

Road Map to Local Advocacy

This tool kit will help you advocate the value and importance of the workforce system to the elected officials and stakeholders in your local area.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
PROFESSIONALS**
CONNECT, ADVANCE, INNOVATE



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About NAWDP

NAWDP provides the professional development, resources, and certification credibility to individuals seeking to thrive in the workforce development industry as thought leaders and innovators. As the leading advocate for workforce development professionals, NAWDP builds relationships and connections with other industry-leading organizations to challenge and collaborate for the advancement of the industry.



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Step 1 - Talking Points



Every organization should have a standard set of talking points that can be pulled from for use in any discussion, meeting, or event. This talking point document should cover every part of your organization and should be updated at least quarterly to ensure information stays current.



Tips:

- Don't use inside jargon and terminology; individuals outside of workforce don't understand these terms.
- Don't use abbreviations or acronyms (e.g. WIOA, TANF) when speaking to non-workforce professionals.
- Be aware of your audience; pull talking points that correspond to their interests and/or concerns. For example, if the official you are meeting with is a veteran make sure you know the number of veterans you served in the last year and highlight the services your organization provides to veterans.
- Use good data that demonstrates the impact and value of your organization.

Step 2 - Identify and Research Your Audience



If you are going to increase your local advocacy efforts, you need to know who your audience is. Local elected officials can range from state-level delegates to county or city level elected officials. You need to know every official whose jurisdiction, no matter how small, covers your local area.

We recommend you take the time to create a contact list of all the elected officials and their staff in your area. You can utilize this list for outreach purposes and to decrease repetitive work in the future when you need to contact local officials. Your contact list should include name, district (if applicable), email, phone number, mailing address, and any areas they focus on or have interest in (e.g. Veterans, Business). See Appendix A for an example.



How to Find Your Elected Officials

You can visit www.usa.gov/elected-officials to find your federal, state, and local elected officials. You can also go directly to these websites to find your elected official's information:

- U.S. House of Representatives: Use the Find Your Representative search box at www.house.gov
- U.S. Senators: Use the Find Your Senator search box at www.senate.gov
- Access your state's legislature website through www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites
- City Elected official's information can be found on your city's webpage. If your city does not have an official webpage, you can call the city hall and get contact information.
- Search for your county's elected officials at ce.naco.org by selecting your county

How to Find the Contact Information for Your Elected Officials

Elected official's contact information can usually be found on their respective web pages or the webpage of the government they represent. Use www.usa.gov/elected-officials to identify and connect you to your elected official's website to gather your information. For state and federal elected officials, you typically will not be able to find an email address, but most have contact forms on their website that you can use in lieu of email. You should also take note of the local office contact information. Call the local office to develop a relationship with your elected official's staff members as they will most likely be your biggest champion.

Tips to Determine Your Elected Official's Hot Button Topics

Most elected state and federal officials have their key issues listed on their websites. Use www.usa.gov/elected-officials to identify your elected officials and to find their website. Take some time to review and note their key issues on your Elected Officials Spreadsheet.



Step 3 - Implement!



Once you have determined what you should talk about and who your audience is, you are ready to determine what engagement strategies work best for your organization.

Get to Know the Staff

When you call the office you will most likely NOT speak to the elected official, however, you want to build a rapport with staff members from the start. Request a meeting with the staff person that handles the issue(s) you are addressing (i.e. business, workforce development). If the elected official can attend that's great, but you should focus on building the relationship with the staff person.

Constituent Services staff members for local officials are actually great people to connect with within the official's offices. These are the people that answer questions and work directly with residents. While these individuals might not have as much public influence, in the long run, they will connect with more potential customers. Any of the following implementation tactics could also apply to these key staff members.

Bring People in for a Tour

A great way to introduce an elected official to the workforce system is by inviting them for an overview and tour of your center(s). Many officials have never been to a workforce center, and even if they fully support the workforce system, they don't have an understanding of what happens at your center. A tour of your center is a great, interactive way to provide an overview of the workforce system.

When you bring anyone in for a tour of your location, you should have a set goal(s) in mind for what you want them to learn and take away after the tour. Also, while showing your center to officials is helpful in their understanding of the workforce system, consider how busy or noisy your center may be during the tour. Having tons of customers in the center shows your value to the area but might make it hard to have in-depth discussions, consider starting or ending the tour with a sit-down overview and discussion with the official to go over details and answer any questions.



Utilize Online Outlets

Website

Your organization's website is your digital home. Everything you do digitally should drive people back to your website. Since your website is the home of all your digital activity you need to make sure it is presentable and up to date with current information. While the primary purpose of your website should be to draw in potential customers, a secondary purpose is to inform stakeholders including officials of the work done by your organization. Consider adding some of the following sections to your website if you don't have them already:

- **Success stories:** Show your success through every platform you can.
- **Your impact:** Add compelling data that shows exactly how your organization's work has impacted the growth and success of your area.
- **Newsroom:** Include a section on your website to show off the coverage you have received in the press. This gives people an outside perspective of your organization.
- **Media section:** A section dedicated to the information that press staff might find useful can make a reporter's job a lot easier. Include overview information about your organization along with a single point of contact at your organization to field calls from the press.

eMarketing

eMarketing (or email marketing) is an outreach tactic that cannot only be used to attract and retain customers but also to keep elected officials and their staff members informed on the accomplishments of your organization and upcoming events. Create a mailing list for elected officials and their staff and send at least quarterly updates on the workforce system in their area.

These updates can include:

- Success stories
- Compelling Data
- Upcoming events and trainings
- Major changes in the workforce system locally or nationally

After building a relationship with elected official's staff members, ask if they would like to be included in your regular mailing list. Most staff members, especially constituent services members, want to be knowledgeable about what services are available in their area so they can address the needs of the residents. If you already utilize eMarketing to engage customers in upcoming trainings or workshops, you can easily add the staff members to your list.



Utilize Online Outlets

Social Media

Make sure you are connected to your local officials on your various social media platforms. Use your various platforms to not only reach out to potential customers but also:

- **Promote upcoming events.** Make sure to tag any official who plans to attend your event so they can share it with their followers.
- **Share success stories.** When your customers are successful, shout it from every corner of the world! Your success stories show the true value of the work you do.
- **If you use Twitter, try live-tweeting an event.** Live-tweeting is a great way to show the success of an event you've spent time planning, but also an avenue to disseminate highlights of the event. Again, make sure to tag any local officials who attended the event.

Social Media



Utilize Events

Events are great ways to bring together large or select groups of individuals to increase the awareness of your organization. Whether the event is in a small setting or a large hall, inviting targeted elected officials can greatly increase your exposure.

When deciding whom to invite to your event, take a look at your elected official's bios and political history to determine what areas they are passionate about. For example, if an official is a veteran they tend to have strong ties to veteran initiatives. You can leverage their interests to tailor your invite in order to make your event more appealing.

Local officials can provide remarks at events, partake in the discussion at meetings and roundtables, or provide comments at openings and conferences. When planning your agenda, consider where you could have a local official involved and try to invite someone to fill that opening.

Some examples of events include:

- Job Fairs
- Board Meetings
- Roundtable Discussions
- Graduations
- Location Openings
- Press Conferences



Involve Your Local Press

Local and national press outlets can be a great way to put your organization in front of elected officials and other stakeholders without direct interaction. The first step to involving your local press is to create a media contact list. Go to the websites of local press and look under contact us or editors room to find the emails of reporters. Larger outlets will have multiple reporters that cover a targeted range of topics, put all of the reporters on your list that match your services. For example, if there is a reporter for business and a reporter for the local area add both and make a note on your media list as to what they cover. Building a relationship with key media outlets can benefit your organization greatly. Make sure you begin your relationship with a good story. Reporters have tons of businesses and organizations vying for their attention, you have to make your first story appealing. Some examples include a new program launch, a new business partnership, or following a participant through a program.

- Press Releases are an easy way to spread the word about your organization, however, they can be unpredictable. A press release is a written communication directed toward media staff that can be used fully or partially in a published article.
 - To involve your local officials, reach out to their office for a quote to include in the press release prior to sending it to your media list. Many officials are willing to provide a quote on topics that interest them. Send their staff member your completed press release and some background information on the release. The key to this is that you must give the official plenty of time to respond, especially because their quote will have to be read and approved by multiple people. If you get a quote from an official you have not only ensured they are aware of the topic covered in the release but have also made your release more appealing to media staff.
- Press Conferences can be utilized for large announcements including program launches and grant awards. Press Conferences are also a great way to involve local elected officials.
 - Reach out to a local official in the area and propose that they host the press conference or partner with your organization to host the press conference. This not only gets an official involved, but their public relations team will assist you in getting more media to attend the event.
 - If the announcement is large, consider discussion with the official about co-hosting the conference with multiple officials. The public relations team for officials typically knows the staff in other official's offices so they can make the connection and ask for you.



Involve Your Board Members

Build your board members into ambassadors for your workforce system, that is what they are there for. Board members not only provide feedback on your system's strategy and implementation, but they are there to promote your work. You never know whom your board members know or what events they will be attending, make sure they are prepared to discuss the work your local area does with elected officials at any time.

- Give your board members talking points. Whether you use the internal talking points created in Step 1 or created a board-specific document, give your members a cheat sheet that they can use.
- Keep your board up-to-date with what is going on within your organization. Include board members in quarterly updates, and make sure board meetings include any major updates or upcoming events board members should be aware of when discussing your organization with the public.
- Create a collateral piece for your board members. Once your board members feel comfortable with discussing your organization and answering questions, consider developing an outreach collateral piece that board members can utilize at events to promote the impact of your organization. This piece should be small and brief that directs recipients to your staff.



Step 4 - Continuous Improvement



Advocacy is not something you do once a year, advocacy is something you do just about every day. It is a critical part of maintaining the workforce development system and ensures success in the future. While advocacy is something that anyone can do, consistency is key.

After reviewing this tool kit there are many different options you and your organization can take to increase your advocacy efforts. Some of these tactics take less time and commitment than others. Before embarking on any of these tactics your organization should determine what resources and staff you can devote to advocacy, this will determine what tactics you can implement.

Just remember, advocacy is not all about getting funding, it is about promoting the good work and impact of the workforce system. When funding is discussed during budget periods, a consistent history of success and value-added to the area will increase your favorability in elected official's eyes. If you do a good enough job advocating for the workforce system to your local officials, you won't even need to ask for money when the time comes.



Example Interest Tracking Sheet

Title	First Name	Last Name	District	Business	Youth	Vets	Disabilities	IT/Cyber	Const	Trans	Healthcare
State Senator	James	Rosapepe	District 21		X			X	X	X	
US Senator	Ben	Cardin	Maryland	X	X	X				X	X
Congressman	C.A. Dutch	Ruppersberger	District 2	X		X		X			X
House Delegate	Pamela	Beidle	District 32	X	X						
County Executive	Stewart	Pitman	County		X	X	X				X
County Council	Sarah	Lacey (Chair)	District 1	X	X	X				X	

Include elected officials at all levels

Track interest in the targeted populations you serve

Track interest in your target or high-growth industries