

The Beginners Guide to

ADVOCACY

2024

 The
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This toolkit is established to leverage assets and tools to aid nonprofits as they advocate for an equitable distribution of resources. The Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC) is responsible for the development and content in this report. The report is being shared with nonprofits throughout the Inland Empire and beyond through workshops and targeted technical assistance.

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Arguably, the most important public policies we have in the United States have come from nonprofit organizations lobbying for their causes...

These achievements may be largely attributed to the strong leadership of executive directors and board members who knew that direct service alone would not change the flawed or missing public policies that contributed to the problems their organizations were trying to alleviate.

David F. Arons, in Nonprofit Governance and Management

The year 2020 was world shifting.

Every year traditionally has a few defining moments, but 2020 contained so many that it was difficult to keep track. The pandemic and its economic fallout, coupled with the inability to physically share space, forced nonprofits to think creatively and re-imagine how they provide their desperately needed services. While the pandemic crisis shook our communities to the core, it also provided us with the opportunity to envision new paths forward, and examine equitable outcomes for all communities through increased advocacy. We have been provided with a national reckoning of systematic racism, unequal opportunities for equity, and equal access to education and services. Coming off of such a dramatic and cataclysmic year, take the time to reflect on how hard you have worked to get where you are. Then, once you've settled in your role and you are ready to make a difference within your company, use some of the following tips to get started. Make choices that assist other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) on their career journeys, help support socially conscious brands, and get prepared for challenging race related conversations.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, research showed a steady improvement for children and families in economic well-being, health, and education, but as the pandemic unfolded many low wage communities and BIPOC communities have been disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of the economic and health disparities of the virus. According to [The 2020 State of Nonprofit and Philanthropy Report](#), by the University of San Diego, COVID-19 has adversely impacted most nonprofits. Demand for nonprofit services has shifted as community need's continue to change as a result of the uncertainty of the pandemic.

While the future remains unknown, one thing is certain, nonprofit organizations continue to play a vital role in the health and well-being of their communities. Nonprofits must be represented in fair and equitable ways. Advocacy will continue to be a vital piece of nonprofits sustainability efforts. But how do we start?

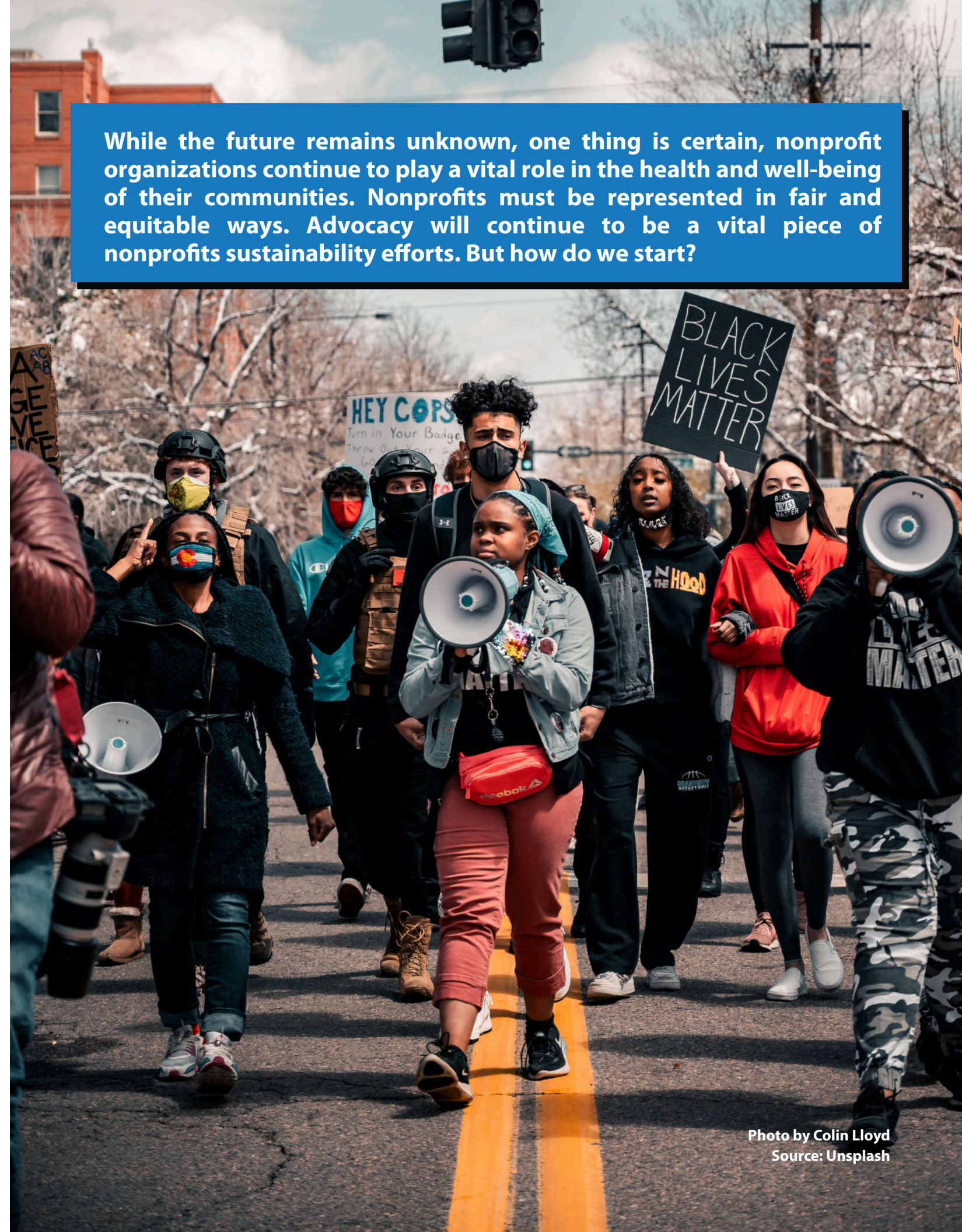


Photo by Colin Lloyd
Source: Unsplash

YOU'RE ALREADY AN ADVOCATE!

Advocacy is an essential act for any nonprofit to remain relevant and effective. Fortunately, we already have a lot of the skills needed to be effective in our work through advocacy. We advocate for ourselves or on behalf of others daily through action. That can be providing a meal to the unhoused, planting a vegetable in a community garden, or helping a low-income family apply for rental assistance. There are countless actions we take every day that help us make our vision of a better world a reality.

While those actions are essential and the most visible of our organization, we do not always think about the other advocacy work that we do behind the scenes that are just as meaningful. Every time you speak about the mission of your organization to someone, you are acting as an advocate for your organization by educating someone about a problem that is affecting a community and providing potential solutions.

The daily communications and fostered relationships are also forms of advocacy. Those relationships you make by getting someone to sign-up for your newsletter, the stories you tell funders to fund your vision of a better future, and the partnerships you build to leverage each-other's skills and resources not only brings awareness to your cause, but it also ensures you have more people in your team when you need them the most. They are valuable resources for you, your organization, and your mission. Those individuals are now aware of your organization, the problem you are trying to solve, and the resources needed to get it done. They are an extra pair of eyes and ears in the community that can keep you updated on issues that may influence organizational outcomes.

WHAT EXACTLY IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy can be a scary word for some nonprofits - but it shouldn't be!

This toolkit is designed to encourage nonprofits, regardless of preconceived ideas to get involved in advocacy efforts, or they risk being left out of vital work that could have a potentially negative effect on their organization.

Most nonprofits who are not currently involved in advocacy would argue that they simply do not have the time, or it is not in their current scope of work. This document strives to argue that this is simply not the case. To get started, we first would like to make sure that we are all on the same page when talking about advocacy.

According to Merriam-Webster, advocacy is defined as **“any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.”** Most nonprofits have not traditionally viewed advocacy as a part of their scope of work; however in more recent years advocacy has become a key component between those nonprofits who thrive versus those who are just trying to survive. Advocacy is key in helping nonprofits achieve their mission, secure and retain funding, and bring their purpose to a grander stage.

Advocacy can mean many things, but in general it refers to taking action.

Examples of advocacy activities can include the following:

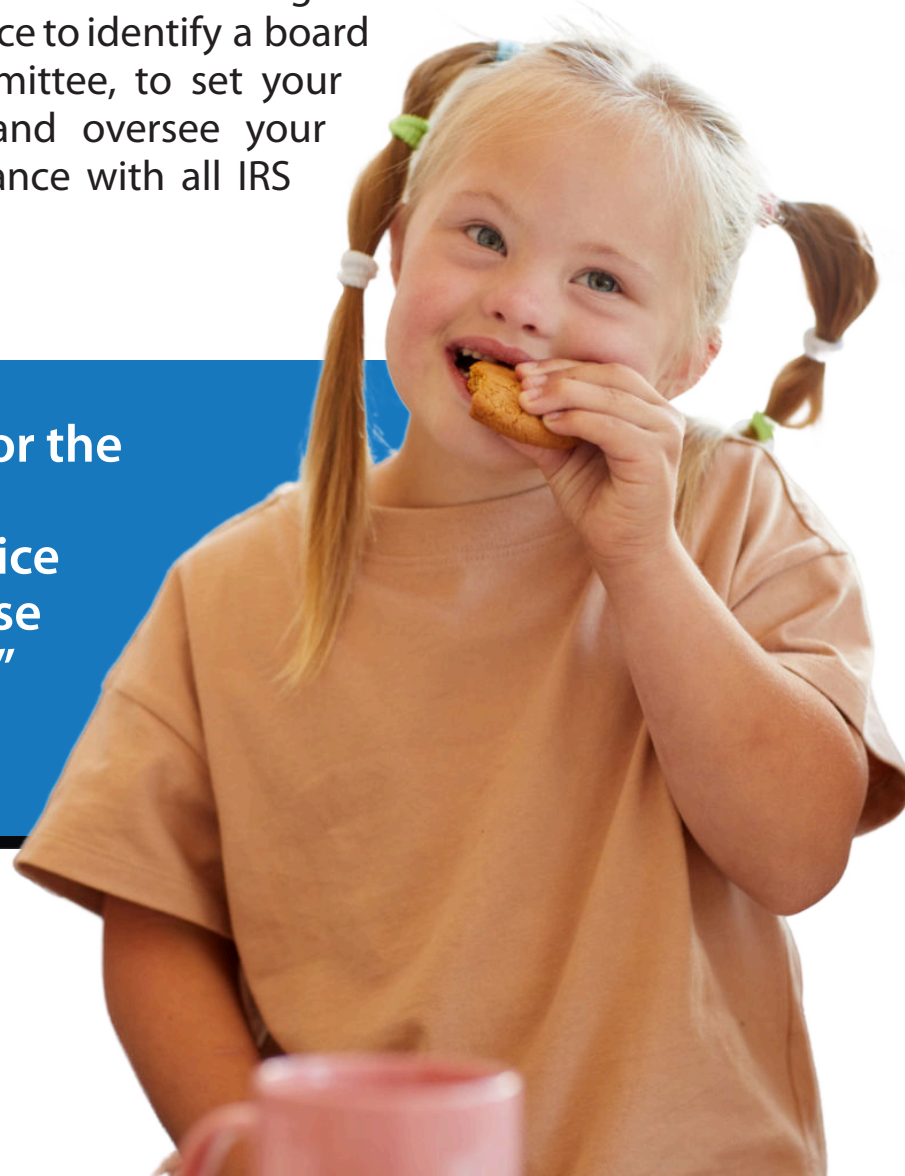
- Educating your representatives about your organization and your mission.
- Building relationships with your elected officials so that your organization has a seat at the table when matters are being decided that affect your organization.
- Educating decision makers on specific issues that affect your organization.
- Educating the public about issues that affect your organization.

Advocacy is the act of arguing in favor of something such as a cause, idea, or policy. It is good practice to identify a board member, or establish a board committee, to set your organization's advocacy priorities and oversee your activities in order to ensure compliance with all IRS guidelines.

"If there ever was a time for the nonprofit sector to work together with a shared voice of inclusion, common sense and conciliation, now is it."

- Dyana P. Mason

Photo source: Canva



IT'S TIME TO TALK POLICY CHANGE!

A common misconception on behalf of nonprofits is that it is illegal for nonprofits to engage in advocacy efforts like lobbying. While lobbying is a form of advocacy, there are many additional ways to advocate for your mission and purpose that are legal and encouraged. In fact, lobbying for specific policy change through legislative means is critical for nonprofits to get the funding they need or to fix systemic problems.

Please take some time and read for yourself the ways to comply with the law and protect your rights...
www.councilofnonprofits.org/proof-nonprofit-advocacy-legal

Policy change is hard, but necessary. But what exactly is it? First it is important to define policy. A **policy** is a set of rules or guidelines that help a system (like a government or an organization) make decisions that result in a particular outcome.

For example, before 1966, it was customary for the oil and gas industry to use lead in gasoline that was used in everything from cars to tractors to improve fuel efficiency. However, studies showed that the use of lead in gasoline not only had harmful effects on local environments, but it was also extremely hazardous to human health. Because of lobbying efforts made by health organizations and environmentalists, the U.S. Congress passed the Clean Air Act of 1966 and lead in gasoline banned. This resulted in healthier environments and improved health outcomes for children and adults.

WHEN ADVOCACY BECOMES LOBBYING.

For decades nonprofits and civil rights organizations have been the leaders of policy change throughout the nation. From the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to pandemic rent relief, nonprofits have used their collective voice and experience to advocate for policies that make lasting change. When you try to influence or persuade public officials to take a desired action, usually to pass (or defeat) legislation, this is known as **lobbying**. Any attempts to influence legislation through communications with any member or staff of a legislative body; any government official or employee who may participate in legislation, or any attempt(s) to influence the public on a ballot measure is lobbying. The communications considered to be lobbying include referring to specific legislation and reflecting a view on the legislation. When it comes to lobbying, there are two major types of lobbying that need to be reported to the IRS:

Direct Lobbying “occurs when the organization contacts legislators or government officials directly” (boardsource.org). This is where nonprofits have room to improve. While nonprofits are skilled at providing direct services, direct lobbying requires dedicating time and effort to educate elected officials on the issues your organization is actively working to solve. Having an elected official on your side can help you enact policies that help your mission and your community.

Grassroots Lobbying is traditionally the method nonprofits are most familiar with. 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” (boardsource.org).

Lobbying Form 501(h)

501(c)(3) organizations are allowed to engage in lobbying efforts as long as those efforts are not a “substantial part” of the work their organization. These lobbying efforts can be measured using the Substantial Part Test. However, we recommend organizations track their activities using the 501(h) IRS form to ensure they are complying with IRS rules and standards. **Additionally, nonprofits are not allowed to participate in partisan political campaigns, electioneering, or spend Federal grant funds on lobbying.**

WHERE POLICY DECISIONS HAPPEN.

Many people make decisions at home or in their organizations that establish procedure on how to make decisions or move forward to address certain issues. Making yourself heard in that process ensures that issues are viewed from every perspective when establishing an important policy. Here are a few places where showing up can make a difference.

Local School Boards

The best place to affect change around education is at your local school board. Their goal is to ensure children are getting a quality education. Showing up to talk out the issues can make a difference.

City Councils

Filling in a pothole in a road or maintaining a park are only a couple city responsibilities. City councils have the power change how we interact with our community on a daily basis. They can implement programs and services or pass local ordinances that uphold community safety and well-being.

County Board of Supervisors (B.O.S.)

County Boards can change policies from jail reform to environmental and health services. Do not be afraid to show up to a B.O.S. meeting and tell your story.

State

The state has the power to create laws and fund programs. This can include expanding disability rights and funding education. Make the effort to meet with your local state Assembly and state Senate members to advocate for your mission.

Federal

Policy makers at the federal level can create laws that must be followed nationwide. From immigration to social security, laws made at the federal level can change lives of people across the country and makes lasting change.

KNOW YOUR STUFF. BE PREPARED.

Sometimes knowing about an issue is not enough. Follow these five steps to policy preparedness that can help your organization stay on track.

- 1. Identify what policies you want to influence or improve upon.**
Legislation and local policies are voted on almost every day. Knowing what policies are already in progress may make it easier for your organization to focus on a specific policy issue. If there is nothing in the legislature or on the local radar, look into current legislation that exists and think about what needs to be changed.
- 2. Learn about the local, state, and federal decision-making processes.**
A city, a county, and the state all make decisions differently. Learning how each level operates, including knowing local rules and laws on engagement, may help you find the best place in the process to voice your concern.
- 3. Build relationships with elected officials and other nonprofit advocacy partners.**
Elected officials want to ensure they are hearing from subject experts on any given topic. Making yourself known to elected officials and other nonprofit organizations is critical to fostering legitimacy and may open up avenues for trust support.
- 4. Craft your message.**
You need to make sure the language and the stories you use are making an impact. They should be meaningful to those with the power to make change.
- 5. Identify Opponents and Allies.**
Not everyone may support you, but identifying your allies and opponents may help you develop a strategy that seeks common ground and foster a space for collaboration.

5 EASY STEPS TO Advocacy.



Now that you know the policy process and have prepared yourself to be a better advocate, here are Five Easy Steps to Advocacy.



1. Sign on to an advocacy letter.

Do not go it alone. There is a good chance other organizations want the same thing you do. Reach out to partners to see if they are willing to sign-on to a letter detailing your position on a certain issue.



2. Join a public hearing.

Public hearings are a great venue to make yourself heard since you have the ear of all elected officials attending. When participating in a public hearing, make sure you know the rules and clearly tailor your message.



3. Meet with elected officials and their staff.

This helps when building relationships with local leaders. They may not be aware of an issue or where to find information without having someone in their network they can trust to give them accurate information.



4. Follow and engage elected officials on social media.

Social media plays a huge role in how the public perceives an issue and elected officials notice. You can put on the pressure or show your support by commenting on their posts, sharing your story, or just stay informed.



5. Join a coalition or collaborative.

Teamwork makes the dream work! Lobbying can be hard, but we already know that there are others willing to put in their time and effort into an issue they truly care about. Come together with other organizations to leverage everyone's skills and resources.

REMEMBER THE RULES

There is a fine line between advocacy and lobbying. If any of these approaches are about a particular bill or piece of legislation, then you need to report it as lobbying with the IRS. Educating the public on an issue related to your mission is advocacy and those activities do not require a 501(h) filing. A nonprofit organization cannot participate in any partisan political campaign, campaign electioneering, or use Federal funds on lobbying.



Photo source: Canva

Different forms of Grassroots Advocacy.

Advocacy efforts are one of the most effective ways to engage people into action. Effective advocacy campaigns can raise awareness around a cause, create education opportunities, influence decision makers, increase donations, and help build awareness for your mission.

Odds are you have received a call or text message from a campaign staffer or volunteer asking you to donate to a cause or to remember that there is an upcoming election with a particular issue on the ballot. Maybe they asked you to post something on social media, have you sign a petition, or even just ask you to turn out for an event to advocate for an issue you care about. All of these are methods of grassroots advocacy.

It should be noted that grassroots advocacy requires a lot of time and resources on the part of your organization to be carried out effectively. We suggest sticking to direct advocacy until you have grown your capacity enough to have a team ready and able to take on the challenge.

Remember, if any of these approaches are about a particular bill or piece of legislation, then you need to report it as lobbying with the IRS using the Substantial Part Test or the 501(h) form.

"When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist."
- Helder Camara

These are ways that non profits can start getting involved in grassroots advocacy efforts:

1 Click-to-Call Campaigns

What is click-to-call advocacy?

Click-to-call is an advocacy tool that connects supporters of your mission to their representative via phone call. With the click of a button, they can call legislators and read a designated script emphasizing the importance of your mission and calling that leader to action.

Here's how it works:



1. First, you design a click-to-call targeted action page with the budget cap amount, a fallback message, and a script or talking points for supporters to follow.



2. Next, supporters enter their phone number on the landing page. Their phone will ring and they're automatically connected to a representative.



3. Finally, with your talking points or script to guide them through the call, your message will be heard by the leaders for your community.

Here are some simple tips from Salsa:
www.salsalabs.com

2 Social Advocacy

What is social advocacy?

Social advocacy requires organizations to employ social sharing and networking sites to advance your advocacy campaigns. Social media can be used to reach out to advocates and alert them of your activities and to reach out directly to your representatives about your mission.



Targeted
Action Alerts



Tag
Representatives



Share Supporter
Involvement

There are three primary ways that your nonprofit can use social media for your advocacy campaigns:

- **Post targeted action alerts.** When you create a new targeted action page, such as an online petition or click-to-call advocacy campaign, post an alert about the new opportunity to get involved on social media to alert supporters.
- **Tag representatives.** With campaigns like Tweet-a-Rep, your organization can create targeted action pages to encourage supporters to reach out to representatives directly with their social media handles.
- **Encourage supporters to share their involvement.** Make sure your advocacy campaign “thank you” page provides an opportunity for your supporters to share their involvement with their network of friends and family.

3 Petitions

What is a petition?

A petition is a request for representatives or legislators to do something in support of your organization’s mission. Your nonprofit collects signatures from your supporters to strengthen the voice of the request.



Signing is fast



Strengthens
your voice



Engages
Supporters

There are a few specific advantages to asking your supporters to sign a petition for your organization’s cause:

- **Signing is fast.** Signing a petition is a time-effective way that nonprofits can get involved in your organization. They can simply and quickly sign to show their support, then go back to their day-to-day lives.
- **Your voice is unified and strengthened.** The more voices you get behind your petition, the stronger your voice becomes. It provides more pressure on your representative when you show that the entire community cares deeply about your mission.
- **It’s easy to engage your supporters.** Many nonprofits ask their supporters for funding over and over again. Petitions provide some variation in the type of engagement opportunities you’re requesting from supporters. This can be more enticing than donating over and over again.

4 Advocacy Events

What are advocacy events?

Advocacy events are a gathering of your organization's core mission representatives to raise awareness for your cause. They may reach out to surrounding community members or to legislators and other leaders to call them to action.



Supporter Acquisition



Legislative Pressure



Fundraising

The key advantages of your organization hosting an advocacy event for your cause include:

- **Supporter acquisition.** When your core group of supporters gets together in support of a common cause, you can encourage them to spread the word of the event to their family, friends, and other connections. This is a perfect opportunity to grow your support base.
- **Legislative pressure.** Of course, one of the reasons for gathering everyone together is to apply pressure on the community leaders for change. The more people you have gathered for discussion, the bigger impact you make on the leaders.
- **Fundraising.** While advocacy events are not focused on fundraising, it is a happy side-effect of gathering everyone together. You can raise money from the event registrations, an auction, or other enjoyable activities that you host.



WHY SHOULD NONPROFITS INVEST IN ADVOCACY?

Most nonprofits dedicate their time, energy, and resources towards providing solutions to some of societies toughest issues. From social justice to homelessness, and a host of societal ills in between, nonprofits are helping people meet their needs. This work is extremely important; however, being caught in the day to day does not often allow for nonprofits experts to be at the table where solutions to these complex issues are being discussed, and that is where advocacy plays a key role.

By engaging in advocacy, nonprofits create opportunities to provide insight and real time experience to solving problems, allocating funding, and furthering their own missions through meaningful work.

Advocacy is one of the most powerful ways in which mission-driven organizations can create large-scale social change. When advocacy is successful, an organization can achieve far greater impact than through direct service delivery. However, advocacy is an unpredictable adventure, requiring clear thinking, skill, and luck.

According to "A Guide for Nonprofits to Move into the Political Space" here are just some of the benefits of nonprofits engagement in advocacy. Follow the link from NTEN below to read the full guide.

Visit NTEN online for more information on how your nonprofit can get involved.
www.nten.org/article/advocacy-and-politics-how-your-nonprofit-can-get-more-involved

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Being more active in advocacy and politics can help your organization build real leadership and political power for the long term by building a reputation as action-takers. Speak up against anything discriminatory. When it comes to race, there are so many unknowns and cross-cultural miscommunication. When small injustices and discrimination occur, they can often be blamed on lack of knowledge. This is where a BIPOC person in leadership could really lend their voice.

Here's one example: maybe a new policy just got implemented, and you notice right away that it impacts people of color more directly or significantly than others. Consider bringing that to everyone's attention, because they may not have even considered that effect and most often, discrimination was no the intention.

FUTURE PLANNING

Having advocacy and political goals can allow you to take an active role in what your community's future looks like. It will force you to develop specific plans and goals to grow in the long term. This should be a good thing. Don't go into greater advocacy or 501c4 work without a plan for what you want to do.

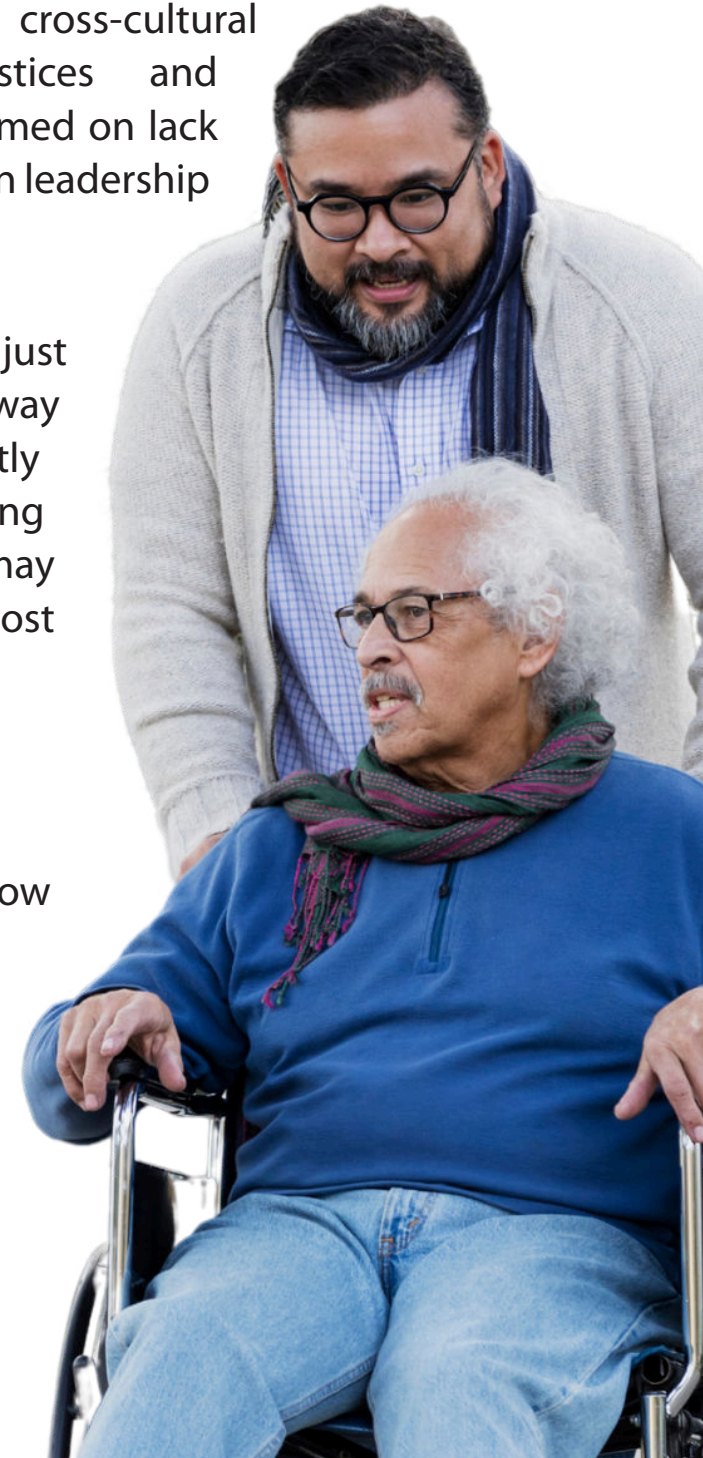


Photo source: Canva

BUILDING CAPACITY

Advocacy and political action can allow you to build greater capacity. That could be new donors, new staff, a new board, and an increased ability to get things done. Ensure your team is well-trained on providing services to people from all ethnic backgrounds.

For many service professions, there is a real difference in the way you would provide treatment to a client of color. Help make sure your team and company are well informed and adequately prepared for serving customers of every background.

REAL ENGAGEMENT

Advocacy and political action can allow you to build audiences and create grassroots and grass-tops engagement for the long term. Partner with minority-owned businesses.

If you are able to build partnerships outside of your company, make it a point to first research and consider minority-owned businesses and companies. Use your creativity to find effective ways to collaborate with other organizations. Ensure that all collaborations are mutually beneficial and that the integrity of the product or service is maintained.

INCREASED FUNDRAISING

Your advocacy or political efforts can grow your fundraising by developing contact lists and reaching donors who can help fund future programs.

COALITION GROWTH

A stronger focus on advocacy or politics can open the door for many potential coalition partners with similar goals you may not have considered before. Growing your coalition will strengthen your nonprofit moving forward. Mentor other BIPOC. Whether you are participating in an official mentorship program or if you have taken the time to provide professional development counseling to one of your team members, it is always good to give back. Share your experience as BIPOC in leadership, your ideas, and mistakes you have made. Once you have learned your role, reach out to others and help assist in their career journey.

LONG TERM ASSETS

Advocacy or political action can mean assets for the long term such as lists, web pages, donors, etc.



Photo source: Canva

Establishing your advocacy STRATEGY.

When most nonprofits think about advocacy, they think about engaging legislators in Sacramento, or Washington D.C., and while those are important parts to advocacy the thought of that can be daunting to smaller nonprofits who lack access. When you start to think about your advocacy strategy, start smaller by thinking about advocacy as a donor engagement tool.

Engaging Board members and key stakeholder in your community is a great advocacy tool when you are just getting started. All advocacy efforts start from building relationships and educating interested parties in your work and how it is bettering your community. Start with the list below:

1. Determine a clear goal
2. Research, research, research
3. Educate internally first (staff, board, volunteers, constituents)
4. Build relationships - who has the power to make effective change?
5. Know your audience
6. Establish a digital strategy - social media, email, website etc.
7. Use data to tell your story
8. Make national issues into local issues
9. Don't be afraid to make course corrections

Advocacy Action Plan with Objectives and Activities

Objectives & Activates	
Time Frame	
Responsible Party	
Partners	
Budget	

Source: Slidestream: [Advocacy Action Plan With Objectives And Activities](http://www.slideteam.net/advocacy-action-plan-with-objectives-and-activities.html)
www.slideteam.net/advocacy-action-plan-with-objectives-and-activities.html

BE SEEN AND TAKE UP SPACE

Using Advocacy Effectively.

While being seen and taking up space may seem like an easy task, you might find it's more challenging to accomplish than you think. BIPOC presence within the company adds to the company's diversity and the unique perspectives are an asset. If there are opportunities for BIPOC members to lend themselves to branding efforts or make suggestions, it will emphasize the need for diversity.

Many nonprofit organizations use advocacy campaigns to effectively draw attention to their mission and cause real change. Whether you are targeting legislators at any level of government, or CEOs and other decision-makers, advocacy campaigns can be an effective engagement activity that helps get your supporters more involved with your cause.

Learn more by visiting:

www.boardsource.org/resources/what-is-advocacy

According to Stand for Your Mission

Advocacy is about educating decision makers about the impact of the public policy decisions they are contemplating. It's about helping them understand how the people and communities we care about will be impacted. And it's about making sure that we aren't sitting on the sidelines while decisions that would positively or negatively impact our missions are being made.

Effective communication is the key for nonprofits to achieve these objectives, and advocacy is the method to get these nonprofit voices heard. Advocacy allows nonprofits to advance the issues they care about and helps bring about lasting change for the people and communities they serve.

Advocacy has evolved over the last decades, as the relationship between the government and nonprofit sectors has become increasingly intertwined and the resources available to nonprofits through contracting and fundraising have increased considerably.

Photo source: Canva

For more advocacy resources, visit:

www.bolderadvocacy.org

AVOID ADVOCACY PITFALLS.

When you're getting started in advocacy it's important to do your research, you do not need to reinvent the wheel, and unique ideas, while always interesting, can be a waste of time or precious resources.

Most likely you are not the first organization to engage in advocacy, so learn what others have done successfully, as well as areas they have fallen short.

Remember to start with something realistic for the size of your organization. Take into consideration the time and effort that will be needed to be successful in your advocacy efforts. Advocacy can be intimidating so start with small wins, don't start with goals of meeting with the president, start with inviting your local mayor to see your organization and begin to foster relationships at the local level.

Photo source: Canva

Here is a short list of some "pit-falls" to avoid when getting involved in advocacy: (Adapted from the [Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook](#))

- 1. Lone Ranger expectations.** Don't expect one person in an organization to do it all! It takes many voices to make a difference.
- 2. Petitions and postcard or email campaigns.** These lack the personal voice that persuades decision makers that constituents really care about the issue. However, if this is all you can do to generate support for your issue, it is better than nothing.
- 3. Crying wolf!** Don't sound so many alarms that your supporters can't sort out the real need for action.
- 4. Showing up at a hearing without following the protocol for signing up to testify.** Learn the local customs and rules on testifying. You may need to come early and fill out forms if they are required.
- 5. Overstaying your welcome.** Don't exceed the allotted time. If it appears that the officials are anxious to leave or move on, shorten your presentation, but state the most salient points.
- 6. Missing the boat.** Don't wait until late in the decision making process to voice your support or concerns.
- 7. Surprises.** Decision makers expect honesty and full disclosure. When telling your story, you need to be honest and tell both sides of an issue during your testimony. Use persuasive arguments to demonstrate your position and stick to the facts.
- 8. Angry, hysterical, or threatening communication.** Don't use a negative, condescending, threatening, or intimidating tone. You will only alienate the decision maker and cause bad feelings that might hurt your case. Be nice!

Empower the Vote. EMPOWER NONPROFITS.



The California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits) and the Independent Sector have done a lot of work to ensure nonprofits have the tools they need to Get Out the Vote (GOTV). Everyday nonprofits interact with hard to reach communities that often go unheard during election season. Nonprofits have fostered a lot of good will and trust among communities. Engaging in GOTV strategies and providing nonpartisan information to volunteers, clients, constituents, donors, and staff has shown to significantly improve voter turn-out. Empowering communities to vote ensures important polices are considered and elected officials are held accountable. Go online and visit the independentsector.org to learn more ways nonprofits can **GOTV** and visit calnonprofits.org to learn how to **Vote Your Mission**.

Take the Pledge and DO YOUR PART.

- 1 Review Your State's Voting Leave Policies**
Voting policies vary by state, but California requires employers to notify employees of their right to take paid leave for the purpose of voting in a statewide election. Take some time to review local laws and update your employee voting polices.
 - 2 Craft & Implement Your Time Off to Vote Policy**
Once you have a voting policy in place, put in the effort to notify employees by notifying them during staff meetings and direct email communication campaigns. Include helpful details such as employee rights and election dates.
 - 3 Inspire Other Nonprofit Leaders**
Share your work or help others get their own organizational polices in place. Encourage other nonprofit leaders to put in the work by spreading the word on social media.
- + Bonus Step: Give Time Off to Serve Voters in Your Community**
Poll workers make elections happen, yet polling sites are often short staffed. Go above and beyond GOTV and offer employees time off to volunteer as a local poll worker or even pay the difference between poll worker and staff wages.



Take the Pledge
Follow the link below to take the nonprofit pledge. Commit to doing your part to get out the vote and make nonprofits heard.
<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofitpledge/>

The importance of Nonprofits Promoting CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

Nonprofits are uniquely positioned to promote civic engagement, playing a crucial role in empowering communities and ensuring that their voices are heard. By fostering civic participation, nonprofits **help communities advocate for local issues, influence policies, and engage with elected officials.** Beyond voter registration, civic engagement includes activities such as organizing forums, encouraging volunteerism, and cultivating community leadership. Nonprofits can reach underserved populations, helping build lasting habits of civic involvement. By promoting civic engagement, nonprofits **strengthen communities and ensure effective advocacy in the public sphere.**



Photo source: Canva

How Nonprofits Can Promote CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INTERNALLY



Providing Time Off to Vote

Offer flexible policies for voting, including time off for early voting or participation as poll workers.

- Allow employees to take paid time off on election day.
- Permit flexible working hours to accommodate early voting.



Promoting Voting as Part of Organizational Culture

Host informational sessions on voting and nonpartisan engagement.

- Organize seminars on the importance of voting.
- Invite guest speakers from nonpartisan voter engagement groups.



Supporting Nonpartisan GOTV Efforts

Promote Get-Out-the-Vote efforts and provide nonpartisan resources to staff and communities.

- Share nonpartisan voter guides and resources through internal communication channels.



Pledge to Vote Cards

Distribute pledge-to-vote cards to staff at meetings or events to remind them of their commitment to vote.

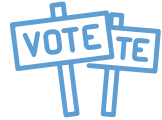
- Include pledge cards in employee welcome packets.



Internal Voting Policies and Reminders

Develop a time-off policy for voting and send reminders about voting deadlines.

- Create a written policy outlining the time-off process for voting.



Voter Registration Drives for Staff

Host voter registration drives within the organization or offer digital registration resources.

- Partner with local election offices to set up registration tables at the workplace.



Leverage Technology for Engagement

Use internal communication tools to share voter registration links, educational resources, and election reminders.

- Create a dedicated space on the company's intranet for election resources and updates.



Host Informational Sessions and Encourage Nonpartisan Conversations

Organize sessions explaining the voting process and discussing relevant issues in a nonpartisan setting.

- Arrange discussions with experts to explain the voting process and its importance.



How Nonprofits Can Promote Civic Engagement While Staying Nonpartisan.

Nonprofits have a critical role in promoting civic engagement. Below are key guidelines for staying within legal boundaries while encouraging civic participation.

What Nonprofits Can Do:

- ✓ **Conduct Voter Registration Drives:** Organize voter registration tables at events or promote registration through newsletters, social media, or websites.
- ✓ **Educate the Community on Voting Processes:** Provide nonpartisan information on voting, including polling locations, absentee voting, and election deadlines.
- ✓ **Host Nonpartisan Candidate Forums:** Invite all candidates to participate in forums, ensuring equal opportunity and a neutral setting.
- ✓ **Distribute Nonpartisan Voter Guides and Sample Ballots:** Share nonpartisan voter guides or distribute official sample ballots without suggesting who to vote for.
- ✓ **Create Candidate Questionnaires:** Send unedited, nonpartisan questionnaires to all candidates and share their responses with the public.
- ✓ **Advocate for Ballot Measures:** Take stances on ballot measures as part of lobbying activities, ensuring expenses comply with lobbying limits.
- ✓ **Encourage People to Vote:** Remind community members to vote without endorsing candidates and organize get-out-the-vote efforts.
- ✓ **Continue Issue Advocacy:** Maintain issue-based advocacy during election seasons, focusing on legislation rather than candidates.

What Nonprofits Cannot Do:

- ✗ **Endorse or Oppose a Candidate:** Avoid public endorsements or opposition of candidates for public office.
- ✗ **Make Campaign Contributions:** Do not make financial contributions to political campaigns or spend money to support or oppose candidates.
- ✗ **Rate or Rank Candidates:** Do not rate or rank candidates based on their positions on issues.
- ✗ **Provide Unequal Access to Resources:** Ensure all candidates have equal access to resources and facilities.
- ✗ **Compare Candidates' Positions to the Organization's Views:** Avoid comparing candidates' positions to the organization's stance on issues.



Pop Quiz: Identifying Partisan Activities

1. Which of the following activities is considered partisan?

- a) Providing information about all candidates equally
- b) Endorsing or opposing specific candidates
- c) Hosting a non-partisan voter registration drive
- d) Educating voters on how to register to vote

2. True or False: Suggesting who to vote for or against is a non-partisan activity.

3. Which activity should be avoided close to an election to maintain non-partisanship?

- a) Creating an issue scorecard or rating system
- b) Offering a neutral voter guide
- c) Encouraging voter turnout
- d) Providing information on voting location

Answer Key: 1. B; 2. True; 3. A.

Still unsure if you're being partisan? Fill out this survey to get more clarification:
<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7614841/Bolder-Advocacy-TA-Request-Form>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.



Since their inception, the California Endowment has awarded more than 22,000 grants totaling over \$2.9 billion to community-based organizations throughout California. Starting in 2021, The California Endowment has committed 2 billion dollars in funding the advanced vision of a more equitable California. With the added language of “Social justice and health equity for all Californians,” the Endowment strives to empower organizations to provide services that create healthy lives for ALL Californians regardless of race, geographic location, gender or sexual orientation.

At this time, The California Endowment partnered with the Inland Empire Community Collaborative (IECC) to build capacity among nonprofits seeking COVID-19 relief and ensuring an equitable recovery for all nonprofits in the Inland Empire.



In 2024, IECC and IE United have partnered with the IE Funder’s Alliance to enhance the nonprofit sector’s ability to engage staff and client networks to participate in the democratic process through civic engagement. The Civic Engagement Pooled Fund initiative has distributed over \$450,000 to 37 nonprofits in the region, to help us promote civic engagement, civic education, and voting access through various communications and social marketing campaigns among the communities we serve.

The pooled fund represents the combined investment of several leading philanthropic institutions, including California Endowment, Weingart Foundation, IEHP Foundation, The Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Women’s Foundation California, and the Inland Empire Community Foundation.

The Inland Empire Community Collaborative is committed to improving the lives of children and families in the Inland Empire. Through our partnerships and large network of nonprofit organizations, IECC is well positioned to advocate for the community on a grander scale to demand justice and equity for children, families, and a wide intersection of underserved and marginalized communities. The mission of the IECC is to support nonprofits to collectively advocate in making the region more equitable, diverse and just, through capacity building strategies and collaboration.

As a result, this toolkit was established as a way to leverage assets and tools to aid nonprofits as they advocate for an equitable distribution of resources. The IECC is responsible for the development of the content created in this toolkit and will be shared with nonprofits throughout the Inland Empire and beyond through workshops and targeted technical assistance.

The IECC Team

We are grateful for the work of board and staff and who contributed and advised this Advocacy Guide:

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RESOURCES.

Advancement Project: Local Budget Basics

<https://inlandempirecommunitycollaborative.org/frj-local-budget-basics-guide/>

Boardsource: What is Advocacy

www.boardsource.org/resources/what-is-advocacy

Boulder Advocacy: Tools for Effective Advocacy

www.bolderadvocacy.org/resource-library/tools-for-effective-advocacy/toolkits

California Association for Nonprofits

www.calnonprofits.org/public-policy

California Budget and Policy Center: Navigating the Budget Process

<https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/navigating-the-state-budget-process/>

The California Endowment: An Ecosystem to Build Power and Advance Health and Racial Equity

https://www.calendow.org/app/uploads/2021/09/An-Ecosystem-to-Build-Power-Final-Report_2021.pdf

Center for Evaluation Innovation: Advocacy that Builds Power

<https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Advocacy-that-Builds-Power.pdf>

Council of Nonprofits

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

Grounded Solutions Network Advocacy Toolkit

<https://groundedsolutions.org/resources/advocacy-tool-kit/>

Harvard Family Research Project: A User's Guide to Advocacy Evaluation Planning

<https://archive.globalfrp.org/content/download/3460/99060/file/UserGuideAdvocacyEvaluationPlanning.pdf>

Independent Sector

<https://independentsector.org/>

Inland Empire Community Foundation

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

NTEN: Advocacy and Politics, How your nonprofit can get more involved

www.nten.org/article/advocacy-and-politics-how-your-nonprofit-can-get-more-involved

Philanthropy U

www.philanthropyu.org/

Slideteam: Advocacy Action Plan with Objectives and Activities

www.slideteam.net/advocacy-action-plan-with-objectives-and-activities.html

Stand For Your Mission

www.standforyourmission.org/resources

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits: The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations

<https://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/resources-tools/publication-detail/the-lobbying-and-advocacy-handbook-for-nonprofit-organizations>

University of San Diego: 2020 Annual Report: State of Nonprofits and Philanthropy in San Diego

<https://digital.sandiego.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=np-stateofnp>

USC Dornsife: California Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape: A Preliminary Assessment

https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/1411/docs/2018TCE_PLA_PERE.pdf

Independent Sector - Nonpartisan Voter Engagement Resource Guide

<https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Nonpartisan-Voter-Engagement-Resource-Guide-To-Save-The-2020-Election-Voter-Engagement-Resource-10.9.20-1.pdf>

Nonprofit Vote Resources

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

Nonprofit Permissible Election Activities Checklist

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/nonpartisan-election-activities-501c3-nonprofits-1.pdf>

Nonprofit Vote – Nonprofit Power Report 2021

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/6-Nonprofit-Power-report-PDF-version-compressed.pdf>

Alliance for Justice – Boulder Advocacy Nonprofit Voter Assistance

<https://afj.org/bolder-advocacy/practical-guidance-nonprofit-voter-assistance-series/>

CalNonprofits – Vote Your Mission

<https://calnonprofits.org/vote-with-your-mission/>

California Secretary of State – Time Off to Vote

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/time-vote-notice>

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IECC Inland
Empire
Community
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The Beginners Guide to **ADVOCACY**

IECC

Inland Empire Community Collaborative
Impacting Lives Together

The Beginners Guide to

ADVOCACY

For more info, please visit our website:
www.ieccnonprofit.org



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Scan the QR code to the right
with your smartphone camera
to download the IECC
Beginners Guide to Advocacy!



The Beginners Guide to **ADVOCACY**