

HOW TO BUILD LONG-TERM APPROPRIATIONS CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

When developing an advocacy campaign focused on securing, protecting, and increasing funding for your issue, it is essential to think long-term. Appropriations are a regular process (annual or bi-annual), so they require a different approach than a big campaign to pass a bill – appropriations work is the definition of playing the long game. Thinking about your advocacy as part of a continuous lifecycle will ensure that your work to secure appropriations is constantly building toward the improvement of your programs and services. A solid campaign strategy is the backbone of long-term success.

1. **Coalition coordination.** Your coalition should meet regularly throughout the year to share intel and align on strategy for the appropriations advocacy campaign.
2. **The funding ask.** Each cycle, your organization and/or coalition should align on an evidence-based funding ask rooted in the current budget forecast.
3. **Align on targets.** Each cycle, assess and choose targets in the executive and legislature who have authority and/or power in the appropriations process, then do the research necessary to power map where, when, and how your organization/coalition can influence them.
4. **Build a campaign plan.** Once your targets are selected, design an appropriations advocacy campaign plan. With the explicit goal of your appropriations ask in mind, develop strategies to achieve it that leverage your organization and coalition strengths. This should include a lobbying strategy, a communications strategy, a strategy for mobilizing constituents, etc. Build a plan for tactics to execute these strategies that are customized to your targets.
5. **Engage state agencies.** State budgets originate in the executive branch so it is important to clearly communicate your ask and why it's needed now to the relevant state agencies and contacts in the governor's offices. State agency heads submit their budget requests to the governor's budget team well in advance and their prioritization can make or break your campaign. Build and maintain strong, trusting relationships with the "career" leaders in state agencies. Their roles transcend elections and they can provide intel about threatened cuts and advocate for your asks when aligned.
6. **Engage the legislature.** As the governor's budget moves to the legislature, turn your attention to your legislative targets – leadership, members of the House and Senate budget committees, etc. Clearly communicate your funding ask via private meetings, public hearings, and constituent engagement.



7. **Communications strategy.** Appropriations is a wonky subject, so it is even more important to tell a compelling story about the value of your program and services and the positive effect funding will have. This should include both data and storytelling via earned media and social media.
8. **Mobilizing constituents.** Elected officials are ultimately accountable to their constituents, so engaging them in support of your funding ask can be incredibly effective. This can include members of a group representing parents meeting with lawmakers about prenatal care, paid leave, and child care or hosting an event about Head Start and inviting providers, families, and lawmakers.
9. **Accountability.** The work isn't over once the appropriations bill passes; it's now time to ensure lawmakers who voted in favor of your funding ask know you appreciate it! Always remember to thank lawmakers for their support – regardless of whether you “won” or “lost” – to maintain your relationship with them since you'll be back again with another request during the next appropriations cycle.
10. **Monitoring and oversight.** After funding is secured, it is important to monitor disbursement of the funds. The state budget office is typically responsible for monitoring appropriated funds, and the legislative budget committee is responsible for oversight. Still, tracking funding implementation is always good to ensure that funds are reaching the families and children most in need in the state and to inform your ask next year.
11. **Collect the data.** The most important piece of appropriations advocacy is to show the positive impact of your program and services and what more it was able to do because of the funding it received. Collecting the data to show the impact is essential to making the case for what you would be able to do with even more funding next year.
12. **REPEAT!**