

## TIPS FOR APPROPRIATIONS LOBBYING


While lobbying on appropriations is largely similar to lobbying on policy, there are key pieces of information and moments in the budget and appropriations process that should be effectively leveraged and a few pitfalls it's essential to avoid. In particular, data can be especially effective when making your case for funding.

### MAKING YOUR CASE

- **Demonstrate need.** Campaigns advocating for funding for direct service programs can and should keep a finger on the pulse of participation and utilization rates of those programs. Waiting lists or a program running out of funds before the end of the year are effective data points to provide to legislators to demonstrate that your program needs additional funding. Also, keep an eye on low participation or utilization rates. Be ready to answer questions about what is happening and why additional funding is needed.
- **Demonstrate impact.** Appropriations lobbying is fundamentally about money, so it is important to be prepared to demonstrate the financial return on investment (ROI) of your program or services. For example, [data shows employers see an ROI of more than \\$2.50 for every \\$1.00 invested in paid leave](#). On the flip side, can you quantify the cost of not taking action on your issue?
- **Provide motivation.** Research how much other similarly-situated states are investing in your issue (i.e., data on a neighboring state's funding of child care or SNAP). This data provides lawmakers with context that can motivate those who want your state to

be the best in their region and/or to give them confidence or cover by realizing they are not alone in investing state funds in your issue.

- **Prepare for pushback.** Anticipate that your budget priority may come at the real or perceived cost to another state-funded program. Some lawmakers might ask advocates where the money should come from or even pose a choice for advocates between priorities (e.g., "We can increase funding for the early childhood education program, but to do so, we're going to have to take that money from the SNAP Incentives program"). Coalition members should plan not to answer questions like that and maintain their strategy if lawmakers create a false choice by pitting causes against one another.
- **Prepare for opposition.** When making your case, it is essential that you can answer tough questions and counter the arguments made by those who oppose funding your issue. Monitor what the opposition is saying publicly in the press. Try to learn what they're saying to legislators so you can best counter and inoculate against the opposition's talking points, especially with lawmakers who are on the fence about funding your issue.



**TIP:** Understand how the opposition thinks and speaks about this issue. Engage in respectful conversations with the legislative leaders most likely to oppose your funding request. Use that knowledge to reframe your arguments and better persuade lawmakers who are still on the fence.

## USE EVERY PART OF THE PROCESS

1. **The executive.** Lobby both the agency and the governor's office directly as the governor's budget is being prepared. This is your best opportunity to ensure your ask is included in the governor's budget.
2. **To the legislature.** If you didn't get your ask in the governor's budget (or you did, but your legislature writes its own budget in addition to the governor's proposal), lobbying key legislators is your opportunity to improve or reinforce your ask. You can advocate for your ask to be included as a member request from a supportive lawmaker or as an earmark (if they have earmarks in your state).
  - ▶ **NOTE:** Earmarks have a controversial history and are criticized because of the way they can and have been used. However, it can also be an effective way to get your program the funding it needs. The bottom line is that you should assess the situation in your state. Will the use of an earmark hurt any relationships with partners or legislators who are opposed? What are other potential downsides? Consider if it's worth it anyway if you can get the funding you need that way.
3. **In Committee.** If you weren't able to secure your funding request in the governor's or legislature's budget, you should try again as the budget goes through the Committee. Work with a supportive lawmaker on the budget committee to add or increase funding for your issue via an amendment. On the flip side, if you were able to secure funding, be on the lookout for amendments from the opposition to cut or eliminate your funding.
4. **On the floor.** If you weren't able to secure your funding request in Committee, you have another opportunity. When the budget bill is going to the chamber floor for a vote, work with a supportive lawmaker to try to add your funding via a floor amendment.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN IT'S A LOSS?

- **When to call it.** While it's difficult when your campaign hits the point where you can see it won't be successful, appropriations in a long-term game. Know when to keep fighting and when to hold off until the next appropriations cycle. Advocating for your program's funding is vital, but so is maintaining the relationships in the legislature you need to get your program funded over the long term.
- **Handling accountability.** When you don't secure the funding needed for your program, organizations and coalitions need to decide how to handle accountability. Sometimes communicating disappointment privately is the way to go (especially with your champions). But sometimes, especially for political organizations that can target lawmakers who oppose your issue, expressing public disappointment is very effective. To maintain strong relationships with supportive lawmakers, it's crucial to give the lawmakers *you have a close relationship with* a courtesy heads-up when they may be expecting to receive critical press coverage for failing to support a priority — even if the criticism isn't directed at them.