Your Y increases its mission impact through this kind of advocacy work.

Advocacy happens everywhere. For example, to better leverage its mission, your Y may often connect with others who work on similar or complementary issues. This is the core of advocacy—organizations and individuals working together to move the mission forward.

All Y leaders can and should engage in this form of advocacy!

⁴ Board Source. What is advocacy? <https://boardsource.org/resources/what-is-advocacy>

A.7 ADVOCACY WEEK TEMPLATE – SUGGESTED TIMELINE

August 23-29, 2020

Chart of Work for Planning Advocacy Event

DATE	ACTION TO BE COMPLETED	INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE	COMPLETED
April 25 th	Advocacy Toolkit disseminated to Alliance membership	Alliance	
June 15 th	Select dates and communicate within your neighborhood. Send dates to Brent.	Each individual YMCA	
July 6 th	Send invitation letter to all local, county and state elected officials.	Each individual YMCA	
July 20 th	Follow up phone calls to elected officials inviting their attendance	Each individual YMCA	
August 3 rd	Send Media invitation to all local media outlets.	Each individual YMCA	
Week of August 17 th	Send press release to all local media outlets with specific information about advocacy event (1 week prior to event).	Each individual YMCA	
August 23-29	ADVOCACY WEEK 2020	Each individual YMCA	

NOTE: This chart is solely to be used as a guide in preparing to host an advocacy event. Please revise and extend this chart as your needs require (i.e. in the event of a crisis).

A.8 SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Honorable [Name]
[Address 1]
[Address 2]

Dear [title & name]:

The Indiana Alliance of YMCAs has designated the week of August 23rd through 29th as YMCA Advocacy Week in Indiana. The purpose of this special week is to provide elected and appointed officials with an opportunity to share their goals and visions with their local Y communities and to celebrate the work of their Ys across the Hoosier Land, including right here in [insert community served].

The [YMCA] will be hosting a “Better Together” celebration on [insert date and time] at our facility located at [insert address]. Please drop in for a visit as your schedule permits during our day of celebration (itinerary enclosed).

As one of our important community leaders, you are INVITED to join us on August [insert event date] to fellowship with our members, volunteers, donors, and staff; tour our dynamic facility; and enjoy lunch with your fellow elected officials from the county, municipality and school district. The local media will be invited to cover this event to share your visit with the community.

The [YMCA] is proud to join with YMCAs across Indiana to recognize Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week 2020. We look forward to hosting you and sharing with you the many ways our Y is impacting children and families in our community!

Please contact [insert contact name] to confirm your attendance. If you are unable to join us, we would be happy to schedule another time to give you a tour of our facilities and discuss with you the work our Y is doing in [insert your community].

Thank you for your continued support of the [YMCA]! I look forward to seeing you on [insert event date].

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer
[insert your YMCA's name]

A.9 SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT

[Your Y Point-of-contact]

[Phone]

[Email address]

INDIANA'S YMCAS CELEBRATE INDIANA YMCAS ADVOCACY WEEK

Ys collaborate with officials and celebrate community impact

The [YMCA] will join other Ys throughout the State of Indiana for the second annual Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week, August 23–29, 2020. The celebration is a program of the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs (Alliance).

The Alliance is made up of 42 separately incorporated Ys led by community volunteers and served by an executive director. As one of Indiana's leading nonprofit organizations, the Y is committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

<Insert quote from your local Y CEO here>

[Names of elected officials attending] will join YMCA staff and volunteers on [day and time] at [location] for a day at the Y. Elected officials will have the opportunity to see the Y in action by participating in activities that include [list activities scheduled]. The community is invited to attend, meet their elected officials and see all that the Y has to offer.

"There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y," said Wade Hampton, CEO of the Alliance. "That's because the Ys in Indiana have the longstanding relationships and physical presence to not just promote, but also deliver on lasting personal and social change. Every day, Ys work side by side with their neighbors to make sure everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive, carrying out the mission of being open and welcoming to all."

For more information on the Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week event at [YMCA], contact [Name of contact person] at [phone number] or [e-mail address]. For more information about the event statewide, contact Brent Wake at (260) 348-5734 or brent@indianaymcas.org.

A.10 MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT

[Your Y's Point-of-contact]

[Phone number]

[Email address]

INDIANA YMCAS PARTICIPATE IN INDIANA YMCAS ADVOCACY WEEK

WHAT: The [YMCA] invites you to cover and attend the biennial Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week Event.

WHEN: [Date and time]

WHERE: [Location]

DETAILS:

Indiana YMCAs are joining together to take part in the second annual Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week. The purpose of this special week is to provide elected and appointed officials with an opportunity to share their goals and visions with their local Y communities and to celebrate the work of Indiana Ys.

The [YMCA] will be hosting a “*Better Together*” celebration as part of the event. Community leaders have been invited to join us to fellowship with our members, volunteers, donors, and staff; tour our dynamic facility; and enjoy lunch with your fellow elected officials from the county, municipality and school district. Local media is also invited to cover this event.

The celebration event is a program of the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs—an alliance comprised of Indiana’s 42 separately incorporated Ys. As one of Indiana’s leading nonprofit organizations, the Y is committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

For more information on Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week event at [YMCA], contact [Name of contact person] at [phone number] or [e-mail address].

For more information about the event statewide, contact Brent Wake at (260) 348-5734 or brent@indianaymcas.org.

A.11 SAMPLE ITINERARY #1

Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week 2020
Indiana Alliance of YMCAs
August 23–29, 2020

SAMPLE ITINERARY #1 – “Areas of Focus Event”

AUGUST [DAY], 2020	
8:30am	Coffee and Refreshments with Elected & Appointed Officials, Staff, Volunteers and Donors (GOAL: informal session to meet elected officials and introduce Y staff and volunteers)
9:30am	Tour of Facility (GOAL: allow elected officials to <u>SEE</u> the opportunities their constituents have in your facility)
10:00am	Open Forum (GOAL: allow elected officials to <u>HEAR</u> the story of the Y in their communities and how the Y serves their constituents; use the opportunity to emphasize the Social Responsibility area of focus) Members, staff and volunteers share stories about the impact of the Y in your community. Allow legislators to ask questions and offer feedback.
10:30am	Activities (GOAL: allow elected officials to <u>DO</u> some of the activities/programs your Y offers in the community; use the opportunity to emphasize the Healthy Living and Youth Development areas of focus) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize a volleyball/basketball game• Have officials read to childcare children• Lead a workout class for elected officials• Meet and Greet with Youth and Government/Teen Leaders/Teen Achievers
12:00pm	LUNCH (GOAL: provide a healthy lunch and use the opportunity to emphasize the Healthy Living area of focus)

NOTE: This itinerary should be considered flexible and may be revised to meet your needs and objectives.

A.12 SAMPLE ITINERARY #2

Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week 2020
Indiana Alliance of YMCAs
August 23–29, 2020

SAMPLE ITINERARY #2 – “The Community Impact Tour”

(GOAL: *Transport* elected officials to different facilities to show diversity of Y programs; invite media to attend.)

AUGUST [DAY], 2020	
8:30am	Coffee and Refreshments with Legislators, Staff, Volunteers and Donors (GOAL: informal session to meet legislators and introduce Y staff and volunteers)
9:00am	Child Care / Early Learning Tour Meet the staff See the facility Let them read to children! (GREAT photo op for elected officials!) (GOAL: remind them of the economic impact of this program!)
9:30am	Building and Facility Tour Meet the staff See the facility Brief them on regulatory issues (e.g. Lifeguards, inspections, etc.) (GOAL: remind them of the importance physical fitness has on health care costs)
10:00am	Camp Tour Meet the staff See the facility Let them participate in a game with the kids! (Another great photo op!) (GOAL: remind them how summer camp keeps kids active and learning in a productive environment)
11:00pm	Wrap-Up Session / Media Availability (GOALS: answer any questions they have; thank them for attending; urge them to visit again!)

A.13 SAMPLE ITINERARY #3

Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week 2020
Indiana Alliance of YMCAs
August 23–29, 2020

SAMPLE ITINERARY #3 – “Service to the Y Recognition Luncheon”

AUGUST [DAY], 2020	
11:00am	Tour of Facility with Elected Officials and the Media
11:30am	Reception with Elected Officials, Members, Volunteers and Donors Informal session enabling guests to meet and talk
12:00pm	Luncheon and Awards Opening remarks by CEO Introduction of all elected officials / special guests Lunch served Video / Oral presentation highlighting the work of the Y in the community Service to Y Awards Present plaques to elected officials thanking them for their service to the Y Allow each to speak briefly GREAT photo / media op Closing remarks by CEO or CVO

A.14 INDIANA ALLIANCE OF YMCAS' PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Once your Y has succeeded in advocacy basics, a logical next step is to consider its role in statewide advocacy through the Public Policy Committee (PPC) of the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs. The PPC is commissioned by and responsible to the Alliance for providing a clear strategy for public policy advocacy and organizing advocacy efforts across Indiana. The PPC is comprised of Indiana YMCA executives and volunteers from across the state. Its responsibilities include:

- Monitoring state legislative reports from the Alliance lobbyist and Vice President for Public Policy & Alliance Initiatives (VP) that would affect YMCAs, and recommending positions on pertinent bills, consistent with the Alliance Strategic Plan
- Working with the Alliance lobbyist and VP to rally local support for issues
- Recommending policy or actions for Indiana YMCAs' public policy advocacy, consistent with the Strategic Plan
- Developing a public policy strategy filter for decision-making
- Assisting in the planning of the Alliance's Statehouse Day in coordination with the VP
- Annually selecting volunteers to attend the YMCA National Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C.
- Overseeing the collections of key legislative contacts from each Alliance member for the VP to maintain and regularly update
- Developing an annual public policy agenda for the Alliance that aligns with YMCA Focus Areas
- Gathering input from Alliance members prior to setting the public policy agenda
- Coordinating federal recess activities and Indiana YMCAs Advocacy Week efforts during the short sessions of the Indiana General Assembly
- Determining Community Benefit Report data-gathering requirements and processes
- Meeting nine (9) times annually; one (1) in person meeting, Indiana YMCA Statehouse Day (during long sessions of the Indiana General Assembly), and up to seven (7) conference calls throughout the legislative session

A.15 RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPING A PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

STARTING POINTS FOR YOUR RESEARCH

Who is affected by the issue?

- Who is affected the most?
- Who loses, and what do they lose?
- Who gains, and what do they gain?

What are the consequences of the issue?

- For the individuals mostly affected?
- For their families?
- For society?
- What is the economic impact of the issue?

What are the economic costs of the issue, and who bears these costs?

- What are the economic benefits of the issue, and who benefits?

What is the social impact of the issue?

- What are the social costs of the issue, and who bears these costs?
- What are the social benefits of the issue, and who benefits?
- What are the barriers?

What are the barriers to addressing this issue?

- How can they be overcome?
- What are the resources?

What resources will be needed to address this issue?

- Where and how can they be tapped?
- What is the history of this issue?

What is the history of the issue in the community?

- What past efforts were made to address it?
- What were the results?
- To put it another way, it's helpful to find the root cause of the issue and what has happened since.

WHAT ARE THE BEST SOURCES OF INFORMATION?

Gathering Background Information

Getting accurate background information may be heavy lifting; you, or others in your Y, may need to become experts in the field, or find existing experts to join or advise your Y.

For example, suppose your issue involves excessive Medicaid reimbursement for community-based health initiatives. Your Y should be somewhat knowledgeable about Medicaid, Medicaid's reimbursement process, healthcare, community-based interventions, applicable state regulations, and so on.

Libraries

When looking for background information, the local library is a great place to start. It will have many current subscriptions and back numbers of major newspapers, magazines, etc. Special reports published by periodicals can be a valuable resource for information about the background of the issue.

In addition, many reference librarians are born to research. They can guide you to reliable sites on the Web where you can get what you need. Here are some specific places to look in the library:

- The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. This will lead you to the names and dates of articles on the issue that have appeared in magazines in recent years. Many libraries will also be able to produce the back copies of the magazines. These articles can be valuable in giving you background information—but keep in mind, although it's not terribly common, incorrect (or outdated) information does occasionally find its way into print. To be on the safe side, verify what you learn with two or three independent sources.
- Almanacs and yearbooks. Annual publications such as The World Almanac and Book of Facts, published by the Newspaper Enterprise Association may produce information you need. Yearbooks are more specialized. For example, The Municipal Yearbook and The County Yearbook are both published by the International City Management Association.
- Indexes and surveys. Major newspapers often publish "indexes" which you can use to dig up stories from the archive, which the library may keep on microfiche or microfilm. The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Christian Science Monitor are three useful ones. Surveys of events are compiled by various organizations. One of the most useful is Facts on File.

LEARNING FROM OTHER ADVOCACY GROUPS

In many cases, background research might already have been done by national advocacy groups. You may also be able to learn from smaller advocacy groups who may be tackling issues similar to yours. However, you will need to be careful about taking over facts and figures prepared by other organizations. In certain cases, these might not be accurate, or might give a different slant to the research than the one you need.

One thing you can learn from other groups is their process—the way they went about their own research. For example, suppose a group in a neighboring community had a problem

high obesity and hypertension rates. Now, a similar problem seems to be a lack of grocery stores with healthy food options. You can find out what sources of information they used and what roadblocks they encountered in their efforts to remedy the situation.

You might want to use something similar to this form to get started:

NEED TO KNOW	WHERE TO LOOK	USEFUL?
Effect of paper mill waste on fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library • College – Professor Smith, Zoology Department • Ask group at Milltown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – ask for Jane • No – consults for company! • Great – have a lot of stuff they'll share

GATHERING LOCAL INFORMATION

You will need very specific information about the issue as it affects your community in order to plan your campaign and push the right buttons.

Some of the research methods you use to gather background information may also be excellent for filling in the local angle. For instance, reference librarians often have an excellent knowledge of the community and where its archives or other background facts may be found.

- **The local media.** If you have a local newspaper, try the clippings file. You may find valuable information about the origins of the problem you face. Television and radio may not keep archives systematically, but if there is a reporter or researcher on staff who's been around for many years, he or she might be glad to give you some guidance. For example: "I remember there was a zoning dispute..." or "When that hospital was set up, there was some provision..." Even unspecific memories and hints may lead you to right places to find relevant official documents. Remember that many local papers now have websites which are often stuffed with archival material.
- **Annual reports.** Is your opponent a company that issues annual reports? These can provide useful statistics. Or you might find valuable information from special reports issued by groups such as public interest groups, business organizations, social services, and others that release information to the public. (Again, librarians might know where to look.)
- **Archival records.** City Hall, or other government agencies, such as school boards, may have archival records that tell you what you want to know. For example, court records and real estate records may be loaded with information about past difficulties of opponents, the history of zoning decisions, and so on. Another possible source to find information is through the Freedom of Information Act.

Under this Act you can obtain information about federal government agencies. This may be about an outside agency or about your own. There are three exceptions: the Congress, the Federal Courts, and the Executive Office. Requests for information cannot be made to schools, state or local governments, and private businesses, organizations, or individual records.

- **Commercial sector.** Often the business establishment of a community gathers facts and figures--for example, for use in a brochure designed to bring new business or new residents to the town. The Chamber of Commerce may be a good place to start.

FILLING THE GAPS

There may be some information your Y just can't get from written sources, whether paper or electronic. And if there are gaps in what you need to know, you may find you can fill them best by asking questions.

For example, do you want to know whether a strategy you are considering is likely to win the support of the general public or their undying resentment? Ask!

Here are some suggestions for extracting information you need from people in your community.

- **Interviews with community leaders.** Set up a time to talk with people who are identified by members of the community as leaders. These people don't have to be elected officials or people in power, but they should be respected and have influence. They might be:
 - Church leaders
 - Youth group leaders
 - Respected local professionals
 - Representatives of the business community
 - Educators (i.e. school board members, school principals)

Usually these people are busy, so it pays to plan your questions before you go and make them specific. For example, "If you were in our situation, how would you...?" Or, "Thinking back 15 years, can you remember how the community reacted to...?" Remember, these leaders may be important to you later in the campaign, so be careful to keep them on your side! If they don't yet want to open up about a certain topic, back off.

- **Interviews with community residents.** You may be able to gather useful information about community knowledge and attitudes by reaching a sample of the residents, if your sample is big enough, and if it is really representative. There are various techniques you can use, including:
 - Intercept surveys (stopping people on the street)

- Telephone surveys (with numbers picked at random)
- Written surveys (sent to a sample picked at random)

You may get useful information from any of these methods, though the return rate on written surveys is usually very low and they're very expensive. Just talking to people in the street, or telephoning a sample to ask what they think about a certain topic may give you fresh insights, or bring to your attention problems you hadn't thought about.

Just remember you probably can't quote facts and figures gathered in these surveys unless:

- You use a sufficiently large sample.
- You are very professional about the way that the sample is chosen.
- You are very professional about the way the questions are worded.
- The results are carefully coded and analyzed.

For example, if your Y claims "90% of the people in this town support us," and it turns out you only telephoned your friends, or only talked to people in coffee shops, this will be easy for the opposition to dismiss--and they are unlikely to take your statistical claims seriously in future.

- **Focus groups.** These can be useful in two ways:
 1. To "go fishing" for ideas and reactions from a group of people
 2. To test out specific ideas

There is one caveat: most research from focus groups can't be used to "prove" anything. You can't say, "People in the community say that clean air is their highest priority - just based on one focus group - it's simply not a large enough sample. But focus groups can be very effective in suggesting lines of inquiry you might not have thought of, and in giving reactions to ideas presented to them.

- **Guided discussions.** This way of gathering information is something like doing focus groups one-on-one. Members of your Y chat with members of the community, either face-to-face or by telephone. Interviewers follow a check-list of points you want covered in the course of the conversation, and questions you'd like answered, but you can also afford to let the conversation wander - and that can often produce some good insights into the issue.

A.16 SETTING YOUR PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

SPECIFIC VS. BROAD POLICY AGENDAS

It may be tempting to think of a public policy agenda as a specific policy ask but this is not always the case. That might be true in some cases, where the policy agenda consists of a very technical or specific policy ask (e.g., requesting a cost of living increase for income supports). Specific asks can be helpful, as the issues your organization is trying to address are likely complex, so your policy agenda might represent a steppingstone to the broader changes you wish to see. It may also be the case that a policy ask is more aspirational, idealistic, or inspirational (e.g., to reduce poverty by 50% in five years). Both of these approaches are valuable and serve different purposes—specific policy requests can make a big impact and broad policy requests can serve to prepare and motivate allies and supporters.

Creating a public policy agenda is not likely to be a neat and tidy process. A good policy agenda is not created in a vacuum and is sure to be accomplished only after several revisions, lengthy discussions, and healthy debate. The more people you can talk to who have differing views and positions, the more robust and thoughtful your policy agenda will be.

To set the issue(s) on which you will focus your policy agenda, consider your strengths as an organization by asking questions like:

- What issues have you already researched? What expertise do you possess?
- What policy issues have you been involved with in the past? Are there opportunities to build on previous momentum?
- Does this issue fall within your charitable objects?
- What is the capacity of your Y? Who can lead and who can support the work?
- What connections with the intended audience (e.g. government, community, industry) already exist?
- What are other organizations doing and can you leverage each other's work?
- What kind of policy shift would make a big impact on the people, community, or issue in your Y's mandate?

SET THE GOAL

Oftentimes, we consider policy change to be the end goal, but you may not want to start there. Ask yourself what it is you want to achieve with your policy agenda. The following are a few examples of some goals your Y might be trying to reach through a policy agenda:

- Establishing credibility and/or expertise on a particular issue
- Building relationships with bureaucrats, elected officials, and/or media
- Maximizing impact by forging partnerships with other organizations.
- Creating engagement among particular stakeholder groups

- Educating and/or informing decisionmakers about issues
- Seeking public commitment on a particular policy issue from parties (either through the party platform or other public declaration of support)

FRAMING

Framing refers to the lens you will apply when communicating about the issue(s) on your public policy agenda. There are multiple ways to look at every issue or problem, so it is important to frame your policy agenda with communications that are crisp, clear, and in a language that speaks to your audience.

Framing a policy agenda comes back to your Y's ultimate goal—once you have become clear in what you hope to achieve, you can ask yourself some of the following questions to help you frame your policy agenda:

- What problem does this solve, and how can that be communicated in a way that conveys the importance of your ask?
- Who is your audience? Be specific, who are you trying to reach with your message?
- What is most relevant or compelling about this issue to your audience?
- What does your audience already know about this issue?
- What is the language that will resonate with this audience?
- What evidence exists for your issue? How prominently does the evidence feature in our message? Research evidence to support your policy agenda is important, though it is rarely the central story, it is a supporting player.
- Who does your issue impact? What would be the effect if your policy agenda was implemented?
- Who are the critics, and what are the risks?
- Who are the allies, and how can you bring them along?
- Into whose jurisdiction does the issue fall?
- How critical is the issue? Is there a need for immediate action, or can it be addressed over time?

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Although there is no magic formula for developing a public policy agenda, there are ways to set conditions for success to strengthen and position your policy agenda:

- You know people, and you know people who know people! Use your networks and the networks of your networks to talk to people about your policy ideas. This may even lead to a collaborative approach and a stronger voice advocating for the same issue.
- Test out your ideas for unintended consequences. Think through as many of the possible outcomes as you can by consulting with people who would be impacted by your policy agenda.

- Know the timing of when and how all political parties are developing their platforms. If you are not in the know, rely on your networks to find someone who is, and gather information through connections.
- Stay up-to-date on current events (e.g., sign up for newsletters from parties, pay attention to news of the day, find e-news sources that are timely and informative)
- Stay focused on your policy agenda but be nimble on how to move it forward.
- Finally, have fun with it! Remember, setting a public policy agenda does not have to be a daunting task, but instead a way to maximize the impact your Y has on the communities it serves.

A.17 WORKING WITH ALLIES

DO YOU AND YOUR ALLIES CARE ABOUT THE SAME THINGS?

Once you have identified potential allies, the first question you will want to ask is which of them cares about the issue enough to want to help your Y. The more a group benefits from your success, the more willing they will be to cooperate with your Y. Likewise, a group with a lot to lose will naturally do their best to oppose you. Of course, groups might have both something to gain and something to lose by helping you. The question is: "Do the benefits of helping you outweigh the costs?" Costs here are not just money, but could include group identity, prestige, or time.

An Allies' Risks vs. Benefits Table will help determine who your strongest potential allies are, by taking into consideration what they may win or lose if they decide to support your cause.

When using the table, ask yourself: "Whose problem is it?" List as many groups as you think may be affected by the problem at stake.

Then, for each of these groups, ask yourself:

- What are the benefits? What do they gain by helping you?
- What are the risks? What might they lose?
- You can now approach these groups as potential allies; knowing the risks and benefits they face makes it easier to downplay or eliminate the risks and emphasize the benefits.

Even groups without a direct connection to your issue may have an indirect interest, which can work to your advantage.

One way to think of indirect allies might be to think of you and your allies as being in the hub of a bicycle wheel. Think of the rim as the rest of the community and the "spokes" of the wheel as the links and ties your immediate allies have to others in the community. The following questions concern who is linked to your allies:

- Who does business with these people?
- Who lends and borrows their money?
- Which organizations and churches do they belong to?

The Happy Valley High School is facing increasing violence among its students. Your group wants to hire a security guard as part of a program to reduce violence at the school. Using the risks vs. benefits table, you determine who is more likely to become an ally among teachers, students, parents and the local education board.

The group who has the most direct connection to the issue you're trying to address would be the students themselves. They're directly threatened by the violence at their school and would benefit from having violence reduced or eliminated.

Indirect interests might be held by the insurance company that covers the school. They could lose money if students or teachers are hurt at school, or if school property is damaged. Thus, your group could approach them as a potential ally, using saving money as the incentive.

USING YOUR ALLIES

Cooperation with allies presents a powerful, unified image to the community, and demonstrates the issue is important enough to compromise and put aside differences in order to solve the problem. The more allies your Y has voicing the same concerns about the issue, the more likely you are to succeed.

Your Y is concerned about the health disparities in an economically distressed community, and you feel a major factor is unhealthy dietary practices. In your community, there is a group of churches that are also concerned about health disparities, but feel that focusing on dietary habits all of the blame on community members. The group of received a large donation from their members to do something about the problem, while your group has many volunteers willing to work, but limited financial resources.

You realize the churches' money and influence on community members would be a great help but convincing the churches to agree to your strategies will be difficult. Instead, you might compromise by creating a series of community workshops where healthy diets and food prep are discussed. You would be working together to make progress on the issue of reducing health disparities, and the church group would benefit without giving in to what they might consider narrowminded placement of blame.

WHICH ALLY SHOULD YOU CONTACT FIRST?

One way to prioritize your list of potential allies is to rank them by how much power they can potentially bring to your group. A group's power is a measure of how effective that

group will be in helping you achieve your goals. As your project progresses, you may find you need an ally with special expertise, or with a special bargaining skill.

Ally Power Grid

The use of an Ally Power Grid may help your group recognize what power a potential ally has, and which allies are most useful to your group.

First, let's run through a list of the types of power allies may possess, and some examples.

TYPE OF POWER	RATIONALE	EXAMPLE
<i>Members:</i> How many members does the group have?	The more members a group has, the less likely it is to be ignored.	A group with 500 members shows up at a school board meeting.
<i>Money:</i> Will they donate money to your issue?	Donated money and other resources are always welcome in achieving your group's goals.	The local teachers' union donated money to your group.
<i>Credibility:</i> Do they bring special credibility?	A group with strong positive recognition in your community will help bring credibility to your own group.	A respected clergyman from a local church speaks on your behalf.
<i>Appeal:</i> Do they have special appeal?	Some groups of people have universal appeal, and if your group is connected with them, it will help your image as well.	A poster child is used to promote an emotional response.
<i>Network:</i> Are they part of a large, organized network?	A group who has lots of other groups in its network is going to have financial resources, credibility, and some political power.	The local chapter of the United Way offers staff support to your group.
<i>Reputation:</i> Do they have a reputation for toughness?	Groups with a tough reputation may discourage opponents.	The local law enforcement officers' union says they'll support policy changes for improved safety.
<i>Skills:</i> Do they have special skills?	An ally may bring technical, business, or legal skills to your group.	Smith, Jones, & Brown's law firm donates free legal support.
<i>Newsworthy:</i> Are they particularly newsworthy?	Some groups may have a reputation or connections in the media that make them newsworthy. If they align with you, that might give positive media attention to your cause.	An activist group for children's rights that recently won a major victory offers to give your group technical support.

HOW DO YOU USE A POWER GRID?

- Use a separate grid for each ally whose power you wish to examine.
- For each type of power, assess how much of it your ally has and give an example.
- Determine the most effective allies by looking at which have more categories of power, or by identifying which allies have power most relevant to your specific needs. That is, if what you really need is an ally with money, then an ally with special appeal may not necessarily be particularly useful at this stage.

EXAMPLE OF AN ALLY POWER GRID

TYPE OF POWER	POWER APPRAISAL: HOW MUCH OF THIS POWER DO THEY HAVE?	GIVE AN EXAMPLE:
Members	They have a lot.	The group has 200 active members.
Credibility	Very credible.	Last year they were responsible for \$100,000 in improvements made to the neighborhood park.

This is helpful for all allies, but if your time is limited, you can do it only for allies you are unsure of, or if you're looking for an ally with a specific power.

Use a blank Ally Power Grid to find the best allies for your organization, and feel free to add your own criteria for power to the grid.

A.18 WHAT NOT TO DO

Success in advocacy takes far more than just launching an advocacy campaign. With the right strategy and tactics, your YMCA can build an engine of genuine Y Advocates and a campaign that takes on a life of its own and pays off handsomely. However, it is important you avoid these missteps that could hurt your effort and your Y.

- **Provide a Generic Advocacy Experience.** Your advocates are busy professionals, and they must be judicious about where they spend their time. Make the effort to personalize their advocacy program (i.e. appeal to their interests). If advocates join the campaign and immediately feel “this isn’t for me,” they won’t engage with the campaign or stick around long-term.
- **Not Starting Internally.** Before you can launch a successful advocacy campaign, you need to get your whole team aligned around the vision. Get buy-in and support at all levels of your association to make the campaign a success.
- **Keep Narrow Advocate Recruitment Efforts.** Attrition of your advocates will happen naturally as advocates change roles and jobs, so you need to be proactive about counteracting this with fresh advocates. If you’re just relying on publicity to generate new advocates, you’re missing a lot of major opportunities to grow your campaign. Plus, if you aren’t continually increasing engagement in your campaign, you are not providing existing advocates a new infusion of people, thoughts, and insights. You need to keep things fresh with a continuous stream of new advocates.
- **Exaggerate.** Be honest even when you are not sure of the facts. Every issue has at least two sides—be honest about admitting the pros and cons of your issue.
- **Make threats.** Telling legislators they have to do what you want, or you won’t vote for them, will only turn people off.
- **Argue.** If it is clear the person will not support your position, just give the facts and ask him/her to consider your viewpoint. You want to keep the lines of communication open for discussing future issues.
- **Make Promises You Can’t Deliver.** Understand your Y’s capacity. It’s best to refrain from making commitments during the meeting. Instead, indicate your Y can have a conversation about the potential committee, then be sure to follow up with the official. Even if your internal conversation gets delayed, update the official regarding the delay.
- **Be Put off by Smokescreens or Long-winded Answers.** Bring the member back to the point. Maintain control of the meeting.
- **Shy Away.** Meeting with cantankerous legislators, or those whose views oppose your own, may provide the legislator with valuable information that moves him/her to your side of the issue. At minimum, it will provide you with valuable information that will inform your campaign.
- **Be offended by Meetings with Staff.** If a member is unable to meet with you personally and requests you meet with a staff person, do so. Legislators can get

incredibly busy, and staff are oftentimes the subject matter experts who will be working on your issue anyway. Value the staff and treat them like the legislator.

- **Make Backroom Deals.** Don't get caught up in pay-to-play arrangements and do not offer any sort of compensation or rewards for actions in favor of your position.
- **Give up!** Advocacy is all about patience, persistence and perseverance. Real change happens over time. Find ways to celebrate the steps along the way to the larger goal

A.19 POLITICAL ACTIVITY VS. LOBBYING

Lobbying and political activity are often and easily confused, and it is vital for YMCAs, as public charities, to know the difference. *Lobbying* refers to the activities your Y does to influence legislation that affects its mission fulfillment. *Political activity* refers to partisan campaigning and nonpartisan voter education.

Public charities are allowed to lobby but can lose their tax-exempt status if they engage in partisan political campaigns, i.e., electioneering. This is because public charities serve and are supported by the general public. It therefore is not fitting for your YMCA to influence the political affairs of the government in one direction or another. Remaining nonpartisan is the only way a charity can represent its constituents in an unbiased manner while fulfilling its public purpose.

The IRS has set strict guidelines for public charities and other tax-exempt organizations regarding political activity and expects them to pay close attention to these regulations. Partisan political campaign activity is strictly prohibited for a 501(c)(3) organization. However, a public charity can and should pursue nonpartisan voter education activities. The distinction between these activities follows.

Partisan Political Campaign Activity/Electioneering

Partisan political campaign activity is called *electioneering* and includes participating or intervening in political campaigns for or against a candidate for national, state, or local elective office. It does not apply to nominees for appointed offices. Electioneering is strictly prohibited for your Y as a 501(c)(3) organization.

Electioneering includes written or oral endorsement of a candidate, rating candidates, forming a Political Action Committee (PAC), coordinating educational or lobbying activities with a campaign, or contributing or soliciting funds for campaigns or candidates.

Nonpartisan Voter Education

Nonpartisan voter education is allowed and can take the form of educational and get-out-the-vote activities. Taking sides is forbidden, however.

Nonpartisan voter education is legal, and is recommended, for your association to increase public awareness of issues impacting its mission. Your Y can:

- educate the public on issues in a nonpartisan manner
- engage in voter registration
- hold nonpartisan candidate debates/forums
- allow its staff to participate in political campaign activities as private individuals

When engaging in voter education, your association must not endorse a particular side of the issue or campaign. More specifically, this means your Y must not:

- name candidates when encouraging people to vote.
- use registration lists to target voters who are of one political party
- select a specific area for a voter registration drive because a certain candidate in that area is a favorite. Your Y must be able to provide contemporaneous reasoning for its voter registration drives and not rely on after-the-fact rationales. If questions arise, it must be able to show what motivated it to make decisions before the event.
- define subgroups by political or ideological criteria. However, your Y may focus on
 - specific minority groups, even if statistical data indicate a political preference
 - subgroups tied to discrimination (race, gender, language, low-income, unemployed)
 - subgroups sharing common problems (farmers, businesspeople)

When planning voter education programs, your Y should be attentive to the following guidelines:

- Don't introduce new issues close to election time.
- Don't coordinate activities with a candidate's campaign schedule.
- Do focus on broad issues and avoid addressing high-profile issues that divide candidates.

When organizing candidate debates/forums, your Y must:

- show no bias when choosing the location, the expert panel, and, when allowing the candidates to express their opinions, address issues that have regularly been of concern to your association.
- invite all viable candidates to the forum—even if they are unable to attend.
- refrain from editorializing informational reports.

A.20 TRACKING AND MONITORING YOUR ADVOCACY EFFORT

The goal of any advocacy project or program is to improve the lives of ordinary citizens. For your Y, this means your staff, Y members, and the greater community. The key question your Y needs to ask is to what extent do advocacy programs effectively achieve this goal?

MONITORING

Each advocacy project should be monitored on a continuous basis over its lifetime.

Reasons for this include to:

- assess to what extent the strategy is successful and to adapt it accordingly to be able to respond to unpredictable events
- provide regular opportunities to communicate, work together and share experience—build relationships
- document the process in order to be able to learn from experience to improve future work in advocacy
- demonstrate the results to donors, supporters, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Monitoring should be the responsibility of those in charge of managing the advocacy campaign. This will normally include the Advocacy Task Force but might also include partners in many situations. It will involve collecting information on pre-defined—or previously not defined—indicators as set out from the beginning of the campaign. Mechanisms for monitoring often include meetings, minutes, telephone calls and project records. Advocacy monitoring also involves constantly collecting and analyzing information on wider issues.

Monitoring might cover information on:

- **internal issues:** this includes how well staff (and partners) are working, and how well activities are being implemented
- **external issues:** this covers key changes in the external environment, and what else is happening (or what others are doing) that might affect the results of the advocacy project
- **collaborative issues:** how well the campaign is linked into and able to cooperate with relevant alliances and coalitions, or how well are any capacity-building activities being carried out; and progress towards objectives: what progress is being made towards the ultimate goals, and objectives of the advocacy campaign

It is essential to recognize the values and opinions of those directly involved in the advocacy campaign at all levels. The most important aim of monitoring is to identify when plans need to be changed because things are not going well, challenges are being faced or new opportunities have been identified.

MONITORING LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

A major challenge for individuals and organizations is determining which of the thousands of measures introduced in the U.S. Congress and the Indiana General Assembly will affect their work and bottom lines. It is a certainty that some of them will.

Regulations based on enacted measures often impose challenges, costs and include provisions for substantial noncompliance penalties. Tracking legislation will enable your Y to limit its exposure to such challenges and costs. With early notification of emerging measures, you can have an impact on the legislative process well before those measures become law and related rules are adopted.

Indeed, legislatures have considerable latitude in addressing the concerns of those likely to be affected by their deliberations. Lawmakers can even decide not to consider a particular bill. It is primarily for this reason that billions are spent each year in lobbying efforts.

Tracking can also be beneficial for organizations that do not actively engage in lobbying. Active monitoring allows organizations more time to prepare for impending changes and various costs that will be incurred. Although lawmakers generally provide a grace period to comply with new laws, early warning provides additional time for smoother adaptation to mandated changes.

THE GOOD NEWS

Monitoring legislative activity can be a challenge, but it is possible to do. Moreover, as with regulations, a benefit that tends to be overlooked is the potential for business opportunities associated with ever-changing mandates. There are also resources available to make monitoring legislation practical and affordable. This enables organizations to adopt a forward-looking view of what is going on in state capitols and at the federal level—so they can quickly identify, assess and respond to legislative activity that's critical to them.

STAYING ON TOP OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

While there are a number of legislation tracking tools that cost, there are also a number that are FREE.

State

- **LegiScan** (<https://legiscan.com/IN>) – the nation's first impartial real-time legislative tracking service designed for both public citizens and government affairs professionals across all sectors in organizations large and small. LegiScan provides monitoring of every bill in the 50 states and Congress. Giving its users and clients a

central and uniform interface with the ability to easily track a wide array of legislative information.

- **Indiana General Assembly Bill Watch** (<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills>). As bills are introduced during the legislative session, the IGA provides basic updates on all the bills that have been introduced. All bills must achieve certain milestones within specific deadlines throughout the legislative process in order to remain active, and whether they are active determines how they are displayed in Bill Watch.

Federal

- **LegisScan** (<https://legiscan.com/US/legislation>)
- **Congress.gov** (<https://www.congress.gov/>) – the online database of United States Congress legislative information. Congress.gov is a joint project of the Library of Congress, the House, the Senate and the Government Publishing Office. The resource is a comprehensive, Internet-accessible source of information on the activities of Congress, including: bills and resolutions, texts, summaries and status, voting results, including how individual members voted, Congressional Record, including the daily digest, presidential nominations, treaties, and appropriations.

Also, keep in mind the Indiana Alliance of YMCAs tracks legislation and employs a lobbying firm at the State level to do the same. The Alliance will always be a resource for your Y if it needs timely updates and information pertaining to bills.

A.21 IDEAS FOR ENHANCING YOUR ADVOCACY WORK

- **Ensure your effort is volunteer-driven and community engaged.** Advocacy is a means for making board membership worthwhile. Allow the development of advocacy strategy to be board-driven. Allow your volunteers and members, especially youth, to tell your stories. If your Y is going to drive this into a sustainable culture-shifting exercise, it has to be driven by volunteers.
- **Start local.** The most impactful advocacy efforts are local. Take advantage of every opportunity to engage legislators and their staff away from the hustle and bustle of the Statehouse and in their home communities. This is your chance to engage them as neighbors and to share about the work that your Y is doing in your community.
- **Collaborate with neighboring YMCAs.** Some legislators represent numerous YMCA service areas. Be sure to work with your Alliance regional neighborhood to coordinate invitations and legislative visits. It might even be beneficial to plan one event for your entire neighborhood or several neighborhood events highlighting the work of each of your neighborhood's Y.
- **Focus on relationship-building.** Local Advocacy is relationship building. The aim is not to oppose or support any particular legislation. Rather, it should be used as an opportunity to discover how your Y can better serve legislators and the State.
- **Share your effort with staff and other community leaders.** As you develop your advocacy strategy, be sure to share your ideas with your fellow leaders inside and outside of the Y. Doing so generates enthusiasm and collaboration opportunities.
- **Integrate youth voice.** Elected and appointed leaders love connecting with YMCA youth. Be sure you strive to include members of your teen groups (i.e., Indiana YMCA Youth and Government, Y Achievers, Teen Leaders, etc.) in the planning and implementation of your strategy and related events.
- **Use local offices.** Far too often, advocates believe federal advocacy consists only of calling their legislator in Washington D.C., visiting them on Capitol Hill or voting. Unfortunately, local YMCAs aren't aware of the possible influential allies they have within the state and district offices of their elected federal leaders. Keeping these local staff representatives engaged in the local Y and informed of advocacy issues important to the communities your Y serves can be far more effective than sending a letter or making a call to Capitol Hill.
- **Treat political campaigns equally.** YMCAs should be very careful about getting involved in political campaigns. While it is not ideal for a local YMCA to support a specific candidate, Y facilities can serve as polling stations and as a town hall or debate venue. Keep in mind, if your Y does either of the latter, it should provide equal opportunity to all candidates of both parties.
- **Be a community convener.** YMCAs are a part of the fabrics of their communities. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Y to be engaged in critical discussions that shape community actions and strategies. Moreover, the Y is often a perfect convening spot for community leaders, as well as the broader community, for these

discussions. Beyond making your Y available, seek out opportunities to be at the table and to make your facility a backdrop of the conversation.

A.22 USEFUL RESOURCES & LINKS

You are not alone in your advocacy efforts. Many organizations and resources exist to provide guidance and best practices to help you in your effort.

Community Toolbox

<https://ctb.ku.edu>

The University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development's Community Tool Box is a free, online resource for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change. Its mission is to promote community health and development by connecting people, ideas, and resources.

Congress.gov

<https://www.congress.gov>

The online database of United States Congress legislative information. Congress.gov is a joint project of the Library of Congress, the House, the Senate and the Government Publishing Office. The resource is a comprehensive, Internet-accessible source of information on the activities of Congress, including: bills and resolutions, texts, summaries and status, voting results, including how individual members voted, Congressional Record, including the daily digest, presidential nominations, treaties, and appropriations.

Find My Legislator

<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators>

A tool provided by the Indiana General Assembly to help Hoosiers identify their state and federal elected officials by inputting their address

Indiana Alliance of YMCAs CEO Portal

<https://www.indianaymcas.org/user>

The Alliance's CEO Portal serves as the home of resources. Include instructions for accessing portal. You can also access the Alliance's public policy agenda at www.indianaymcas.org/policy-priorities.

Indiana General Assembly Bill Watch

<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2020/bills>

As bills are introduced during the legislative session, the IGA provides basic updates on all the bills that have been introduced. All bills must achieve certain milestones within specific deadlines throughout the legislative process in order to remain active, and whether they are active determines how they are displayed in Bill Watch.

Internal Revenue Service

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits>

The Internal Revenue Service Charities and Nonprofits section has a wealth of resources to help organizations to understand permissible and non-permissible advocacy-related activities.

LegiScan

STATE: <https://legiscan.com/IN>

FEDERAL: <https://legiscan.com/US/legislation>

The online platform provides the nation's first impartial real-time legislative tracking service designed for both public citizens and government affairs professionals across all sectors in organizations large and small. Having nearly 20 years of development maturity, the service provides monitoring of every bill in the 50 states and Congress. The services gives users and clients a central and uniform interface with the ability to easily track a wide array of legislative information.

Stand for Your Mission

<https://standforyourmission.org>

The *Stand for Your Mission* campaign is a challenge to all nonprofit decision-makers to stand up for the organizations they believe in by actively representing their organization's mission and values, and creating public will for positive social change.

Initiated by BoardSource — together with the Alliance for Justice, the Campion Foundation, the National Council of Nonprofits, and the United Philanthropy Forum — this campaign seeks to unleash the full potential of the nonprofit sector to create positive impact by engaging board leaders more directly in the advocacy work of their organizations.

Y-USA LINK

<https://link.ymca.net/user/document/180468>

A link to the federal legislative priorities of the YMCA of the USA