

INTRODUCTION

# WHY ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY? WHY LOBBY?



**N**onprofit organizations can and should lobby.  
It isn't difficult.  
It isn't mysterious.  
It isn't expensive.  
And it *is* a proper role for nonprofits.

## **The Essential Role of Nonprofits in Shaping Public Policy: Why Lobby?**

Lobbying builds public policies that improve people's lives and the places where they live. It enriches a nonprofit's ability to fulfill its mission.

Nonprofits do a lot to promote the interests of their communities. Your organization most likely already does some advocacy work. You may be raising awareness of the value of literacy or fighting for livable wages or encouraging recycling. Perhaps you advocate for victims in the criminal-justice system or urge social-service programs to incorporate arts into their programs. Think of lobbying as a specific and critical component of that general advocacy you already do for the people and ideas that matter to you.

Through nonprofit organizations, people are able to join together to nurture the val-

ues and provide programs and services that strengthen their communities. The first philanthropic organizations gained legal status in the United States shortly before the Civil War. Since then, nonprofits have served a wide range of societal goals in arts, education, environment, social services, human services, health care, social justice, and economic security.

It is through working in nonprofits that we have one of our best opportunities to shape the social contract—the choices we make about how we will connect to one another. Nonprofits, community-based organizations, voluntary associations, and charities have been excellent vehicles for people to engage in the life of their communities. Nonprofits animate people to do together what they cannot do separately. And now more than ever, the people involved in nonprofits understand that their role is not only to deliver programs and services but also to engage in public discussions about the governmental policies that shape our local, state, and federal priorities.

Lobbying is exciting and rewarding work! This is your organization's opportunity to provide leadership in shaping and sustaining public policies that reflect your values and priorities. It may be your best way of guaranteeing that you can carry out services and programs in a supportive environment and that your community works on long-term and lasting solutions to the problems you address.

Consider some of the positive changes brought about by nonprofit lobbying:

- Nonprofit organizations that work to eradicate poverty have led many states to pass earned-income-tax-credit legislation. These measures ensure that people who work have a better chance of maintaining income levels that will support themselves and their families.
- Affordable housing, child care, and improved transportation options have received increased funding because of nonprofit lobbyists who have worked to move people off of welfare and out of poverty.



### **Lobby because it makes a difference**

Without the experience and expertise of nonprofits, the public debate will never be fully informed. And without nonprofits doing direct and grassroots lobbying, many people will never make their voices heard in the centers of power in this country. Nonprofit lobbying fosters citizen action; it is an essential act in a democracy.

- Arts organizations have been effective lobbyists for public art projects: murals, sculpture gardens in public spaces, and art as a required component of publicly funded building projects.
- At the national and state level, nonprofit lobbying has played a key role in legislation to protect clean air, safe water, and waste reduction.

This book will guide the work of nonprofit boards, staff, volunteers, and constituencies as they move into public policy arenas and lobby on issues essential to the well-being of their communities and the people they serve.

Nonprofit lobbying in the public interest makes a difference. Try it!

## Who This Book Is For

This book is for boards and staffs of nonprofit organizations that aim to build their capacity and effectiveness in state and local public policy advocacy. It will also serve volunteers and supporters who participate in advocacy and care about the effectiveness of the organization's lobbying efforts.

Planning and implementation strategies included here are designed to serve all nonprofits, large or small, rookies or veterans in public policy work. If your organization is very small, you may wish to follow recommended shortcuts in the planning process. If your organization has significant experience in advocacy, you may want to choose the sections that will strengthen your work, filling in gaps in your capacity or actions by ensuring that you have internal systems to support your advocacy work or expanding the role of board members in your lobbying efforts. Keep in mind that the process of creating an advocacy agenda and carrying it out is one that, in general terms, applies to almost all organizations.

The information in this book will be useful to all community-based organizations, but it is specifically intended for 501(c)(3) charities. If your organization has been designated with 501(c)(4) or any other IRS status, the rules that govern your ability to lobby or engage in political activity will be different from the information provided in Chapter 4: Nonprofit Lobbying and the Law. National organizations, including the Alliance for Justice, National Council of Nonprofit Organizations, and Independent Sector, will help you to understand the unique tax laws that govern your activity. Information about these and other resources is included in Appendix B.

*Note that this book does not constitute legal advice. If your organization has legal questions about lobbying and other advocacy efforts, consult an attorney.*

The key concepts in this text are for everyone. Choose the components that suit your needs and interests, plan to adapt what you learn here to your unique situation, and lobby strategically!

## How to Use This Book

*The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations* is a planning guide and resource for nonprofit organizations that want to be an effective voice on the issues that matter to them. It will support you as you mobilize others to be their own best voice. Working with this guide, you will build your capacity to shape the policies that touch people's lives. You will be better able to serve the public interest.

*This step-by-step guide focuses on lobbying at the state level, with an emphasis on influencing state legislatures.*



### Think nonprofits can't lobby?

While nonprofits are not allowed to engage in political activity, they are allowed and encouraged to lobby. Get all the details in Chapter 4.



## Advocacy makes a \$37.5 million difference for affordable housing

Contributed by Kenza Hadj-Moussa, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

In 2011, nonprofit leaders formed the Homes for All coalition. The economy was fragile and human services budgets were being cut. Political gridlock shut down the state government for nearly a month. Homelessness had reached a record high.

On May 8, 2012, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bonding bill that invested a record \$37.5 million in affordable-housing development. The bill was passed with broad political and geographic support. It was approved by a Republican-controlled legislature and Democratic governor.

Three factors drove the success of this campaign: unified advocacy, a clear goal, and coordinated leverage among nonprofit networks.

### 1. Unified Advocacy

The economic and political climate challenged complementary allies to take a unified approach to advocacy. Homes for All united homeless and housing advocates around a shared legislative agenda and campaign strategy.

Co-chaired by the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, steering committee members included: Hearth Connection, Heading Home Minnesota, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, and Minnesota Housing Partnership.

Collectively, these organizations represented a united, broad constituency base including: private-housing developers, rural and urban social services, faith advocates, business leaders, foundation officers, and community development agencies.

### 2. Clear, Specific, Achievable Goal

In 2012, Homes for All launched a campaign to support a clear, specific, and achievable goal: pass \$40 million in bonds for affordable housing. Leaders decided that the coalition would hold firm to the same message: \$40 million for housing.

The clear, precise, repeated advocacy made affordable housing a key issue in the bonding bill.

The bill was widely supported by legislators and nonprofit organizations because it provided a broad boost

to the housing sector as a whole. Instead of earmarking funding for specific projects, the legislation allowed development funds to be awarded through a competitive state grant process.

### 3. Leveraged Networks

Homes for All used their expansive network, an asset of the nonprofit community, to leverage their people-power. The coalition mobilized front-line staff, donors, volunteers, board members, and service participants in the effort. The core Homes for All team supported each other's organizations to execute lobby days, letters-to-the-editor drives, and postcard campaigns.

Citizen lobbyists were equipped with basic data and came with personal stories about homelessness in their areas and descriptions of what housing could be developed with the funding.

### Short-Term Outcomes

In late 2012, Minnesota Housing awarded \$37.5 million to dozens of nonprofit and private developers to build or rehab over 3,100 affordable housing units across the state. Projects included fifty-five units for homeless veterans at Fort Snelling and housing for victims of domestic violence at the Tubman Center.

### Long-Term Impact

In 2013, the Homes for All coalition shifted to focus on a \$100 million campaign to stabilize families, prevent homelessness, and create workforce housing. Homes for All emerged with a stronger campaign. The coalition started educating legislative candidates and building relationships months before Election Day. During the summer, legislative ambassadors were recruited in districts across the state to be lead constituent advocates.

Highly coordinated policy, communications, and field teams were developed, mirroring the structure of an electoral campaign.

Homes for All has continued to use successful advocacy techniques to lead public policy work grounded in a shared commitment, clear direction, and process to leverage networks. Nonprofits have the expertise, the community standing, and the strength of organized constituencies to truly make a difference in all of our communities.

This text also shows your nonprofit how to use the strategies outlined here to have an impact on county and city governments. While the focus is on legislative bodies at the state and local level, plans for influencing the executive branch and the media are included.

Using this book, you will have the ability to

- Understand your nonprofit's role in shaping state and local public policy
- Assess the benefits of lobbying as a way to fulfill your organization's mission, service, and program goals
- Incorporate strategic lobbying efforts into your organization's culture and work plan
- Establish the infrastructure (systems, staffing, and resources) to support your lobbying efforts
- Choose issue priorities and strategies for initiating, supporting, or defeating bills
- Develop skills to ensure that your lobbying efforts are effective
- Build and mobilize supporters for your efforts
- Influence the executive branch of government to support your policy positions
- Use the media to build awareness of and support for your positions
- Learn how to comply with federal and state regulations and reporting requirements that govern nonprofit advocacy

As you proceed to build your capacity and skills for advocacy, keep in mind that grassroots organizing, media advocacy, and lobbying serve your mission most effectively if you commit to long-term and ongoing work. Understand that effective advocacy is an on-going cycle of planning, engaging people, advancing issues, and building an ever growing base of supporters and sustained involvement in shaping public policy. Building advocacy as a sustained component of your mission-based work requires following the steps reflected in this cycle. Build capacity and impact cycle after cycle and keep your organization engaged in this leadership work.

If lobbying is new to you and members of your organization, use this book as a tool to support your decision making. For the person or team steering the organization's entrée to the world of lobbying, this book gives the basic tools to plan and carry out both short-term and long-term policy initiatives. The guide will help experienced organizations and lobbyists reinvigorate their efforts, review some tried-and-true strategies, and see some new ways to approach lobbying. Finally, the resources identified

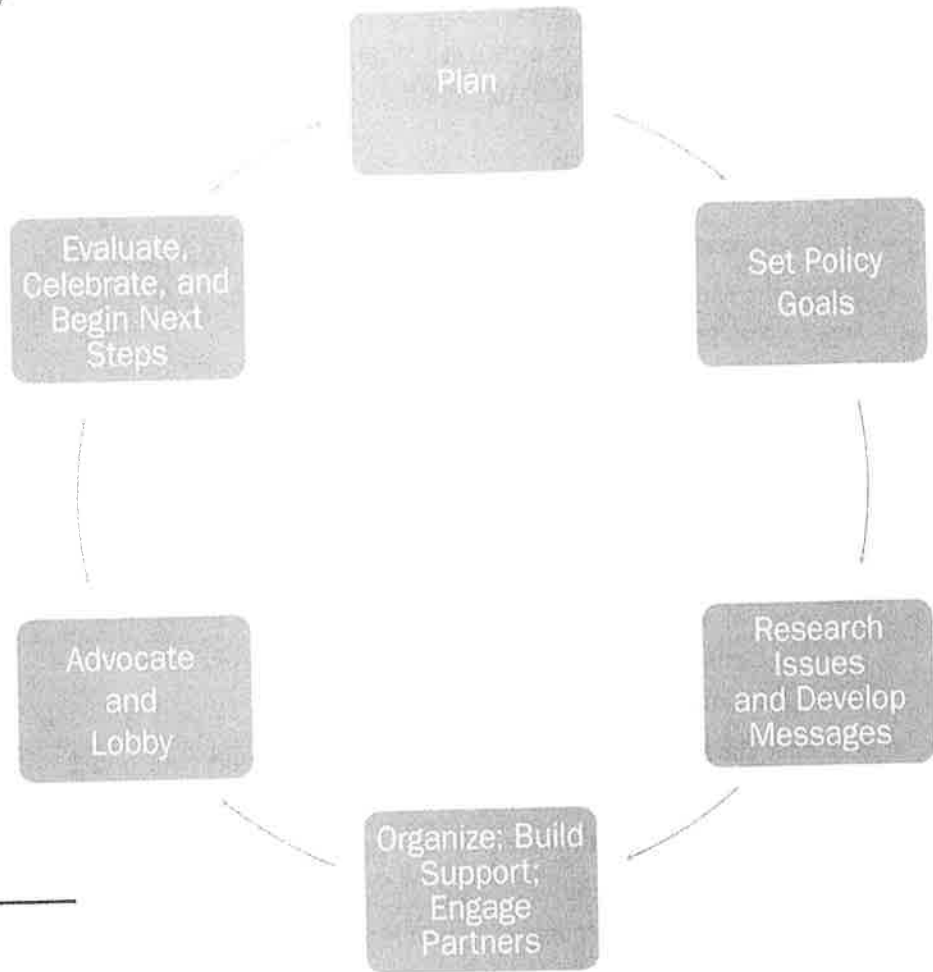


### **Lobbying in D.C.**

A note about lobbying at the national level: This guide focuses on legislative activity at the state and local level. Nevertheless, many of the planning steps and principles apply to national activity. For specific guidance on national lobbying, consider resources offered by national organizations, especially Independent Sector, Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest at the National Council of Nonprofits, and the Alliance for Justice. Bob Smucker's *The Nonprofit Lobbying Guide* is an excellent starting point for groups wanting to have an impact on congressional decisions. Information about these resources is included in Appendix B.

*Advocacy  
lobbying is  
ongoing. Infrastructure  
is important*

*How  
to develop  
a plan*



**Cycle of Advocacy**

**When you finish the steps in this book, you will have**

- Clarity about your goals for policy work and how they advance your mission
- A detailed strategic plan for your public policy work
- The organizational infrastructure to support your lobbying efforts
- Skills in lobbying the legislative and administrative branches, building and mobilizing grassroots support for your issues, and gaining media support for your positions on issues
- Resources for future reference and further development

throughout the text provide connections to groups whose experience and expertise can support your organization's public policy initiatives.

**What's Ahead**

There are four chapters in this book, designed around key steps in the development of an advocacy plan for your organization. A series of worksheets help guide you and your organization through the steps to a plan of action. Sample worksheets, embedded in the guide, illustrate the process.



*Blank worksheets are found in Appendix E; you may reproduce them as needed to facilitate your planning. Worksheets are also available online to purchasers of this book. To use the online worksheets, visit <http://www.turnerpublishing.com/lobbying-and-advocacy-handbook-worksheets>.*

**Chapter 1: *Get Ready!*: Develop a Plan for Advocacy and Lobbying** helps you “plan your plan,” setting the stage for your organization’s decision to engage in public policy efforts. This chapter leads you from launching the organizational discussion about public policy through outlining a planning process.

**Chapter 2: *Go!*: Implement Your Advocacy and Lobbying Plan** has two parts. The first directs the planning team through the planning process. It includes a self-assessment tool to help you figure out your baseline capacity. Examples and worksheets provide models and a systematic way for the planning team to record decisions. Your planning team will develop a strategic public policy work plan for the organization to adopt. The second part moves your organization into the action mode. This part contains two sections. First, it guides you in setting up internal systems and structures to facilitate your lobbying activity. Then it guides you through specific legislative lobbying skills to initiate, support, or defeat a bill. It also helps you understand how to use the media to strengthen your public policy impact.

**Chapter 3: *Sustaining the Cycle of Advocacy: Expanding Impact through Civic Engagement*** explains how your ongoing advocacy work will be strongest if you adopt a cyclical (rather than linear) model of change. Doing so not only helps insulate your organization from economic and political misfortunes but also allows you to create favorable conditions to advance your issues.

**Chapter 4: *Nonprofits and the Law*** explains ways in which the federal government encourages nonprofit lobbying and discusses limits on lobbying expenditures and systems for accounting for lobbying activity. This chapter also includes information about state-level registration and reporting and how to learn about your state’s requirements.

**Appendices** include directions for responding to a crisis or an opportunity (Appendix A); lists of resources for nonprofit lobbying (Appendix B); a guide to legislative processes (Appendix C); an annotated package of samples from a nonprofit (Appendix D); all the blank worksheets (Appendix E); and, finally, a guide to evaluating advocacy (Appendix F).



## Ten reasons to lobby for your cause

- 1. YOU can make a difference.** In Toledo, Ohio, a single mother struggling to raise her son without the help of a workable child-support system put an ad in a local newspaper to see if there were others who wanted to work for change. There were. Over time, they built the Association for Child Support Enforcement, which has helped change child-support laws across the country.
- 2. People working together can make a difference.** Mothers Against Drunk Driving convinced dozens of states to toughen up their drunk-driving laws. As a result, the numbers of drunk-driving deaths are lower nationwide.
- 3. People can change laws.** History is full of people and groups that fought great odds to make great changes: child-labor laws, public schools, clean-air and -water laws, Social Security. These changes weren't easy to achieve. They all took the active involvement—the lobbying—of thousands of people who felt something needed to be changed.
- 4. Lobbying is a democratic tradition.** The act of telling our policy makers how to write and change our laws is at the very heart of our democratic system. It is an alternative to what has occurred in many other countries: tyranny or revolution. Lobbying has helped keep America's democracy evolving over more than two centuries.
- 5. Lobbying helps find real solutions.** People thinking creatively and asking their elected officials for support can generate innovative solutions that overcome the root causes of a problem. Through such work, abused children have found rapid placement in safe homes, and restaurants have been able to donate excess food to food shelves.
- 6. Lobbying is easy.** Lobbying isn't some mysterious rite that takes years to master. You can learn how to lobby—whom to call, when, what to say—in minutes. There are a few simple reporting rules that your nonprofit organization needs to follow, but they aren't complicated.
- 7. Policy makers need your expertise.** Few institutions are closer to the real problems of people than nonprofits and community groups. Every professional lobbyist will tell you that personal stories are powerful tools for change. People and policy makers can learn from your story.
- 8. Lobbying helps people.** Everything that goes into a lobbying campaign—the research, the strategy planning, the phone calls and visits—will help fulfill your goal whether it be finding a cure for cancer, beautifying the local park, or some other cause that helps people.
- 9. The views of local nonprofits are important.** Because local governments often decide how to spend federal and state money, local nonprofits have even more responsibility to tell local policy makers what is needed and what will work. Your lobbying can have an immediate, concrete impact on people in need.
- 10. Lobbying advances your cause and builds public trust.** Building public trust is essential to nonprofit organizations and lobbying helps you to gain it by increasing your organization's visibility. Just as raising funds and recruiting volunteers are important to achieving your organization's mission, so is lobbying.

Adapted from "Ten Reasons to Lobby for Your Cause" by the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, now a part of the National Council of Nonprofits. Used with permission.

# GET READY!

## DEVELOP A PLAN FOR ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING



Nonprofits increase their likelihood of impacting public policy when they are intentional and prepared. Your organization can design a public policy lobbying effort that serves its mission well. To do so, you will engage in a planning process that answers two key questions:

1. What are our public policy goals on the issues that affect the people we serve?
2. How will our organization carry out our lobbying work?

This chapter prepares you to create a planning process that will answer these questions. It covers ways to get an organizational commitment to public policy participation and maps an eight-step planning process. When you finish this chapter, you will have a plan for advocating in the public interest that includes your work in organizing, lobbying, and media advocacy. In Chapter 3, you will have the opportunity to add one more component to your work, civic engagement. The full cycle of advocacy can and should include work to engage your constituencies in many forms of citizen engagement, including election activity. While being fully nonpartisan, you can strengthen the impact of your organizing and increase elected officials' accountability to their constituents, by educating voters on the process and mobilizing them to vote. Be prepared to incorporate this work into your organization's advocacy plan.

Many nonprofit organizations get drawn into lobbying efforts because of a pressing need to respond to a particular legislative proposal. This is not a bad way to start, and you can use what you learn in such crisis lobbying to plan for strategic, sustainable public policy involvement. Planning will ensure that you will be ready to respond

to emerging issues and that you will be positioned to provide leadership in shaping policy. Your involvement will be consistent and purposeful.

While planning should be structured to suit your organization's unique need and specific timeline, some basic steps are generally helpful:

- Launch the discussion. One person can begin the conversation that inspires your nonprofit to understand how lobbying helps fulfill your mission. Interest your organization in considering how advocacy and lobbying makes good sense because it will further your cause.
- Get key leaders' approval to create a public policy plan. Get formal agreement that the organization will design a public policy component as part of its overall work plan. Secure their commitment so planning will be structured and timely.
- Select the public policy planning team and establish a clear set of responsibilities for team members.
- Outline the planning process.
- Begin!

Instructions for accomplishing each of these steps follow.

## Launch the Discussion

Your organization may be starting from one of a variety of levels of involvement:

- This may be your first exploratory look at how public policy work could help further your mission.
- You may have been catapulted into public policy work by a threat to your funding or programs. Now you want to back up and think about strategies for long-term policy involvement.
- Yours may be one of many groups that lobby frequently but in a reactive, crisis-oriented mode. It is time, you suspect, to stabilize that effort and operate from a position of strength.

Regardless of your starting point, someone needs to urge the organization to see well-designed public policy advocacy as an opportunity to fulfill your mission and build on your accomplishments. Anyone—YOU, an individual, or a small group—can take a leadership position and begin the discussion. Convince your organization to join the public policy dialogue. Core arguments might include these convincing points:

*"This is work worth doing well. Let's figure out a way to target our efforts to make a difference on our key issues. And let's be ready to move into this work with a strategic and sustainable effort."*



*"I think that if we want to further our mission, meet the needs of our clients and other stakeholders, and change systems that aren't working for the communities we care about, we have to be a voice in the public policy debate."*

*"We have an opportunity to make a difference on issues that affect our mission. It is our responsibility to use the information we have to inform the public debate and to give our constituencies a chance to be a strong voice for issues that matter to them."*

*Good* *"Providing services and programs isn't enough. We need to lobby for the policies and resources that will solve problems and sustain our efforts to build strong communities and improve people's lives."*

*"Proactive is better than reactive. Planning matters."*

*"When we organize our supporters to work for policy changes that further our work, we create a powerful voice in the community. This is leadership work!"*

*"If we plan to build public policy advocacy into our core work, we will be making the best use of our experience and expertise and serve as a resource to decision makers and opinion shapers who are working with the issues we know well."*

*"Sometimes the best service that we can provide to our community is to give people an opportunity to work together and have a voice in the decisions that impact their lives."*

You know the needs that will convince your organization to embrace public policy as a part of its work. Frame your argument and imbue it with your passion. The next step tells you how to frame the argument. You'll have to provide the passion!

## Get Approval to Develop a Public Policy Plan

You—or whoever is the lead proponent for advocacy and lobbying—will need to meet with the key leaders in your organization to make your case for adding public policy to your organizational agenda. Prepare by framing the arguments as follows:

1. State your mission.
2. Identify how policy work will further your mission. Which state or local policies and funding decisions will solve (or compound) the problems faced by your clients or community? Which policies will strengthen your organization's ability to provide essential programs and services?
3. Specify what your organization could contribute to the debate on the issues you

Use this  
Chapter to  
inform how  
you will  
approach your  
assigned nonprofit  
and make the case  
for how your work  
can help them  
after they  
ID an issue.

identify. Your nonprofit no doubt has information and insights without which the public policy debate is not fully informed.

4. For extra impact, identify the consequences of failing to get involved.
5. Show that policy work energizes supporters and builds relationships with decision makers and community partners. It may also engage your members and supporters in exciting new ways. People want your organization to be relevant and to weigh in on issues where you have an interest.

Once you have framed the reasons why lobbying is important to your group's work, raise the issue with your organization's leaders, especially its executive director and board chair. These are the people who set your nonprofit's decision-making agenda. They can determine what additional information, if any, is needed before they seek full support for a planning process. When these key leaders understand the relationship of lobbying to mission, they will be willing to secure board and staff support for this effort and to encourage the participation of those who will do the planning.

In some organizations, the lead advocate can take a well-framed argument straight to the board for approval. In others, he or she may need to take steps to solidify organizational agreement to make public policy a priority. Organizations have used one or more of the following options to get organizational commitment for lobbying. Choose approaches that suit your organization and be creative!

- Discuss the merits of lobbying with the organization's key leaders.
- Meet with other nonprofit lobbyists or executive directors and board members who can speak from experience about the benefits of lobbying.
- Provide leaders with information from state and national groups that support nonprofit lobbying, such as Independent Sector, the National Council of Nonprofits or your own state's nonprofit association, and the Alliance for Justice. (See information in Appendix B: Resources for Nonprofit Lobbying, page 171.)
- Invite your organization's decision makers to participate in nonprofit lobbying training. Many state associations of nonprofits (identified in Appendix B) offer basic training in the how, what, and why of nonprofit advocacy.
- Be sure that leaders know that nonprofits are allowed to lobby—the federal and state laws are quite clear about this—and that lobbying is, in fact, encouraged. There are clear and easy-to-meet guidelines that your nonprofit can follow for lobbying within the limits of the law. (See Chapter 4: Nonprofit Lobbying and the Law.)
- Provide clear expectations about time and resource commitments. Nonprofits can lobby with minimal commitments of staff time and money. Your approach can be as basic or elaborate as needed to fulfill your mission and balance your workload. Nonprofits that dedicate three hours a month to public policy work have shown clear results!
- Prepare a board resolution that would authorize the planning process.

- Offer a sample step-by-step planning process that the organization could adopt and adapt to meet your specific needs. (See Outline the Planning Process in this chapter.)
- Write a charge to the planning team. The worksheets in this book can serve as the guides to the process the team will follow and the format for a plan. Set deadlines that are realistic—but carry momentum—for planning and action.
- Volunteer to help coordinate or support the effort.

Test your own lobbying skills as you persuade your target audience that public policy advocacy is the route to take. Convince your audience that advocacy is in the best interest of the communities you serve. Then seek commitment. Remember that you are NOT asking the board of directors to commit to a specific policy plan at this point. You are asking them to

- Authorize the executive director to proceed with development of a public policy plan for the organization.
- Agree to review the planning process that will be proposed before the actual planning takes place.
- Review, alter, or commit to the plan and budget developed as a result of the process being launched here.

## Select the Planning Team

Once your board authorizes the development of a public policy plan, it is wise for the director and board to delegate the planning to a working team. The *public policy planning team* should represent the interests of leaders and stakeholders who will inform your policy work and who will be critical to the adoption and implementation of the plan. Keep the team manageable; three to five people can do this planning with focus and momentum.

Consider including

- The board chair or a board director with an interest in policy work and the ability to inspire thoughtful board review of plans to be proposed.
- The executive director or a staff person with high-level responsibility for the organization's strategic plan and work plans.
- Someone—board member, staff member, volunteer—who understands policy issues and arenas of influence. This person will help shape your organization's strategy for impacting issues that matter to your mission.
- A staff member or volunteer who will be the *planning coordinator*, shepherding this process through its various phases and facilitating communication with larger groups of stakeholders along the way.
- Someone willing and skilled at *recording* the process.



## A few terms you need to know:

### Public Policy

Public Policy is the combination of goals, laws, and rules set by public officials that determine how government meets needs, solves problems, raises resources, and prioritizes public spending. Public policy is formally set by elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels through the legislative process. Informally, think of public policy as the set of decisions that our elected representatives makes about how we in this society will care for one another, our communities, and the land.

### Advocacy

Advocacy involves embracing and promoting a cause. It is an effort to increase awareness about an issue and make the case for changes that are needed. Advocacy may or may not include a call for actual changes in the law. In public policy work, "advocacy" is the overarching term that encompasses many types of activity and persuasion: conducting policy research and analysis to understand problems and shape policy solutions; promoting key ideas about what is needed in society; collecting, creating, and disseminating information about a policy issue; organizing support for issue campaigns; taking a position on a specific policy proposal and lobbying on it; building alliances and coalitions to support causes; mobilizing supporters; promoting favorable media coverage of your issue or position; generating media to move your messages; and countless other ways in which nonprofits advance causes.

For example, when a nonprofit works to end smoking in public buildings, it advocates in many ways: aggregates research about the health impact of nicotine products, publicizes the personal and public costs of health problems related to smoking, argues that everyone has a right to breathe clean air, and organizes a coalition of health-related organizations to form a statewide Smoke Free Coalition.

### Lobbying

Lobbying is one specific form of advocacy. It is that component of advocacy that focuses on supporting or opposing a specific law that is being proposed. For example, the nonprofit that wants smoke-free environments and its allies in the Smoke Free Coalition are lobbying when they propose a specific legislative proposal (e.g. a bill, an ordinance) or urge elected

officials to vote for or against a specific piece of legislation. The Smoke Free group isn't lobbying when it promotes the general idea that a smoke-free environment is a public-health imperative. It IS lobbying when it urges decision makers to pass a specific bill that, for instance, would prohibit smoking in public buildings and parks. Once the nonprofit asks a decision maker to vote "for" or "against" something, the organization is lobbying. Lobbying requires the "ask."

### Organizing

Organizing is an essential component of nonprofit advocacy. It involves people and organizations in coming together to advocate for policies that are important to them and to their community. For many people, nonprofits that organize constituencies to support or oppose an issue create a pathway for people who want to play a meaningful role in the life of their community. An organizing component of an advocacy effort builds a strong base of support for your long-term goals, your ongoing advocacy work, and timely issues campaigns. Organizing builds collective power and positions nonprofits to be an effective force for change. Components of organizing include identifying people and organizations that share your values and policy goals or are persuaded to do so when they are educated about the issue. Organizers do outreach, engage people in discussions about their interests and aspirations, involve people in the development of issues and advocacy strategies, support leadership development among their constituencies, and mobilize supporters to take action.

### Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is the component of this work that allows your nonprofit to reach its specific audiences through the mediums that appeal to them. Nonprofit advocacy and organizing have changed significantly over the past decades because of technology advances. The component of advocacy allows for broader reach and greater innovation than ever before, and effective advocates develop media advocacy strategies that are core to their policy work. Nonprofits serve as a resource to journalists and work to get coverage in media venues to inform target audiences about their issues. One target for nonprofit advocates continues to be traditional media: print newspapers, radio, and television. Newer media venues that nonprofits rely on and either create or court include Internet-based



media: online newspapers, blogs, websites, and countless forms of social media from Facebook and YouTube to Twitter and beyond. In an age when we see videos and listen to the news at newspaper sites, read the news and enjoy podcasts at radio station websites, and look to blogs for information and commentary, nonprofits can maximize creative options for telling their stories and promoting their messages. Advocates build awareness and understanding about their issues and promote their positions on issues, by using all forms of media to reach their own committed and potential supporters, the general public, opinion shapers, and elected and appointed officials. Nonprofits also need to be media savvy—prepared to respond to media coverage of their issues in timely, responsible, and dynamic ways.

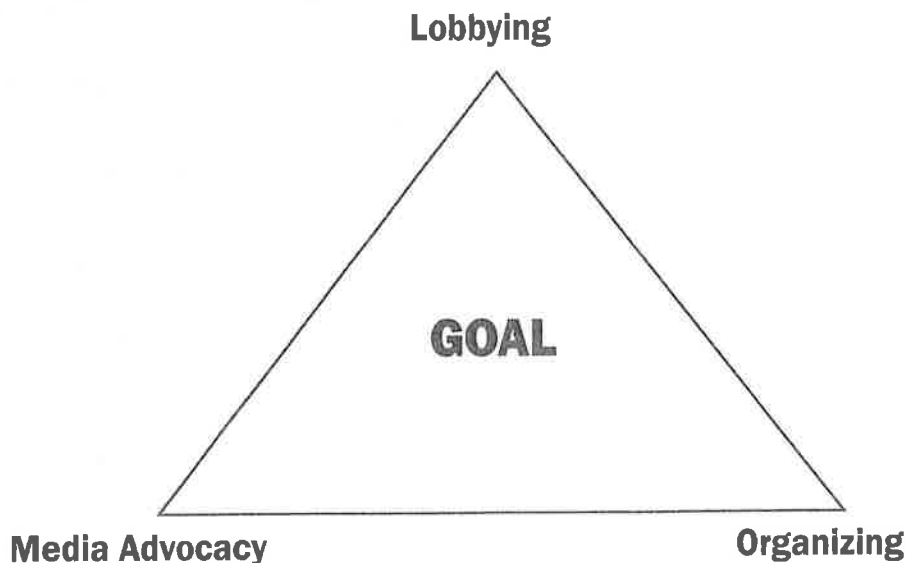
### **Arenas of Influence**

Arenas of influence are where public policy is decided. They include the legislative branch of government, including Congress, state legislatures, county commissions, city councils, metropolitan governments, school boards and other regional or local entities. The administrative branch is equally important. Here changes are made through executive order, through changes in administrative rules, policies, and procedures, and through the use of the veto power by elected executives: the president, governor, or mayor. Some policy decisions are eventually made in the courts, and nonprofits do engage in litigation. Your organization's planning involves targeting the arenas where your issues will be decided and where your involvement can make a difference.

## **Advocacy Triangle**

### **A Framework for Approaching Public Policy**

As your nonprofit develops its public policy plan, it is useful to have a basic framework for thinking about the core components of effective advocacy. This triangle serves as a visual reminder that, once your organization develops its mission-related policy goals, once it identifies the issues for near- and long-term work, there are three key advocacy strategies to employ: organizing, lobbying, and media advocacy.



Invite people who *want* to do this planning and who are well respected by the larger stakeholder groups in the organization. A planning team whose members are committed to mission, have good communication skills, and hold honest discussions with one another will have productive and positive outcomes.

## Outline the Planning Process

The steps set forth here—or an adapted version that suits your circumstances—can serve as the charge to the planning team. *Preplanning* includes forming the planning team. Once this is accomplished, the actual steps in developing a work plan for your nonprofit's public policy work can be accomplished in six meetings that cover eight planning steps. These steps are discussed in detail and with guiding worksheets in Chapter 2, but they are outlined here so you can tailor them as you create your own process.

If your organization is small, or your board members are not in close geographic proximity, or you are just plain impatient, a few shortcuts are suggested throughout the planning process. Most organizations will be able to accomplish the steps in this process with only six meetings. And you are encouraged to adapt this process to your organization's situation and personality.



### Worksheet samples: one organization, GREAT!, serves as a model

The worksheet samples in this book illustrate the planning stages of a fictional nonprofit, one based on a composite of several organizations with which the author has worked. The Gloriously Responsive Employment Advancement Training! (GREAT!) organization provides workforce development programs. Its mission is to support people with barriers to employment to move out of poverty and into jobs that provide a career path and livable wages. GREAT! is probably very different from your nonprofit. These illustrations are intended only to suggest how documentation of the planning process might look.

## Preplanning: Team Logistics and Startup

In the preplanning stage you will

1. Name the planning team.
2. Identify the team's planning coordinator who will call meetings and serve as facilitator.
3. Name the recorder who will capture key points of discussion and decisions and who will write up the plan.
4. Review the planning steps outlined here and discussed fully in Chapter 2.
5. Set a schedule of meetings and deadlines for completing each stage of planning. Keep in mind that preplanning should begin well before a legislative session or the crucial stages of local government decision making. Adapt your calendar to your state and local legislative timelines.

The Preplanning Checklist, page 205, is a convenient place to record team members, meeting times, and the formal charge of the planning team. A sample is on page 35.

## **Eight Planning Steps in Six Meetings**

Following are the eight planning steps, set up to be accomplished in six meetings as outlined below. Use this format, or modify it to fit your charge, the size of your organization, and the probable complexity of your plan.

### **First meeting**

**Planning Step 1: Prepare the Planning Team.** Provide basic orientation for the planning process. This includes a “public policy readiness inventory” that will help you to understand your organization’s current capacity for doing public policy work. The inventory is included in Worksheet 1 on page 207.

**Planning Step 2: Articulate Vision and Goals.** In this step, you create a picture of where you’ll go with public policy work, and some goals that will help you get there.

### **Second meeting**

**Planning Step 3: Establish Criteria and Identify Issues.** In this step, you decide the specific issues you’ll tackle.

### **Third meeting**

**Planning Step 4: Target Arenas of Influence.** In this step, you’ll determine which legislative or administrative bodies will be deciding on your issues. You’ll begin to learn about those groups.

### **Fourth meeting**

**Planning Step 5: Choose Strategies and Tactics.** In this step, you’ll select the strategies you’ll use and begin to develop some tactics to accomplish them.

**Planning Step 6: Design Organizational Infrastructure.** In this step, you work out decision making, staff commitments, and resource allocations for your public policy work.

### **Fifth meeting**

**Planning Step 7: Create Your Work Plan.** This is the time to tie all your strategies and tactics into a work plan with specific actions and target dates.

### **Sixth meeting**

**Planning Step 8: Present the Work Plan.** This is the time to show the plan to key decision makers in your organization and secure their commitment to move forward.



### Shortcuts in the process

Organizations that have few employees or wish to proceed more rapidly can condense the eight planning steps and six meetings recommended in this book into two full meetings of the planning committee. To do so, the planning committee should combine the scheduled meetings and delegate to staff additional responsibilities for developing the plan as directed below.

For Planning Step 1, the staff member coordinating the planning process should prepare a succinct written document that presents

1. The charge to the planning team
2. A schedule and expectations for each step of the planning process
3. A completed Public Policy Readiness Inventory for planning committee members to review

These draft documents should be routed to the planning committee members for review and comment. Then the planning committee convenes for its first meeting. During this meeting, members should have the discussions covered in Planning Steps 2 and 3. This includes

1. Articulating visions and goals for the organization's public policy work
2. Deciding the specific issues that the organization will address in its public policy agenda

Staff can then complete Planning Steps 4, 5, and 6. This includes an analysis of

1. Arenas of influence
2. Strategies for policy initiatives
3. Development of a proposal for the organization's internal structures for carrying out lobbying activities

The draft documents of this analysis should be sent to planning committee members for ideas and reactions. All members of the committee should review and comment on the drafts.

Finally, the committee should meet for a second time to debate and agree to key strategies and organizational infrastructure commitments. The staff will have integrated these into a proposed work plan for the committee to rely on as a starting point for discussion.

At the end of this discussion, staff should have adequate direction to shape an advanced draft of a work plan, submit it to committee members in written form for their review and comment, and finalize a plan to present to the board and staff for adoption.

### Summary: You're Ready!

At this point, you have built the case for public policy advocacy in your organization, persuaded the organization to commit to a planning process, selected a team, and sketched out the process. Now it is time to create your plan.

## PREPLANNING CHECKLIST

*After completing this checklist, circulate it to all members of the planning team prior to the first meeting.*

1. Identify members of the planning team for GREAT!: Glorious Responsive Employment Advancement Team. (This fictional nonprofit will be used throughout to illustrate the way in which the worksheets in this book may be used.)

Executive director

Communications director

Board chair

Board member with policy experience

Volunteer with grassroots organizing experience

2. Set a schedule of meetings.

All meetings will be held at GREAT! in the small conference room. Sandwiches and beverages will be provided.

Meeting 1: 1/15      5–9 PM

Meeting 2: 1/29      5–9 PM

Meeting 3: 2/12      5–9 PM

Meeting 4: 3/1 (Note: Sat. meeting—full agenda) 10 AM–5 PM

Meeting 5: 3/22 (Note: Sat. meeting—work plan) 10 AM–3 PM

An additional meeting will be scheduled if needed.

Meeting 6: 4/16      6 PM Board Meeting Presentation!

3. Write the “charge” or “job description” for the planning team.

The team will develop goals, a strategy, and a work plan that will guide GREAT! in lobbying at the state and local levels on issues that help us to meet our organizational mission: “To support people with barriers to employment in moving out of poverty and into jobs that provide a career path and livable wage.” In the planning process, the team will follow the planning steps in *The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations*.

(continued)

**Preplanning Checklist - continued**

GREAT!'s stakeholders will be consulted as appropriate to ensure that they add their ideas, priorities, and expertise to the planning process.

The communications director will serve as the planning coordinator of the process, including setting up meetings and reminding participants of schedules. She will staff the team, including preparing packets of information for team members to read and review prior to each meeting so that everyone is prepared to use meeting time to move forward with the work. She will document the process and all decisions, including the final work plan. The executive director will facilitate the discussions.

The team will complete its work in six meetings, devote the needed time to interim research and reading, and deliver a proposed work plan to the board at its April meeting.

You're ready. Now get set. It's time to design your lobbying plan. Use this eight-step planning process, once step at a time. Agendas are provided for six planning meetings that constitute a thorough, thoughtful, and energetic process. Worksheets for each planning step provide a ready vehicle for recording your decisions. When you have completed the six meetings and eight steps described here, you will have a public policy work plan for your organization to adopt and implement.

The eight planning steps are

- Step 1: Launch the planning team
- Step 2: Articulate your vision and goals for your policy work
- Step 3: Develop your policy agenda: Establish criteria and identify issues
- Step 4: Target arenas of influence where issues are decided
- Step 5: Choose strategies and tactics for effective advocacy
- Step 6: Design the organizational structure that you need

Step 7: Create your plan

Step 8: Finalize your organizational approval of the plan and begin the work

Let the planning begin!

## **Planning Step 1: Create a Planning Process and a Planning Team**

Preparations can be accomplished in one four-hour meeting. In the preplanning step, you appointed one member of the planning team to be the team's planning coordinator and facilitator of the entire process. His or her role is to

- Coordinate the meeting dates, times, and places for the planning process
- Ensure that the agenda is clear and everyone understands what is to be accomplished in each meeting
- Keep the discussion moving while providing all participants with the opportunity to have ideas heard
- Be sure that someone records key points of discussion and decisions (worksheets will help with this process)
- Maintain any records of the planning process
- Be sure the plan proposed by the team is presented to the organization for discussion and approval

The planning coordinator has a key role to play. In addition to being the steward of the process, the planning coordinator keeps the team focused on the big picture: engaging in public policy work so that the organization can be more effective at meeting its mission. Select the person with the passion and skills best suited for the task.

At least one week prior to the meeting, the planning coordinator should send each member a packet containing the following:

- List of team participants with contact information (phone, fax, e-mail).
- Agenda for the first meeting, including date, time, and location.
- The charge to the planning team. This may have been incorporated into a board resolution or the organization's overall strategic plan.
- The list of steps and projected schedule for the planning process as developed earlier. (See the Preplanning Checklist, page 205.)
- List of key terms from Chapter 1 of this book.
- This book so that all participants can read the background information and tackle the worksheets; or a copy of Worksheet 1: Public Policy Readiness Inventory, page 207.

Here is a sample agenda for the first part of your first meeting. Specific instructions for each substep are included. (A summary of the agenda for the first meeting appears in the box on this page.)

1. **Make introductions.** Ask each person to provide an introduction that answers these questions: What's your specific interest in being part of the planning process? Why do you see public policy and lobbying as a priority? What stakeholder groups' interests do you represent?
2. **Review the charge to the planning team.** Whether or not planning team members participated in preliminary discussions of the planning process, it will be helpful to read and discuss the charge to the team. Make sure everyone shares the same basic expectations and sense of purpose.
3. **Discuss the planning process.** This can be accomplished easily with a brief review of the six proposed meetings and their suggested agendas. Review the

schedule of meetings if it has been set, or use this time to schedule the remaining meetings. The planning coordinator should discuss key ground rules for the process, such as everyone has a chance to participate, honesty is expected, meetings will begin and end on time, and other guidelines that suit your organization's culture.

4. **Review key terms.** This is as simple as referring team members to the terms used in Chapter 1 on page 30 for review and handy reference.

5. **Complete the Public Policy Readiness Inventory.** Complete Worksheet 1: Public Policy Readiness Inventory on page 207 to get a baseline inventory of your organization's public policy readiness. The team members should fill this out together, discuss individual's perceptions about where the organization stands, and reach consensus about current levels of readiness. You can revisit the assessment tool at the end of the planning process and as you implement plans. Returning to this baseline inventory and updating your status will help everyone involved appreciate progress. A completed sample of this worksheet can be found on page 62. (Note: Throughout this book, samples of completed worksheets for the fictional nonprofit GREAT! will appear at the end of the chapter to give you a sense of how an organization might use the worksheets.)

Upon completing Worksheet 1, you have completed Step 1. The team shares an understanding of how you will proceed with fulfilling your charge to create a work plan for the organization's public policy work. The organizational self-assessment helps

## Agenda—Meeting 1

*Preparation: Be sure each member has received a packet containing team membership roster, meeting agenda, meeting schedule, list of key terms, Preplanning Checklist, and Worksheet 1: Public Policy Readiness Inventory.*

### Planning Step 1: Prepare the Planning Team

1. Make introductions.
2. Review the charge to the planning team.
3. Discuss the planning process as outlined in Chapter 2.
4. Review key terms.
5. As a group, complete Worksheet 1: Public Policy Readiness Inventory.

BREAK (15 minutes)

### Planning Step 2: Articulate Vision and Goals

6. Review your organization's mission and reaffirm that your public policy work will enhance your ability to meet your mission.
7. Develop your vision for public policy work.
8. Develop the broad policy goals for your work.

*Homework: Each member should gather a list of potential public policy issues to be discussed in the next meeting.*

you to look at where you are in your readiness for public policy work. The questions suggest some components of planning that will ensure that you are well prepared to lobby effectively. Take a break and reconvene to complete Step 2.

## Planning Step 2: Articulate Policy Vision and Goals

Step 2, covered in the second part of your first team meeting, provides an opportunity for inspiration and reflection. The planning team is ready to imagine what a strong and effective policy effort would accomplish and how it would enhance your ability to fulfill your organization's mission. The planning coordinator can guide the discussion as follows:

1. Review the organization's mission. Always go back to mission! Have a written copy of the mission for each participant. Read it out loud. Underscore how important it is to shape a public policy work plan that furthers your mission in significant ways. Write the mission statement on Worksheet 2: Mission, Vision, and Goals on page 213.
2. Brainstorm a list of ways in which public policy advocacy and lobbying can further the mission. Capture all ideas.
3. From the list, create a written statement of your vision for the organization's public policy advocacy work. (The sidebar Two Approaches to Public Policy: Initiate and Respond, on page 40, can help you envision your approach to public policy.) A vision expresses what your organization will look like in three to five years with a strong and effective public policy component in place. How will the people you serve be helped by your public policy efforts? How will your mission be advanced by your public policy work? How will you increase your ability to provide programs or services? How will you create new opportunities for people to get involved in work that supports your organization and its mission?
4. After you've created a vision, you can identify your organization's public policy goals. Identifying broad goals early in this process will make later decision steps manageable. Typical goals include
  - Specific changes in policies or funding for programs
  - Increased opportunities for people to participate effectively in the policy decisions that shape their lives
  - Strong ongoing and positive relationships with policy shapers
  - Working alliances with other nonprofits and other sectors on issues of shared interest



### Planning shortcut

If you are using the "shortcut" option for your planning process, begin your first meeting with Planning Steps 2 and 3. Staff should have all of the preparation described in Planning Step 1 ready for the planning team to have as background material.



## Two approaches to public policy: initiate and respond

As you envision your future policy work, think about a dual path: your nonprofit can *initiate* new ideas and *respond* to existing proposals that you support or oppose.

**Take the initiative:** Introduce a new legislative idea. Your organization—your staff, board, constituents, and stakeholders—is likely to know more about your issues and the community's needs in your program and service areas than most public officials. Without your involvement, the public policy debate is not fully informed. You have an instrumental role in developing and advocating for new and improved policies that will address problems and promote the general welfare.

Given your experience and expertise, your organization can take a proactive leadership role. Work with legislators to promote solutions that you know will work. Offer new ideas for policy and programs. Provide positive alternatives to weak budget proposals or unfair tax policies. Develop an idea, support it with solid information and stories about how your idea will make a difference, and then lobby until your idea becomes law.

**Be responsive:** Lobby to support an idea proposed by others or to stop a bad idea from becoming law. You

know the issues, the affected populations or places, and many of the stakeholder groups relevant to your mission, so you have an important role to play in responding to legislative ideas. Your support can make a strategic difference in whether or not legislation now "in play" passes. You can oppose an idea by pointing out its harmful consequences and by offering alternative solutions to a problem.

In either case, your organization should have a voice, and it should encourage the people you serve to be their own best voice about how proposed legislation will affect them. Become responsive by being vigilant about

- Monitoring legislative activity
- Identifying proposals that will affect your work as soon as they are introduced
- Alerting people to proposals that will touch their lives
- Coordinating efforts to inform and persuade decision makers to develop policies and funding streams that will address your organization's concerns responsibly

Specific techniques for initiating and responding are covered in Chapter 3.

- Capacity within your organization to do effective public policy work over the long term
- Enhanced positioning of your organization as a valuable resource in the community

Enter your vision statement and goals on Worksheet 2: Mission, Vision, and Goals on page 213. A sample is on page 69.

## Summary of Planning Steps 1 and 2

At the end of your first meeting, you have completed the first two steps of your planning process. You have assessed your current public policy readiness and stated your vision and goals. It is essential to continuously tie the vision and development of your

public policy work to your organization's mission. As you conclude your discussion of vision and goals, urge planning team members to read ahead to the plans for discussing issue priorities. Ask the team to do preliminary "scouting" about issues that relate to your vision and goals. Staff members may be in a strong position to prepare short briefing papers about the status of issues that they are aware of and that you might want to include in your next discussions.

Now you are ready to move to the next step in the planning process. Allow up to four hours for this second meeting of the planning team.

### **Planning Step 3: Develop a Policy Agenda: Establish Criteria and Identify Issues**

In Planning Step 2, you set broad public policy goals. Review what you recorded in Worksheet 2: Mission, Vision, and Goals. In Step 3 of this process, you will select more-specific issues to tackle.

You can usually complete Step 3 in one four-hour meeting. Here is an agenda for that meeting. (A summary of the agenda for the second meeting appears in the box on this page.)

#### **Establish Criteria**

Before you select issues, you need to create governing criteria for your public policy issues. These criteria will help you decide which issues to pick. The criteria become increasingly important as you become more active. Public-interest topics and new legislative agendas can crop up overnight, and you need to be prepared with firm guidelines to help you decide which battles to choose.

As in the first meeting of your planning team, review the mission and vision and then discuss the criteria that should govern your organization's decisions about issue selection. Keep the criteria simple, mission-focused, and limited in number. The criteria should express your organization's mission and deepest values. Invite all ideas and then agree on the criteria that are most essential. Enter your recommended criteria on Worksheet 3: Criteria for Selecting Issues on page 215. A sample worksheet is on page 70.

#### **Agenda—Meeting 2**

*Preparation: Each team member should prepare a list of potential public policy issues.*

##### **Planning Step 3: Establish Criteria and Identify Issues**

1. Review the mission, vision, and goal statements discussed at the first meeting.
2. Establish criteria for setting issue priorities.
3. Identify issues that are important to your organization and the people you serve.
4. For each issue, identify specific policy objectives and hoped-for outcomes of the lobbying effort.
5. Rank issues for your public policy agenda.

*Homework: Make sure each participant reads Appendix C: Legislative Process (page 179). Assign one or more people to research state and local processes and to outline them for the planning team.*

When reviewing sample Worksheet 3, note that GREAT!'s criteria would support making child-care accessibility and affordability a priority. The organization would have no doubts about engaging in lobbying when proposed legislation would cut the child-care services essential to its clients' ability to get and hold jobs. On the other hand, the criteria would probably screen out lobbying on the issue of state aid for K-12 education. While an important social issue, it is not close enough to GREAT!'s core mission and areas of expertise.

## Identify Issues

With criteria set, you can begin to identify issues that are important to your organization and the people you serve. This is often the most exciting component of planning. You will be deciding where you will use your time, talents, and energy to make a difference!

To identify your specific public policy issue priorities, the planning team will need to build a list of key issues that affect your mission and goals. Consider three types of issues:

1. Issues already in discussion in public policy arenas
2. Issues anticipated to be on the agenda of state or local decision makers
3. Issues you want to initiate in the public policy debate

In this first step of identifying issues, research can be both formal and informal. In smaller organizations, the planning team alone may be able to name the majority of issues. Larger organizations with multiple programs may need to start a process that solicits issues from program directors, staff, clients, other advocacy groups, and other key stakeholders. Use a process that fits your size, budget, and broad goals.

Based on how wide-ranging you choose to be in identifying possible issues for your agenda, planning team members will need to list

- Issues that you know about from media coverage and general knowledge.
- Issues that coalitions or allied organizations have identified as priorities. This may require meetings with the executive director, lobbyist, or other key leaders from the relevant coalitions or organizations.
- Issues that elected officials who represent your district or who take a leadership role in your field identify as key legislative items. This will require meetings with targeted legislators for state-level activity and county, city, or other officials if your work will focus on local government.
- Issues that grow out of your organization's experience and expertise that are not being addressed but need attention.

Once you have identified a basic list of issues, do a preliminary assessment of fit with mission, goals, and criteria. Use Worksheet 4: Identify Issues on page 217 to record your analysis. A sample is on page 71. Remember that issue selection is an ongoing process. As a planning team, you are providing initial suggestions and testing a process for the development of your issue agenda.

## Set Objectives and Priorities

At this point in the planning process, the team will need to use the criteria to decide which issues to pursue. Ask, “Based on our goals and criteria, and on how much attention the issue is getting, how does each of our issues rank in importance?” Return to Worksheet 4 to rank the importance of each issue. Consider how closely each issue matches your criteria. Also consider how likely it is that the issue will actually be addressed by decision makers. (Is it a “live” issue?) Your top priorities should be those issues most important to your mission, vision, goals, and criteria that will have a chance to progress in policy debates. Choose to initiate issues that are likely to be taken seriously and acted on by legislators. Prepare to respond to those “hot” items that are in debate and have significant implications for your work and for the people you serve.

Once you have decided on the issues you will pursue, you must determine your lobbying objectives and positions on each issue by answering the following questions:

1. On this issue, what is our public policy objective? What change or new initiative do we want to see in place?

For example, GREAT! wants to see adequate and effectively targeted state support for workforce training. One of its policy objectives is a coordinated state system for workforce training.

2. To achieve the policy objective and attain the desired change, what specific position will we take on this issue? Do we agree with a current proposal for legislation, or do we want to offer an alternative proposal?

GREAT!’s position is to support a current bill, HF 554, that would provide funding and other assistance to coordinate workforce training across the state.

Many organizations will do both a long-term and a short-term policy issue agenda. To document your decisions about issues for your policy agenda, use separate copies of Worksheet 5 for immediate and long-term agendas.

A short-term issue is one that can be addressed and resolved in the very near future. These issues are often uncontroversial. Sometimes they are issues that have to be addressed quickly because of their very nature, such as budget appropriations. A short-term agenda item for GREAT! might be to stop another group’s proposal to cut

current funding for workforce development programs. GREAT! would move into rapid action to encourage legislators to defeat that measure. This issue would have to be addressed in the short term—during the same legislative session in which it was proposed and the budget was being set.

A long-term issue is usually one that requires extensive education and requires you to build support for your position over time. Sometimes it is an issue that requires that you attain your objectives incrementally rather than in one single step. For GREAT!, a long-term issue might be integration of state and federal workforce-development programs. This could be initiated with a proposal to synchronize one aspect of the programs, perhaps the reporting requirements that federal and state agencies have. It could build over time to a more significant coordinated effort to share program goals and jointly fund projects.

Worksheet 5: Issues, Objectives, and Positions on page 219 will guide you in this process. On this worksheet, you have the opportunity to state your specific position on the issue. A sample is on page 72.

### Summary of Planning Step 3

At the end of this third step in the planning process, you have reached a major point of accomplishment. You have determined

- Criteria for issue selection
- An issue agenda for immediate and long-term policy work
- Positions and objectives for your lobbying efforts



#### Planning shortcut

For organizations using a shortcut to the planning process, staff should prepare all of the information developed in Planning Steps 4, 5, and 6. These materials can be sent to planning committee members prior to their second meeting and discussed before they complete Steps 7 and 8.

As a result of this work, you are beginning to get a more concrete sense of just where your vision will take you. At your planning team's next meeting, you will tackle Planning Step 4: Target Arenas of Influence. In this step, you will learn about the state and local legislative bodies and administrative agencies where your issues will be decided.

### Planning Step 4: Target Arenas of Influence Where Issues Are Decided

Three arenas where you can influence public policy are described in this step: the legislature, the executive or administrative branch of government, and the courtroom. This book focuses primarily on ways you can influence the legislative branch of government at the state and local levels. How-

ever, never overlook the importance of direct contact with the people responsible for implementing laws—the administrators in the executive branch. Also keep in mind the media. They can get an issue “on the radar screen” for decision makers. And, of course, some battles can only be won in the courtroom.

With careful preparation, you can accomplish this step in one four-hour meeting. This meeting can be a lot of fun, including a guest speaker and presentations on various forms of government. A discussion of the agenda for the third meeting follows. (See the box on this page for a summary of the agenda for the third meeting.)

## Review Arenas of Influence

Your organization will be working to influence government decision makers in one of three arenas of influence. These are the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

### Legislative branch

Often the most effective action is shaping public policy through legislative lobbying. Legislatures create laws that impact all dimensions of human activity. Legislatures determine how government will collect revenues and how it will spend its resources.

Use the legislative arena to influence the funding priorities and appropriations decisions of your state or local government. For example, health-care advocates lobby at federal and state legislative arenas for funds to guarantee that children whose families don’t have adequate health coverage still get the necessary immunizations.

Use the legislative arena to shape broad policies. For example, human-rights advocates have advocated at state legislative arenas for policies to protect workers from harassment in the workplace.

Use the legislative arena to pass laws that set the standards for acceptable social behavior and establish consequences for violations of those standards. For example, groups concerned about drunk driving have lobbied state legislatures to set standards for what level of alcohol in a person’s blood constitutes drunkenness and stiff penalties for those convicted of driving while intoxicated.

### Agenda—Meeting 3

*Preparation: Make sure each participant reads Appendix C: Legislative Process (page 179). Assign one or more people to research state and local processes and to outline them for the planning team.*

#### Planning Step 4: Target Arenas of Influence

1. Review the possible arenas of influence where your issues might be decided.
2. Identify a primary arena of influence for each of your issue priorities.
3. Learn more about the state and local legislative arenas where your organization works, with a special emphasis on those where your key issues are likely to be decided. Learn about the process and the people in these arenas of influence.  
Suggestion: Invite a guest speaker—legislative staff, an experienced lobbyist, or an elected official—to present an overview of the state and local processes where you expect to lobby.
4. Determine what additional steps team members will take before your next meeting to build your knowledge of how your targeted arenas of influence are structured and operate. Assign readings. Consider scheduling an additional meeting for a tour of your state capitol, county office, or city hall as part of the planning process.
5. Develop a plan for educating others in the organization about your arenas of influence.

*Homework: Assign members to gather information about each arena of influence in which you are working. Assign one member to review Chapter 3 to guide choices to be made in the next meeting about direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying tactics.*

### **Executive branch: elected officials and administrative agencies**

Some issues can be addressed most effectively in the executive branch of government. A governor or mayor can act with executive authority to effect change on some policy issues. For instance, a governor has emergency powers and can mobilize public-safety or crisis responses. Executive leaders appoint administrative officials, propose policies and budgets, and have significant influence in negotiations over policy issues and fiscal decisions that involve controversy. Nonprofits benefit from serving as a trusted resource to executives and their key staff.

Administrative agencies carry out the programs and policies set in place by the legislative and executive decision makers. They implement policies with rules, program design, and contracts with nonprofits and other entities. Your state, county, and city have agencies and program managers who have oversight responsibility for the policies, programs and budgets that are related to your policy issues and work. They also serve as key advisors to the executive and legislative branch. Effective advocacy involves being known and trusted by administrators and executive leaders and staff. Your organization can have an important impact by advocating to those who prepare budgets, propose policies, and analyze the impact of policies proposed in the legislative branch.

### **Courts**

For some long-debated and complex issues, the courts are the proper arena for influence. Nonprofits use litigation to meet their objectives when legislative bodies have no authority to act or refuse to act; when federal, state, and local legislative decisions are contradictory; and when there is reason to believe that laws have been violated. For example, nonprofits have initiated litigation against utility companies to force them to comply with environmental-quality standards when those utilities were violating existing laws. Another example: smoke-free coalitions and states have challenged the tobacco industry through individual and class-action litigation. Legal action was the best path for compelling the industry to pay states and victims for health problems related to smoking. Keep in mind that litigation is more costly than lobbying.

### **Multiple arenas**

Sometimes you will want to work in multiple arenas for change. In parallel actions, states have curbed sales of tobacco to minors, controlled advertising practices, and taxed tobacco through legislative initiatives. On a campaign as broad in scope as tobacco control, such multiple strategies are essential. Your organization should assess where decisions will be made about your issue and how you can have an impact in one or more of those arenas.

## Identify Arenas

Usually, the arenas in which you must work are fairly apparent. Return to Worksheet 5: *Issues, Objectives, and Positions* to review your policy issues. List them again on Worksheet 6: *Identify Arenas of Influence*, page 221, noting each issue, the arena or arenas in which action must be taken, and what actions your organization has already taken. A sample is on page 74.

## Learn the Lawmaking Process

For planning purposes, study the overview of the legislative process included in Appendix C: *Legislative Process*, page 179. Then work with local experts and materials produced by your state and local governments to understand how the process works in your area. For this third meeting of the planning team, ask members to read Appendix C before you meet to discuss arenas. Also provide members with information about your own legislative process. Information is always available from your legislative information offices, from civic organizations such as the League of Women Voters, and at state legislative websites. The basic information presented in Appendix C will serve as background for getting up to speed on your state (or county or city) process.

In this third meeting of your organization's public policy planning team, consider inviting a guest speaker who knows your state or local process well. Ask a legislator, legislative staff member, city or county manager, or an experienced lobbyist to spend an hour outlining how the process works in your arena of influence. Ask the speaker to include a case study of how one idea moved through the process. Expand the length of the meeting if you choose to cover multiple arenas. Including a speaker may extend the meeting, but it is likely to be informative and energizing as you learn from "inside players" about how the process works.

Focus on learning the informal rules of the process as well as the formal steps you will need to take. For example, an informal rule is that the media often cover the first hour of a hearing. Therefore, you want to be sure that your witnesses sign up to testify early in the hearing. You will learn such informal rules from the "real stories" of guest speakers who have been involved in the legislative process.

Finally, you can begin to compile what you are learning by filling in Worksheet 7: *The Legislative Arena* on page 223. Do this as a group effort so that you review what you know and identify gaps that need to be filled. Most organizations will need to conduct a minor amount of research, using materials provided by legislative information services or local government information offices to complete this worksheet. Invite members of the team to volunteer to seek out the information that you are unable to fill out at the meeting. Your answers to Worksheet 7 become a part of your organization's public policy guide; of course, some dates will need to be changed annually. Because this worksheet is self-explanatory, no sample is provided.

### Understand the legal mandates that govern your arenas of influence

This is a background step that will be useful for your organization's advocacy efforts. A member of the planning team should retrieve and review the legal mandates that govern the arenas of influence in which you will be advocating. This person becomes your expert and helps others to know the "rules of the game." This person should

- Review the state constitution, county charter, or city charter as fits your goals. What is the form of government described? What are the legal duties and responsibilities of elected officials and key administrators?
- Review official rules published by the legislative body that govern the process.
- Serve as the resource person on these legal mandates.

You may also rely on governmental websites and official offices—including those of the secretary of state, attorney general, county attorney, charter commission, and others—to have information about the jurisdictional mandates for each level of government. From time to time, you will need to know such things as whether a governor or mayor can address your issue through executive order without your having to become involved in the legislative process. You may need to know what is required to raise a tax, override a veto, or propose a ballot initiative. Those who know the rules can be most strategic in shaping policy plans.



### Understand the legal mandates that govern your arenas of influence

Increasingly, the vast majority of information about a unit of government may be obtained online. Be familiar with the website of your targeted arena of influence. Make sure that you know where to access relevant information on the site. Often units of government and policy makers offer e-mail newsletters, schedules, alerts, and records of action. Some will have a public presence on social media as well. Subscribe to information resources that provide the information and updates that you will need about the governmental body.

### Know the People of the Process

In addition to knowing the process for lawmaking, you must understand the people of the process. They are the decision makers who have the power to decide about your issues and who control the timing and tone of the debate. They include legislative leaders and staff, executive branch officials and staff, and others in the public-affairs community: lobbyists, political analysts, media, researchers, policy analysts, and engaged citizens. Remember that those who oppose you are also "people of the process" and need to be included in your assessment of all the important players surrounding your issue. Review the section *The People of the Process in Appendix C: Legislative Guide*. Then gather information from others with experience in arenas of influence and fill in *Worksheet 8: The People of the Process* on page 229. You can assign the worksheet to one or more members of the team to be completed before the third meeting. Or you can take part of the meeting to complete the worksheet as a group, depending on the time you have available.

Worksheet 8 will become part of your record for your policy guide. Naturally, names will have to be changed annually as new officials take office and new administrators are appointed. No sample of Worksheet 8 is provided, as the questions are self-explanatory.

While you are learning about the legislative process, take the opportunity to learn about the political and fiscal landscape of your area. Which political parties have power in state-level executive and legislative positions? Have there been changes in political power in recent elections? What is the fiscal landscape? Does the city, county, or state have a budget surplus or deficit? Why? Also learn about the political culture of the arena of influence. What are the values that dominate the landscape? What are the ideological frameworks of elected officials from different parties or areas of the state or district? What is the general political will on the issues that you champion? What are the “hot button” items that dominate political dialogue? How open is the process: i.e., are residents and community organizations welcome to participate in the process?

Your team is near the end of its third meeting and the completion of Planning Step 4. You have been learning about arenas of influence, identifying the gaps in your knowledge, and assigning individual team members to seek out information, fill in worksheets, and share what they find by the next team meeting.

Lobbying and learning about it can and should be fun! With that in mind, create an interesting field trip for your team. Schedule a two- to three-hour visit to your state capitol, county office, or city hall. Consider inviting not just the planning team but any other key stakeholders whom you’ll want to involve in future advocacy efforts. The sidebar Treasure hunt at the capitol or city hall on page 50 describes an enjoyable way to get acquainted with the place where you’ll be lobbying and the people there.

## **Develop a Plan for Educating Others in Your Organization**

Once you have completed the team’s discussion and work assignments for Planning Step 4, you will need a means for sharing the information with others in your non-profit. Keep a list of the ways in which you will compile and distribute the information. Some good ways to educate your colleagues include the following:

- Compile a policy notebook for all key staff and board members. Include the worksheets compiled in the planning process and any basic information that you have acquired about the arenas of influence and people of the process. Maintain this notebook in electronic format as a work in progress, ready for updates and new segments over time.
- Keep an e-mail list of key staff and board members for interim and ongoing communications about the planning process and for distributing additional materials.
- Invite all interested members of the organization to participate in a “treasure



## Treasure hunt at the capitol or city hall

Directions: Plan a business-hours visit to your state capitol, county office, or city hall for members of your planning committee plus any stakeholders you want to involve in your organization's lobbying effort. Allow three hours for this adventure. Plan to visit with your own elected representative, if possible, to get acquainted. Have fun on your "treasure hunt" as you do the following:

- Find the building. (Provide a map; one new lobbyist's first visit to her state capitol left her perplexed. There were no other cars in the parking lot. How could this be? She was at the nearby cathedral, which looks a lot like the capitol building but isn't!)
- Find the information office. Look for the house information office and the senate information office (except in Nebraska, which has a unicameral legislature).
- Learn where on the governmental website you can find the following:
  - Information about how the legislative process works
  - Information about the executive branch and administrative agencies
  - How to find out who represents your area
  - How to teach your constituencies to learn who represents them
  - Information about committees: their issue areas, members, and staff
  - Meeting minutes
  - Information on audio and/or video coverage of meetings and press conferences
- Find out how your nonprofit can reserve a space for meeting at the capitol when you have a Day on the Hill
- Sign up to get publications and meeting notices by mail or e-mail.
- Visit the index office. Ask how you get copies of bills, current calendars, agendas for legislative sessions, and official records of votes. Is there a system for tracking bills on the Internet? Ask for a demonstration of how to track a bill.
- Visit the legislative reference library. Is there one? What resources and services does it provide?
- Visit the legislative chambers. Where does the house, senate, county board, or city council meet? Ask how you get messages to elected representatives when they are on the floor debating issues.
- Visit committee meeting rooms. Where do the elected officials sit? Where do witnesses sit or stand when presenting testimony?
- Visit the press-conference room. Is there a space for media events? How can you reserve it if you want to use it?
- Visit the press corps offices. Where are they? Stop and introduce yourselves.
- Where can people park? What are the public-transportation routes for your constituents?
- Is the governmental complex fully accessible? Are there interpreter and translator services?
- Is there a cafeteria or other food service?

In addition to your public policy-oriented tour, suggest that planning committee members take the architectural-historical tour of your capitol, often offered by the state historical society or capitol staff. These tours give historical context and provide some intriguing stories.

hunt” in your chosen arena for change. (See the sidebar Treasure hunt at the capitol or city hall opposite.)

- Sponsor a training session. Ask your planning team members and someone experienced in nonprofit lobbying to do a three-hour session on how the process works, who has power, and how to reach them effectively.

## Summary of Planning Step 4

At this point in your planning process, you have set your issues agenda and learned a lot about the arenas where you want your issues to be addressed and acted upon. Before your next meeting, members will need time to complete their research assignments, perhaps meet for a “treasure hunt” at the arena of influence, and pull together all the information gathered. Once this has been completed and information has been compiled and distributed, the team can meet to focus on lobbying strategies and tactics—getting the work done well!

## Planning Step 5: Choose Strategies and Tactics for Effective Advocacy

Planning Step 5 is where you decide on the basic approaches you’ll use to carry out your lobbying work. You will choose from a checklist of typical strategies and add some of your own. After you know your broad strategies, you will turn to Planning Step 6: Design Organizational Infrastructure. The agenda for your fourth meeting, which should take from three to four hours, follows. (See the summary of the agenda for the fourth meeting in the box to the right.)

### Agenda—Meeting 4

*Preparation: Assign one planning team member to read about direct lobbying and grassroots mobilizing in Chapter 3 in preparation for Item 2 below.*

#### Planning Step 5: Choose Strategies and Tactics

1. Conduct a *brief* review of what has been decided about your agenda of priority issues and the arenas of influence where those issues will be decided.
2. Discuss direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying.
3. Decide on the key components of each type of lobbying that your organization wants to implement in your legislative work.

BREAK (15 minutes)

#### Planning Step 6: Design Organizational Infrastructure

4. Discuss decision-making structures. Determine the role of the board, key staff, a public policy advisory committee, and a rapid-response team.
5. Identify the role of staff. Develop the job description for the lobbying coordinator. Determine who will carry out key responsibilities for tracking legislation, direct lobbying, and mobilizing support for your positions.
6. Identify costs in staff time and financial resources that the organization will need to commit to lobbying.

## Review Completed Work

Your public policy planning team has covered a lot of ground. Before choosing lobbying strategies, take a few minutes to review the decisions made about priority issues and desired outcomes. Review Worksheet 5: Issues, Objectives, and Positions; Worksheet 6: Identify Arenas of Influence; Worksheet 7: The Legislative Arena; and Worksheet 8: The People of the Process. In addition, team members may have gathered more information

based on the assignments made at the previous meeting. Be sure that all members of the planning team have received and reviewed information added to the worksheets by team members.

## **Discuss Direct Lobbying and Grassroots Organizing**

Whether your arena of influence is the state legislature, the county board, or the city council, your nonprofit will be most effective if you use a two-pronged approach: **direct lobbying and grassroots organizing**. Direct lobbying is the action that your organization takes to persuade elected and appointed officials to adopt your position and vote the way your organization wants them to on your bills. Grassroots organizing involves educating and activating the public to persuade elected and appointed officials to vote to support your positions.

*Nonprofits have two primary sources of power: valuable information and the voices of people who care about your legislative priorities. Direct lobbying and grassroots organizing enable your nonprofit to use those two sources of power effectively.*

Your nonprofit has unique and valuable expertise and experience about your issues. Without this information, elected officials may make uninformed decisions. In direct lobbying, you provide information—data and anecdotes—that shapes the debate.

When you tap your members, friends, and allies and reach out to the public, you mobilize people who care about the issue. Therefore, they are willing to share their concerns (and your nonprofit's positions) with decision makers, especially their own elected officials. Your supporters can use their influence as constituents. This is a great advantage to your nonprofit. Constituents elect government officials and can hold them accountable on election day. In a representative democracy, constituents' voices are sure to be heard, and your supporters can be persuasive with those whom they elect.

Chapter 2 will guide your nonprofit through the "how-to" steps of both direct lobbying and grassroots mobilizing. Prior to the fourth meeting, assign one planning team member to read through Chapter 2 to help guide the discussion around grassroots organizing and direct lobbying.

## **Choose Lobbying Strategies**

At this point in your planning process, your planning team should consider lobbying strategies and tactics and determine which you want to have in your repertoire.

Knowing the general types of lobbying activity that you will want to employ over time will help you to develop a lobbying plan and anticipate the resources needed to carry it out. Worksheet 9: Lobbying Strategies on page 231 outlines basic lobbying strategies and includes a checklist of tactics you might take. As mentioned above, the most basic division of strategies is between lobbying and organizing. Tactics within these strategies include:

### Direct lobbying

- Build positive relationships and trust with elected officials.
- Monitor the legislative process and identify activities that affect your issues.
- Provide expertise to elected officials.
- Persuade legislators to support your position.

As you can see, direct lobbying strategies focus on providing valuable information to legislators and working with them in positive and respectful ways to influence their decisions. Over the long term, your information and unique expertise can make you a resource that elected officials and their staff will turn to as they shape their own priorities and positions.

### Grassroots organizing

- Build your base of supporters.
- Mobilize your supporters.

Grassroots strategies can multiply your overall effectiveness. Grassroots lobbying involves first developing a base of supporters (including your most direct stakeholders but reaching out to many others as well), keeping them informed and updated, and then mobilizing those who care about the issue and who are willing to have their voices heard. Read more about grassroots organizing in Chapter 2, pages 101-107.

As a group, read and discuss the options in Worksheet 9: Lobbying Strategies. Select those that, at least for the present, fit your goals. This checklist is an overview of choices about direct and grassroots lobbying approaches. Consider your team's responses as a preliminary catalog of the types of activities that you will undertake. But remember that your unique circumstances—your existing relationships with elected officials, the readiness of your supporters and allies, the work already under way on the issues that concern you—will create specific needs and opportunities for your lobbying effort. The checklist allows you to make some tentative decisions about basic activities that can be used or held in reserve as circumstances require. (Because Worksheet 9 is self-explanatory, no sample is provided.)

## Planning Step 6: Design the Organizational Infrastructure You Need

You have made key decisions at this point in the planning process. Your planning team has examined

- How public policy advocacy and lobbying will enable you to fulfill your mission.
- Public policy goals.
- Priority issues, positions, and desired outcomes.
- Information about arenas for change where your issues will be decided.
- Lobbying strategies that you might employ.

To lobby, your organization needs to have enough internal capacity to do this work well and sustain the effort. Whether you intend to lead a major lobbying effort or dedicate a few hours a month to communicating with elected officials, plan for the infrastructure that will meet your organization's expectations. In Step 6, you will examine internal decision-making structures, roles and responsibilities, and resource commitments needed to meet your lobbying objectives.

Planning Step 6 can often be accomplished in the second part of the fourth meeting (see Meeting 4 Agenda repeated at right). It's natural to follow up choices about likely activities with the development of a structure that will support those actions.

### Discuss Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision Making

Public policy decisions require both long-term strategies and short-term responses to unanticipated crises or opportunities. To ensure that policy decisions are made with adequate information and by those in the organization with authority to set the organization's policies, your nonprofit needs to establish decision-making roles in your public policy work.

Typical roles for board, staff, and advisory committee are described below.

- **The Board of Directors.** The board has final authority over your policy agenda and the resources allocated to public policy work, consistent with the governance role of nonprofit boards. The board must ensure that policy efforts are helping the organization meet its mission.
- **Staff.** Usually, your organization's executive director and any staff designated to carry out lobbying activity will need to work with the board in setting the issue agenda and identifying resources. In addition, the director and staff will shape the work plan for implementing the lobbying effort and ensure that staff members have clear direction about roles and responsibilities.

- **Public Policy Advisory Committee.** In addition to board and staff involvement, many nonprofits find great value in forming a public policy advisory committee. It can be a committee of the board or a committee composed of a mix of stakeholders interested in the public policy dimension of your work. These people may be your link to other organizations working on related issues. They may be community members who care about your issues, stay informed, and are eager to be active in policy efforts. When the public policy advisory committee is not a committee of the board, it should include one or two board members who can serve as liaisons to the board.

Board, staff, and public policy advisory committee roles need to be clearly defined so that this strategic work can proceed in a timely and focused way. Legislative activities often require on-the-spot decisions and adjustments in plans to meet changing circumstances. In advance of actual lobbying, your organization needs to decide who will make decisions about your organization's policies and activities.

Many nonprofits designate a rapid-response team made up of a few board and staff leaders. This team is empowered to deal with fast-moving action in a legislative arena and to make decisions when there is little time to consult widely or convene a board meeting.

Consider the wide array of public policy job descriptions that you might want to adopt or adapt to your organization's particular structure and culture. The sidebar Public Policy Job Descriptions on pages 56 and 57 provides a menu of possibilities. Consider both the decision-making hierarchies in your organization and the ways in which you want to assign responsibility for lobbying activity. As a group, read through all the options. Use Worksheet 12: Roles and Responsibilities (page 243) and Worksheet 13: Decision Making (page 247) to designate staff for the positions you'll need and to note who has authority for decisions. Sample worksheets are on pages 75 and 80.



## Identify Staff and Financial Costs

*Public policy work requires thoughtfulness, energy, creativity, and time. It doesn't always require much cash.*

Your organization needs to determine what your lobbying costs will be and build that need into your development and resource-allocation plans.

## Develop a public policy guide for your organization

Your organization will need its own public policy guide, complete with internal policies and procedures and information about the policy arenas you work within. Begin now by saving relevant worksheets and adding notes and documents provided by guest speakers or uncovered in your own research.



## Public policy job descriptions

### Board Chair

The board chair leads the board in ensuring that the organization has been intentional in adopting public policy as a component of its work. The board chair works with the board to affirm the organization's positions on public policy measures and to determine the priority of public policy in the overall mix of the organization's work. The board chair guides the board as it shapes plans and allocates resources for lobbying. In some organizations the board chair may be a community leader in a strong position to be a public spokesperson for your issue.

### Board Members

Board members make the key decisions to move the organization into public policy initiatives that are consistent with the organization's mission and goals. Board members may serve on the planning team that determines what role public policy will play in the organization's program, and they may also serve on the public policy advisory committee if one is created. Board members' responsibilities for the management of organizational resources and for organizational accountability are important in their governance of policy work. Often board members have relationships and status in the community that position them to be good spokespersons and lobbyists. Their role should include advocating on behalf of your organization's public policy positions in coordination with the board chair.

### Executive Director

The executive director has oversight responsibility for public policy and works with the board chair to ensure that the board shapes the organization's direction on policy. The executive director may also serve as spokesperson for the organization and is likely to be one of its official lobbyists (registered, if required by state law). His or her responsibilities for hiring, program design, program accountability, and resource management all apply to the public policy component of the nonprofit's work.

### Public Policy Coordinator

This staff person or volunteer tracks and manages all information relevant to your nonprofit's public policy work. He or she is the steward of the plans and systems essential to your policy initiatives. This person also coordinates communications and activity. The coordinator's responsibilities may range from knowing how to access all statements ever made by the organization on a given policy issue to being sure that there is enough postage to get out a call to action on schedule! This person knows where every policy spokesperson is and needs to be. The coordinator ensures that all spokespersons are promoting the same key messages, that the lobbyist's report from the capitol gets to the organization's directors and members, and that the rapid response team is convened to deal with a crisis or course correction.

### Lobbyist

The lobbyist works to persuade decision makers to adopt your organization's position on an issue. Some nonprofits have a full-time lobbyist because of the priority placed on lobbying and the intensity of the issue. For many nonprofits, an executive director or program staff person serves in this role. If you plan on long-term involvement in policy work or are addressing a complex major issue, your organization may want to have at least one lobbyist who is often (preferably always) present at the legislative body where you are working to create change. He or she should know the legislative process and players. Your lobbyist's credibility, timeliness, savvy, and ability to present clear and compelling arguments will be a keystone to your success.

Some nonprofits may hire a contract lobbyist who is familiar with nonprofit lobbying. Contract lobbyists have developed experience and access to the legislative arena that can serve you well, especially when you expect to have only short-term involvement in a lobbying effort. Because smaller nonprofits can rarely afford their own

lobbyist if they are seeking someone with significant experience, hiring a contract lobbyist can be cost-effective. The contract lobbyist will need to have clear responsibilities, and the lobbyist's work will have to be coordinated well with the efforts of the organization's staff and board. The policy coordinator should work closely with the contract lobbyist in such cases.

#### **Public Policy Advisory Committee**

This committee can be either a committee of the board or an advisory committee that includes both board members and other interested stakeholders. This committee can add a focus and perspectives that you might not otherwise have. Its role can include shaping your organization's long-term policy agenda and assisting in building grassroots support for positions. A key role for this committee is to work with your organization in building strategic relationships with public officials, nonprofit colleagues, and other sectors.

#### **Rapid Response Team**

The team should include the executive director, a board member, the lobbyist, and up to two other people who are authorized by the board to mobilize quickly and make crucial decisions during the fast-changing legislative process. Compromises, media opportunities, and proposed alliances will have to be addressed between board meetings, and this is the team to do it.

#### **Organizer**

This staff person or volunteer organizer informs and mobilizes your supporters by building support in key legislative districts; holding briefings or press events that garner understanding and attention; and managing an action alert network that can muster calls or letters to decision makers on short notice.

#### **Media Specialist**

This person builds rapport with the members of the media who cover your organization's issues. This communications specialist knows how to reach the media, how to handle the tough

questions, and how to become a resource—the person the reporters call when they need a community connection on a story about your issue.

#### **Just a note: DON'T LET THIS LIST BE DAUNTING.**

In most nonprofits, the lobbyist, the organizer, the policy coordinator, and the media specialist are the same person. For small nonprofits, even those with only a few staff and volunteers, some minor shifts in work priorities make it possible to do the advocacy work that furthers your mission strategically. Advocacy requires good planning and strategic thinking. It does not always command a lot of time if you focus on a very specific agenda and especially if you collaborate with other organizations.

Many organizations support lobbying work with unrestricted funds such as dues, fees from events or publications, and fees for services. While some governmental and foundation grants prohibit lobbying with grant funds, many will fund educational efforts and outreach related to your public policy issue priorities.

Once you have selected your issues and some key lobbying strategies, you will be able to identify budget needs. Use Worksheet 14: Identify Resources on page 249 to build a preliminary cost projection for your lobbying effort. Base your personnel costs on the anticipated percentage of staff time spent on public policy. For example, an executive earning \$70,000 a year who is anticipated to spend 5 percent of her time on public policy would cost \$3,500, plus benefits. A sample is on page 81.

### **Summary of Planning Steps 5 and 6**

At the end of your fourth meeting, you have gone as far as you can to determine the infrastructure you will need for public policy work. You have looked at possible ways to define roles and assign responsibilities to carry out your public policy work. You have determined how decisions will be made and by whom as you engage in a process that can present crises and opportunities without much warning, and you have done some initial calculations of the costs that you will incur as you lobby.

### **Planning Step 7: Create Your Plan**

Your nonprofit's public policy planning team has carried out a wide range of tasks and made some key decisions throughout the planning process. Now it is time to put it all together in a work plan to propose to the organization's leaders for approval. Your work plan will combine all the decisions you've made and indicate the activities that you will carry out. If you are following the meeting schedule on page 33, this will be your fifth meeting. (See the summary of the agenda for the fifth meeting in the box on the opposite page.)

### **Review and Include Key Documents**

You have already gathered much of the information you'll need to create a public policy work plan. Review and compile the information you've gathered on your mission, vision, and goals, your issues and strategies, and your infrastructure.

### **Mission, vision, and goals**

Begin your public policy work plan with your overall thesis that public policy advocacy is a strategy for meeting your organization's mission. Include in your work plan the statements about your public policy vision and goals developed in Worksheet 2: Mission, Vision, and Goals. Review these statements and change them if needed. Your core positions are not likely to change, but you may have more details to add as you complete your planning process.

### **Issues and strategies**

Next, review your issue priorities and the advocacy strategies you will use to meet your policy objectives. In Worksheet 5, you identified your issues, positions, and objectives; in Worksheet 9, you identified some advocacy strategies that match your needs and organizational strengths. Now you develop a preliminary plan of action that shows which strategies you will put into place to meet your policy objectives and achieve the desired outcomes.

This is a preliminary but important plan that identifies some concrete options for how you will eventually advocate. It will be shaped and reshaped by your staff, board, and public policy advisory committee once it is adopted.

### **Infrastructure**

Compile the work completed in planning for the infrastructure required to carry out your public policy initiatives. Here you will integrate into your plan the thoughts developed in Worksheets 12, 13, and 14, which were completed during your last meeting.

Worksheet 15: Public Policy Work Plan on page 251 will give your organization a sense of your planned efforts. Assign one person to compile the worksheets as reviewed and amended by the group during this fifth meeting. As necessary, have the full team review and respond to the draft plan before forwarding it to the board for approval. A sample of Worksheet 15 is on page 82.

### **Prepare a Proposal Letter to Your Organization**

After you've drafted the plan, assign one member of the team to write a cover letter to the organization that makes the case for accepting the plan. Be persuasive. Ask for authority to implement the public policy plan.

### **Agenda—Meeting 5**

#### **Planning Step 7: Create Your Work Plan**

1. Review and include key documents developed in the planning process relating to your public policy vision, goals, and objectives.
2. Present your issue priorities and determine which lobbying strategies you will employ to meet your objectives.
3. Review and include key documents developed relating to organizational infrastructure.
4. Assign one member of the team to write a cover page requesting the organization's approval of the work plan.
5. Return to Worksheet 1: Public Policy Readiness Inventory and see how far your planning team has progressed.

## Summary of Planning Step 7

Your planning team has completed a thorough process and developed a proposed work plan for your organization to adopt and implement. Now it is time to present the work plan to the decision makers within your organization who can review it, revise it (if needed), and set it into motion. Set a meeting date and time. Be certain that key leaders who need to be involved in discussions and decisions can attend, and provide participants with your cover letter and work plan in advance of the meeting.

This is a good time to retake the Public Policy Readiness Inventory presented in Worksheet 1. By following this planning process, you have made great strides in increasing your organization's readiness to advocate. Your progress will be clear when you go back to your baseline inventory and compare it with the present.



### Planning shortcut

For nonprofits that are using a shortcut version of the planning process, this is a good time to reconvene your planning committee for its final meeting. Staff should present proposals based on Planning Steps 4, 5, and 6. Staff may also present a draft work plan to stimulate and focus discussion as the full planning team completes its planning.

## Planning Step 8: Present the Plan and Secure Organizational Commitment

This is the final stage of the planning process. In presenting your work plan to your nonprofit's organizational leadership, make your case interesting and compelling. You might invite a leader from another nonprofit to explain how advocacy helped his or her organization make a difference. Or ask an elected official to speak briefly about the critical role nonprofits play in advising policy decisions. Focus on mission and on the specific steps you've outlined for an intentional, systematic, and strategic way to select issues and lobby for changes that affect the lives of the people and communities that you serve. Since the presentation is done at a full board meeting, the agenda is not under your control. The box on the opposite page, however, suggests an agenda for the sixth meeting that might be incorporated into the board agenda.

### Summary: You're Set!

You have done the critical work of establishing a plan, a foundation for your advocacy and lobbying systems and activities:

- You have articulated your vision, goals, and policy objectives.
- You have taken the first steps in identifying the arenas of influence where your issues will be decided.
- You know who has power and influence within those arenas.

- You have chosen some of your strategies for advocacy and lobbying.
- You have planned the infrastructure that ensures your advocacy and lobbying is an effective and sustainable strategy for fulfilling your mission.

Be sure to thank the members of the public policy planning team for their time and talent. Their work is the bedrock of the policy changes that your organization will influence in the years ahead.

**Celebrate!** The planning team has completed its assignment. Your nonprofit's staff and board are ready to begin the work outlined in Chapter 2: *Go!* Implement Your Advocacy and Lobbying Plan. Let's GO!

### Agenda—Meeting 6

*Preparation: Distribute the proposal prior to the meeting. Review it with your organization's decision makers and then formally present it to the board at a board meeting.*

#### **Planning Step 8: Present the Work Plan**

1. Report on the planning-process steps.
2. Discuss the planning team's proposal for your public policy work.
3. Participate in the board's discussion and track changes made to the proposal.
4. The board formally adopts the proposal.

## WORKSHEET 1 Public Policy Readiness Inventory

There are two parts to this assessment. Part A looks at the substance of your organization's public policy objectives. Part B looks at your organization's current capacity to do the work.

Use this assessment to create a public policy readiness profile. This profile will help you to see how prepared you are to do this work effectively and examine your capacity to do the work. Refer to it as you complete planning and assess your first months of policy work. Mark your progress along the way. Remember that your response marks a starting point. Consider this a tool to inspire a sense of direction.

### Part A: Public Policy Objectives

#### 1. What are your issues?

In the context of our mission, goals, and existing work, we have identified issues and objectives that can be furthered by engaging in debates about public policy and specific legislation.

YES

NO

IN PROGRESS

Our public policy issues are

- State support for job training and education—good programs, adequate funds
- Inclusion of all potential and incumbent workers in state training and education programs
- Coordinating state and federal workforce development programs
- Livable wages
- Work supports: child care, housing, transportation

#### 2. What are you already doing to address these issues?

We have organizational involvement and expertise in the public policy areas we most want to influence.

YES

NO

DEVELOPING

Expertise and experience are demonstrated in

Programs:

Job training: GREAT! has three programs that provide training and education to workers. These programs have been in existence for

(continued)

## Worksheet 1- continued

4 years, and GREAT! has been recognized as innovative and experienced based on their accomplishments. These three programs are

- *Starting Up*. A Program for New Workers. It covers work-readiness skills, including language classes where needed.
- *Moving Up*. A Program for Incumbent Workers. This provides skill training, often in cooperation with potential or committed employers, for individuals who need additional skills to move up the career ladder.
- *Entrepreneurial You*. A Program for New-Business Builders. This supports individuals and partners seeking to form new businesses with everything from business-plan development to examination of business-finance options.

Services:

GREAT! provides

- Language training
- Work-skills training
- Personal employment counseling
- Child-care and housing referrals
- Job placement
- Post-employment support

Research:

GREAT! does limited research, mostly tracking our clients—job placements, wages, job retention, types of requests for follow-up support. On an as-time-allows basis, we also track programs that support our clients in multiple ways: child care, etc. When possible, we conduct research into good model programs throughout the country. We also research new sources of state and federal funding.

Education, awareness, community outreach:

GREAT! has done only limited outreach, mostly to program officers at the state economic-development agency and with employers who are partners in shaping specific job-training and placement efforts.

(continued)

## Worksheet 1- continued

Advocacy:

None

Lobbying:

Limited. We testified each year over the past three years at state legislative committee meetings to explain how we use state funding to improve people's self-sufficiency potential.

3. Where are your issues decided and debated?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City or County Agency |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Legislature           | <input type="checkbox"/> Court                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Board                | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Council                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Administrative Agency |   |

Arenas for influence where we have an interest in shaping policy decisions are Mostly state. But we need to figure out how county policies affect our budget and clients. Need to get a better handle on federal action. Are feds doing more since the workforce shortage is a national issue? Need to check this out.

4. What policy changes do you want?

We know the actions or changes that are needed in legislation to address the problems and opportunities that we have identified in our priority issue areas.

YES

NO

SOME

Desired changes in laws, ordinances, or budget and tax policy are

- Need more money for workforce training.
- Also need to be sure people get enough training (especially welfare recipients, new immigrants, youth, and other first-time workers) to really be self-supporting.
- Need better coordination of state programs and state and federal programs.

(continued)

## Worksheet 1-continued

- Include simpler single-form grant and contract applications, single reporting form.
- Need better coordination with employers and "next-millennium" industries so we prepare people for the jobs of the present and the future.

## 5. Will you be reactive or proactive?

We will be proposing policy changes and need to prepare a campaign to introduce and lobby for a new idea.

YES      NO

The ideas above are proactive. We hope to work with other groups on them.

We will be responding to an existing legislative proposal or another group's efforts by supporting it.

YES      NO

Other groups are talking about forming a coalition to work on a proposal for coordinating state programs and providing more extensive training and education. GREAT! could work with them on this.

We will be lobbying to stop a measure that we think will have negative impact on our community or the people we serve.

YES      NO

If the rumors are true and the legislature plans to cut funding for community-based workforce-development programs, we'll fight that effort. Lots of organizations would be likely to join together to oppose that proposal!

## 6. Will you be lobbying onetime only or are you in it for the long haul?

ONETIME ONLY

ONGOING COMPONENT

(continued)

## Worksheet 1- continued

Check the approaches compatible with your organization's strengths and objectives:

- Background research and information gathering to "make the case"
- Public education and awareness
- Responding to issue alerts by organizations taking the lead on issues
- Direct lobbying of elected officials
- Mobilizing grassroots support (at least clients, employer-partners)
- Working with other organizations in a coalition or an informal alliance
- Media advocacy
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part B: Organizational Capacity for Public Policy Work

#### 1. Who is the organizational champion of public policy work, and how deep is the organization's commitment?

The person(s) serving as key conveners of the discussions about policy work and the stewards of organizational readiness for policy work are

Name: Jane S. Title: Executive Director  
 Name: Mai M. Title: Board Chair  
 Name: Larry L. Title: Board member (former legislator, too!)

We have begun the organizational discussion about why and how to do policy work.

YES NO IN THE SEEDING PHASE

The board of directors has made a commitment to policy work.

YES NO IN DISCUSSION (They're almost ready to vote.)

Our organization's staff share a commitment to policy work.

YES NO A FEW SKEPTICS

Members, clients, stakeholders, and other supporters are ready to go.

YES NO NEED TO TALK TO THEM

(continued)

## Worksheet 1—continued

**2. Do you have a public policy plan?**

Our organization is engaging in a planning process to decide how to incorporate public policy work into our organizational strategy and work plan.

YES                      NO                      PLAN TO

**3. Who's doing what and when?**

We have designated a person to coordinate our policy planning and work.

YES                      NO                      RECRUITING

The role of the board is clear.

YES                      NO                      WORKING ON IT

Staff roles are clear.

YES                      NO                      WORKING ON IT

We have a "rapid-response" team ready to make decisions and set the course for action when we are in the midst of fast-moving policy action.

YES                       NO                      WORKING ON IT

We have decided to form an ongoing public policy advisory committee, and its role has been defined.

YES                       NO

**4. Where is the voice of the community?**

We have systems in place to educate, inform, and mobilize our members and our constituencies in support of our issues.

YES                      NO                      WORKING ON IT

**5. Do you understand legislative processes and structures?**

We know how our state (or local) government moves an idea through the legislative process to become law.

YES                      NO                       LEARNING

(continued)

We know the key structures (house, assembly, commission, committee, political caucuses) and the players (leadership, members, staff) whom we will need to influence.

YES

NO

LEARNING

6. What are you prepared to do now?

We are ready to

- Compile and present the information that makes the case for our position
- Identify legislative proposals that affect our issues
- Identify decision makers and our supporters who are their constituents
- Monitor the introduction and progress of bills
- Record all of our action on our issues
- Inform all interested people as the debate progresses
- Issue calls to action to people ready to act
- Record all press coverage of our issue
- Maintain a record of our activity

7. The best things are not always free. What resources will you commit to policy work?

We have budgeted for staff time, materials development, and information dissemination.

YES

NO

PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR

8. Media matters. Are you camera-ready?

We have included a media advocacy component to our lobbying plan.

YES

NO

WORKING ON IT

9. Nonprofits can and should lobby, but do you know the rules?

We understand the IRS rules governing 501(c)(3) lobbying and reporting.

YES

NO

WORKING ON IT

We understand the registration and reporting requirements our state has in place.

YES

NO

WORKING ON IT

**WORKSHEET 2 Mission, Vision, and Goals**

*Record your mission statement. Then brainstorm a public policy vision and related goals for the organization. What will change in three to five years as a result of your public policy efforts? What broad goals will get you there?*

**Your mission statement:**

Gloriously Responsive Employment Advancement Training! (GREAT!) was formed to address poverty issues through workforce development. Our formal mission statement is: To support people with barriers to employment in moving out of poverty and into jobs that provide a career path and livable wages.

**Your vision statement for public policy work:**

If we fulfill our dreams for our public policy work, we will be able to assess our status and accomplishments in 3 years and say:

- GREAT! is more effective at supporting people with barriers to employment to get jobs and the assistance they need to maintain the highest level of self-sufficiency possible.
- We have a good plan in place and have worked it well.
- We have lobbied successfully for state and county policies that address the training, education, and work-support needs (child care, health care, housing, transportation) of our clients.
- We have the skills, financial resources, and organizational systems in place to be effective lobbyists on our key issues.
- We have a strong communications strategy that helps us to get our key messages to decision makers, the media, and our supporters.
- We have increased support for our issues in the nonprofit sector and the community at large.
- Other organizations involved in workforce development and self-sufficiency, including employers, have a better understanding of the needs of those with employment barriers and understand the strategies for overcoming those barriers. They see GREAT! as an important organization on these issues.

(continued)

## Worksheet 2- continued

**Your broad public policy goals:****GREAT! Goals:**

1. State support for job training and education-good programs, adequate funds
2. Inclusion of all potential and incumbent workers in state training and education programs, especially low-income workers, welfare recipients, new immigrants
3. Coordinated state and federal workforce-development programs
4. Livable wages
5. Work supports: child care, housing, transportation

**WORKSHEET 3 Criteria for Selecting Issues**

*Issues and priorities will change as the policy landscape changes from year to year, sometimes from day to day. Identify the criteria that your organization will use to decide whether or not to advocate on an issue. Be sure that your criteria keep you close to the core of your mission and goals.*

**Based on our mission and goals, we will select public policy issues and action strategies that address the following principles:**

1. The issue is a priority in our work and is essential to GREAT!'s mission.
2. The proposed legislation presents a threat to our organization, our mission, our services, and the people and communities that we serve.
3. The legislation involves an issue area where we have unique and valuable information to contribute to the policy debate.
4. The legislative issue presents an opportunity for us to involve people who will be affected by decisions in the public dialogue, thereby increasing their participation in the decisions that affect their lives.
5. The issue presents an opportunity for our organization to establish a leadership position that enhances our role in the community.

**WORKSHEET 4 Identify Issues**

On the table below, list those issues currently in discussion, those anticipated over the next year, and those you wish to initiate. Then place a check (✓) if the issue fits with your mission, goals, and criteria.

	Serves mission	Fits goals	Consistent with criteria	Ranking priorities
<b>Issues already in discussion</b>				
Make training comprehensive to include all workers	✓	✓	✓	3
Increased child-care funding	✓	✓	✓	6
<b>Issues to anticipate</b>				
Possible proposal to cut workforce-development program budgets	✓	✓	✓	2
Possible proposal to increase minimum wage	✓	✓	✓	5
<b>Issues to initiate</b>				
Adequate state support for workforce development; requires increased funding	✓	✓	✓	1
Increase coordination of state and federal workforce-development programs	✓	✓	✓	4

### WORKSHEET 5 Issues, Objectives, and Positions

List in priority order your selected issues, policy objectives, and positions.

Issues	Policy objectives	Positions
<p>1. &amp; 2. Adequate state support for workforce training</p>	<p>a. Increased funding</p> <p>b. Defeat efforts to cut funding</p>	<p>a. Initiate new proposal to fund demo programs (\$2 million) and fund current programs (\$13 million increase over current budget)</p> <p>b. Monitor proposals</p>
<p>3. Comprehensive workforce training is needed in state programs</p>	<p>a. Include new workers</p> <p>b. Include immigrants</p> <p>c. Include hard-to-serve</p> <p>d. Support dislocated workers</p>	<p>a. Initiate mandate to provide increased training to welfare recipients before requiring workforce entry</p> <p>b. Support bill for ESL, translators at work sites, cultural-awareness programs for employers</p> <p>c. Initiate bill to design and fund programs meeting needs of potential workers with mental or physical disabilities, displaced homemakers, others</p> <p>d. Support proposal for increase in funding for dislocated-worker programs and improve systems for identifying needs. Support continued employer tax for dislocated-worker program</p>

(continued)

## Worksheet 5-continued

Issues	Policy objectives	Positions
4. Federal and state programs need to be coordinated and consistent	a. Design coordinated system  b. Develop common application and reporting forms	a. Oppose department's plan and offer alternative that includes a new workforce coordination office that has multiagency and intergovernmental authority  b. Work with agency staff to accomplish this administratively
5. Wages	a. Increase minimum wage  b. Incentives to employers	a. Support union proposal  b. Support Chamber tax incentive proposal
6. Work supports for housing, child care, transportation	a. Comprehensive system of work supports, well-coordinated	a. Support welfare-coalition proposal

**WORKSHEET 6 Identify Arenas of Influence**

*For each issue identified in Worksheet 5, note the arenas of influence where your lobbying efforts will occur. Also note any actions you've taken so far.*

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Arena of current debate</b> (or likely arena for new initiatives)	<b>Action to date</b>
<b>State support</b>	<b>Legislature, Economic Development Committee</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Inclusive training</b>	<b>Legislature, Economic Development, and Human Services committees</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Coordinated state and federal program goals, delivery systems, and application and reporting requirements</b>	<b>Legislature, Administration</b>	<b>Four agencies requested by Legislature to propose a coordinated system. GREAT! has asked to be included in discussion.</b>
<b>Wages</b>	<b>Legislature</b>	<b>Union has proposed bill to increase minimum wage; GREAT! has signed on to support.</b>

**WORKSHEET 12 Roles and Responsibilities**

*Record below the positions you will create, the individuals who will fill those positions, and their responsibilities. Remember, in most organizations, the positions are incorporated into existing jobs.*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Person/title</b>	<b>Job description/Role in public policy</b>
<b>Board Chair</b>	<b>Mai M. (board chair)</b>	Serves as part of rapid-response team. Is a public spokesperson for the organization to the press and elected officials as needed. Ensures that the board has complete and timely knowledge of public policy activity and fulfills its responsibilities in shaping GREAT!'s legislative agenda.
<b>Board</b>	<b>All 22 board members</b>	At least one board member serves on the public policy planning team. Once the board approves the public policy plan and a public policy advisory committee is created, two board members serve on that public policy advisory committee. They are the key liaisons between the public policy advisory committee and the board of directors. They ensure that the work of the public policy advisory committee is consistent with the mission of the organization and organizational policies. They facilitate the annual discussion of policy agenda proposals presented by the public policy advisory committee to the board. While the board members who serve on the public policy advisory committee have a specific role as liaisons, all board members participate in the lobbying efforts and other aspects of public policy work.
<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Jane S. (executive director)</b>	Has responsibility for oversight of the public policy component of GREAT!'s work. Hires and supervises the public policy coordinator. Works with the board chair to ensure that the board is involved in setting the agenda and supporting it. Serves as part

(continued)

## Worksheet 12 - continued

Position	Person/title	Job description/Role in public policy
Executive Director (Continued)		of the rapid-response team and collaborates with the public policy coordinator as needed on the shaping and implementation of the public policy work plan. Serves as a public spokesperson for GREAT! with the media and elected officials. Educates external and internal audiences about GREAT!'s agenda.
Public Policy Advisory Committee	25 representatives, executive directors, and lobbyists from other nonprofits involved in workforce development and economic justice issues	The public policy advisory committee serves as a network that informs and advises GREAT!'s public policy agenda and lobbying strategies. Committee members may propose initiatives that should be incorporated into GREAT!'s public policy agenda. The committee provides information, intelligence, and analysis of legislative issues and proposals. Committee members may be involved in lobbying efforts. The committee facilitates the coordination of GREAT!'s public policy work with the initiatives of other organizations and coalitions to ensure that shared interests are served well by GREAT!'s work and by involvement in collaborative efforts. The committee will meet four times a year—more often during legislative sessions, as issues need attention.
Public Policy Coordinator	Jason W. (public policy coordinator—new hire)	The public policy coordinator (PPC) is responsible for all aspects of GREAT!'s public policy work. The PPC convenes and sets the agenda for the public policy advisory committee. The PPC is key in the development of the policy agenda and work plan. For now, the PPC also serves as the organization's lobbyist and organizer. The PPC, with the executive director and key board members, establishes and maintains relationships with

(continued)

## Worksheet 12 - continued

Position	Person/title	Job description/Role in public policy
Public Policy Coordinator (Continued)		<p>supporters, elected officials, and the media. The PPC represents the organization on a day-to-day basis with elected officials and with other organizations and coalitions. The PPC also maintains internal systems for monitoring policy debates and legislative activity, informing supporters of organizational and legislative action on GREAT!'s issues, and alerts supporters to act as needed. The PPC works with GREAT!'s management-information system (MIS) director to set up and maintain databases of supporters, elected officials, and the media as well as files of all legislative activity. The PPC keeps records of all legislative activity in which GREAT! engages for purposes of reporting to the state and the IRS. The PPC coordinates all training and events relating to public policy, including GREAT!'s "Action Day at the Capitol."</p>
Lobbyist	Jason W. (also public policy coordinator)	<p>For now, the PPC will also act as lobbyist. The PPC may supervise interns and volunteers who work on public policy issues and some lobbying activity for GREAT! As resources allow, GREAT! may contract with a lobbying firm for lobbying services on major issues. The contract lobbyist would be selected by the executive director according to GREAT!'s usual contracting protocol, which involves multiple bids, reference checks, and interviews in which the PPC and board chair participate. The contract lobbyist would serve as GREAT!'s "eyes and ears" at the capitol, provide a constant presence for the organization, and</p>

(continued)

## Worksheet 12 - continued

Position	Person/title	Job description/Role in public policy
Lobbyist (Continued)		work with the PPC and the executive director to determine when others need to be present and engaged in the process. The contract lobbyist would also help to facilitate GREAT!'s access to elected officials and the press.
Organizer	See PPC	The PPC will conduct outreach to supporters and clients and on public policy activity as much as possible.
Media Specialist	See PPC and executive director	The PPC and executive director will share responsibility for developing a media strategy to support lobbying activity. They will hire a media consultant to carry out this activity.
Rapid Response Team	Mai, Jane, Jason, and one member of the board who also serves on the public policy advisory committee	The rapid-response team (RRT) assists the PPC with decisions and strategy plans that need to be addressed quickly. The RRT is authorized by the board to make decisions about media responses, changes to legislative initiatives, and other activities that surface during the lobbying process and need to be resolved in a short timeframe. The decisions of the RRT will be reported to the board.
Spokesperson(s) for the organization on public policy issues	Mai (board chair), Jane (executive director), and Jason (public policy coordinator)	The board chair, executive director, and PPC serve as spokespersons and decide who should address each targeted audience. Other members of the board and public policy advisory committee may be called on to speak as needed, given the issues, their expertise, and standing in the community.

(continued)

## Worksheet 12 - continued

Position	Person/title	Job description/Role in public policy
Other staff (researcher, support staff, program staff with lead responsibility in key issue areas)	Appointed as needed	<p>Program staff will provide information and supportive testimony as needed when the public policy agenda focuses on their areas of experience and expertise. They will assist the PPC in compiling information needed to build GREAT!'s case for an issue, and staff will recruit clients and colleagues who can serve as speakers and "story tellers" in meetings with elected officials, the media, and others. All staff will dedicate time to educating those they serve about GREAT!'s public policy agenda and encouraging their participation in responding to action alerts. The role of the MIS director has been addressed above. One clerical support staffer will be dedicated to half-time work with PPC on public policy efforts.</p>

### WORKSHEET 13 Decision Making

*Record below the individuals who have key responsibilities for decisions in your organization. This information will become essential in the fast-changing legislative environment. Keep it as part of your public policy guide.*

<b>Decisions to be made</b>	<b>Key decision makers</b>
Adopt the organization's policy goals and strategies	Board of directors
Shape the organization's policy agenda	Executive director, public policy coordinator
Set the organization's formal policy priorities	Board sets final priorities. (Staff and ongoing policy advisory committee <u>propose</u> agenda items; the planning team <u>recommends</u> priorities.)
Assign responsibilities to board	Board chair requests board members' support and involvement.
Assign responsibilities to staff	Executive director assigns staff responsibilities.
Allocate financial resources	Board sets budget; executive director manages public policy budget; public policy coordinator tracks expenditures and time on lobbying activity.
Manage organizational activity in carrying out public policy activities	Public policy coordinator
Approve public statements about the organization's position	Executive director (in consultation with the rapid-response team if issue is controversial)
Approve positions in negotiations with elected officials when issues are in hurried stages of debate	Executive director and lobbyist (in consultation with rapid-response team when possible)
Other: Track changes in federal laws and implications for GREAT!'S issues	Public policy coordinator

**WORKSHEET 14 Identify Resources**

Create a preliminary budget for your policy work. Determine the amount of time that each staff person will dedicate to public policy work and budget the required amount of salary and benefits. Plan for all related program activities, such as printing, postage, travel, and meetings. Don't forget administrative costs.

Item	Cost
<b>Personnel: Salaries</b>	
Executive director (.2 FTE x \$60,000)	\$12,000
Public policy coordinator (1 FTE x \$51,300)	\$51,300
Lobbyist (same as public policy coordinator)	\$0
Support staff (.2 FTE x \$24,000)	\$4,800
Other as determined by roles identified in your nonprofit _____	\$0
Personnel: Benefits (24% of salary)	\$16,344
<b>Total Personnel Costs</b>	<b>\$84,444</b>
<b>Public Policy Program Activities</b>	
Technology: hardware and software, as determined by plans to reach elected officials and mobilize supporters _____	\$0
Website _____	\$0
Broadcast fax _____	\$0
E-mail _____	\$0
Telephone _____	\$1,250
Printing, as determined by plans for educational materials and alerts _____	\$3,500
Postage _____	\$3,000
Travel	
Board and public policy advisory committee travel to meetings _____	\$3,000
Staff travel _____	\$1,500
Public policy advisory committee meetings (space, food) _____	\$1,000
Events (Day on the Hill, policy training, briefings) _____	\$1,000
Administrative (% of organizational administrative budget as determined by % of overall work that is public policy) _____	\$1,250
Other _____	\$0
<b>Total Program Costs</b>	<b>\$15,500</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$99,444</b>

**WORKSHEET 15 Public Policy Work Plan**

*Gather together Worksheets 1 through 14. Compile and edit them into the format in this worksheet. Route the draft to the rest of the planning team, rewrite as necessary, then seek the team's approval to send the plan to the board for approval. Save this as part of your public policy guide.*

**I. Organizational mission**

**GREAT!'s mission is to support people with barriers to employment in moving out of poverty and into jobs that provide a career and livable wages.**

**II. Public policy vision and goals****A. Vision**

In three years, as a result of our public policy efforts:

- **GREAT! is more effective at supporting people with barriers to get jobs and the assistance they need to maintain the highest level of self-sufficiency possible.**
- **We have a good plan in place and have worked it well.**
- **We have lobbied successfully for state and county policies that address the training, education, and work-support needs (child care, health care, housing, transportation) of our clients.**
- **We have the skills, financial resources, and organizational systems in place to be effective lobbyists on our key issues.**
- **We have a strong communications strategy that helps us to get our key messages to decision makers, the media, and our supporters.**
- **We have increased support for our issues in the nonprofit sector and the community at large.**
- **Other organizations involved in workforce development and self-sufficiency, including employers, have a better understanding of the needs of those with employment barriers and understand the strategies for overcoming those barriers.**

*(continued)*

## Worksheet 15—continued

## B. Goals

GREAT! has the following public policy goals:

- State support for job training and education: good programs and adequate funds
- Inclusion of all potential and incumbent workers in state training and education programs, especially low-income workers, welfare recipients, and new immigrants
- Coordinated state and federal workforce-development programs
- Livable wages
- Work supports: child care, housing, and transportation

## III. Issues

*For each issue, state the objective, the arena of influence where that issue can be addressed, and how the organization will lobby. Identify the roles and responsibilities of staff, board, and volunteers in carrying out those lobbying activities.*

*Many organizations choose a single issue for their primary focus. Often, this is the best approach, especially for an organization just beginning its policy efforts. In your plan, focus on just the one issue that will dominate your work in the next year. If you plan to address multiple issues, indicate which ones will get the emphasis in your work and which you might simply monitor.*

## Issue 1

Our top priority is increased funding. We will lead by getting a legislative proposal introduced, debated, and supported.

## Objective:

A \$2 million increase in state spending for workforce-development programs targeted to serve new workers (including new immigrants, welfare recipients, and people with disabilities) and low-income workers. (This number could change pending the research for the initiative.) Workforce-development programs intended to serve these specific populations should be funded by the state and delivered by community-based service providers. (NOTE: GREAT! would be eligible to compete for these funds. But

(continued)

## Worksheet 15 - continued

the objective is to expand the pool of resources available for workforce-development strategies that serve those who most need training and support to move out of poverty and into maximizing their ability to support themselves and their families.)

Arenas of influence:

1. *State legislature.* Key decisions will be made in the House and Senate Committees on Jobs and Economic Development. The legislature is the primary arena of influence, the place where the final decision about the appropriation will be made.
2. *State Department of Jobs and Economic Development and the State Finance Agency.* The commissioners of those two agencies propose programs and budgets for legislators to consider as they shape the state appropriations proposal for the next biennium.
3. *Governor.* She has the ability to line-item-veto legislation. We need her support for this increase in workforce-development spending.

Tasks/Activities	Who	By when
Prepare the case: research/write report identifying all state spending on workforce development	Jason (Public Policy Coordinator)	June 1
Write one-page legislative proposal: statement of need, funding request, rationale	Jason	June 1
Public Policy Advisory Committee reviews/amends proposal	Public Policy Advisory Committee	June 15
Board reviews, amends or approves proposal	Ex. Dir., Board, Jason	July 30

(continued)

## Worksheet 15-continued

Issue 1 work schedule (*continued*):

Tasks/Activities	Who	By when
Prepare supportive educational materials and final proposal. Promote to stakeholders in summer newsletter.	Jason	Aug. 15
Present proposal to Commissioner of Jobs and Economic Development and State Finance Commissioner. Ask for support, inclusion in Econ. Dev. agency budget proposal.	Board Chair, Ex. Dir.	Aug. 15
Involve Welfare Reform Coalition (and others) in supporting the effort. Attend their meetings, begin reciprocal support arrangements for their issues that relate to ours.	Jason	Begins Aug.; ongoing there- after
Identify chief authors for House and Senate versions of bill. Request support from Economic Development Committee chair or senior member of committee. Serve as resource for chief author.	Jason, Ex. Dir., Board, or Policy Advisory Committee member from author's district	Sept., Oct.
Secure additional authors; meet with all Economic Development Committee members to seek their support.	Jason, others who are con- stituents of authors (as needed)	Oct.- Dec.
Briefing and training sessions for grassroots and coalition supporters; letter, fax, e-mail, personal-contact campaign	Jason	Nov.
Ask authors to introduce bill	Jason	Jan.

*(continued)*

## Worksheet 15 - continued

Issue 1 work schedule (continued):

Tasks/Activities	Who	By when
Find witnesses/prep testimony	Jason, Public Policy Advisory Committee	Jan.
Meet with Economic Development Committee members to explain proposal and seek support. Follow up their questions.	Jason, Ex. Dir., constituents	Jan.
Media contacts begun	Jason, Ex. Dir., Board	Imme- diately prior to intro- ducing bill
Monitor legislative activity; alert all supporters to first and subsequent hearings/urge direct contact. Send weekly alerts. Participate in negotiations as requested. Keep governor's office focused on issue.	Jason, Rap- id-Response Team	As dates set, Jan.-May

(Note: GREAT! will focus on only one issue for the first year of effort.)

#### IV. Organizational infrastructure

##### A. Roles and responsibilities

Insert and edit your completed Worksheet 12: Roles and Responsibilities.

(Editor's note: sample Worksheet 12 not included in this sample plan)

(continued)

**Worksheet 15 - continued**

**B. Decision-making authority**

*Insert and edit your completed Worksheet 13: Decision Making. (An organizational chart for your public policy work could be included here to illustrate the roles and responsibilities of the people involved and the lines of decision-making authority.)*

*(Editor's note: sample Worksheet 13 not included in this sample plan)*

**C. Resources needed**

*Insert and edit your completed Worksheet 14: Identify Resources.*

*(Editor's note: sample Worksheet 14 not included in this sample plan)*

**V. Conclusion**

The organization should discuss, amend if needed, and adopt the work plan when it is presented to the board by the planning team. Once the plan has been accepted, the executive director should assign staff responsibilities and develop task and timeline plans with each staff member involved. This may involve significant revisions to job descriptions or creation of new positions. The hiring process for such positions should be launched as soon as possible.

The executive director should provide oversight to the process and convene involved staff on a regular basis, at least weekly, to ensure that tasks are coordinated and proceeding. Throughout, the work plan should serve as a guide.