

## STEP 7

# Continue Your Advocacy



While this workbook will help you plan a campaign around a specific goal, library advocacy is an ongoing process that requires long-term commitment, attention, and effort. The needs of libraries and communities change over time, and library stakeholders change as well, so it's best to envision advocacy as a cycle.

## Advocacy for the Long Haul

- **Get to know your decision makers and elected officials** (local, regional, state and national representatives). Build and keep your relationships with them by attending their meetings, town halls, and events, as well as inviting them to your own events and meetings. Make sure to maintain the relationships throughout the good times and the difficult times; do not befriend them only when you need them. These partnerships are a two-way street, so you should also consider what libraries can do for your decision makers and elected officials as you continue your advocacy efforts with them.
- **Join other advocacy groups**—other library advocates, arts groups, literacy groups, education advocates, and work to promote each other's goals and issues. Chambers of commerce and business alliances often have committees that advocate for everyone to the legislature. Check local policies and state laws and, where you're able to do so, join forces with others to advocate collaboratively.
- **Join with non-profits and other government agencies** (senior centers, recreation centers, animal shelters). Work together to help everyone achieve their goals.
- **Advocacy is a long game.** Always maintain constructive relationships with decision makers and be in the process of recruiting and preparing your successors.

## Cycle

- Learn the election and legislative cycles for all the groups who make law or policy for your organization. **Do not wait until the legislative session starts.** Legislators and policy makers are extremely busy at this point and you need to have made your case before bills are introduced so that all you have to do is send short reminders or points to consider. Before your issues come up they should know you and your issues well.
- Remember that all legislators and policy makers have aides who do most of the research and work. Get to know them and help them understand your issues or requests and why you are asking for certain things. Make them an ally so when the legislator needs reminding on how to vote they can help direct them.

## Evaluation

Annually (or semi-annually) evaluate your advocacy efforts to see what could improve.

1. Did you get what you needed?

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2. Was progress made?

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3. Do you have new supporters?

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4. Was the amount of time and effort expended worth the result?

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5. What do you need to change? What should be continued?

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6. Is anything missing?

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7. Do you need to adjust target audiences?

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## Maintain Relationships

- **Keep in contact** with your groups, legislators and policy makers. Don't be a fair weather partner or constituent, and remember to say thank you.
- **Volunteer** to help other organizations in their efforts, and show them that the library building and holdings are not the only resources on offer—the people who represent the library are equally as valuable and beneficial to the community.
- **Invite partners** to celebrate and plan together. Make sure to support work on their priorities as well.
- **Thank advocates** for their efforts with a shout out on social media or a note or email.
- **Keep aware of your stakeholders**—local, regional, state and national—so you can anticipate or be aware of future issues and opportunities.
- **Don't bury your head in the sand.** Be a complete and participating advocacy partner.