



nati^onal
collab^orative
for infants
& toddl^ors

NCIT TOOLS FOR WINNING STATE APPROPRIATION CAMPAIGNS

2024 Toolkit Launch
Wrap Report



PURPOSE

Voices for Healthy Kids partnered with M+R Win to develop a state budget and appropriations toolkit and implement an accompanying training curriculum for the National Collaborative of Infants and Toddlers (NCIT). The goal was to provide a national movement of advocates with the tools and expert support required to effectively advocate for funding of critical programs, systems, and services to meet the needs of all pregnant people, infants, toddlers, and their families (PN-3) and address the inequity and disparities that exist across the country.



PROCESS

Voices for Healthy Kids partnered with M+R Win to design and execute this project in three phases: **LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH, DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING THE TOOLKIT, AND IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION.**

PHASE 1: LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

At the outset of this project, M+R Win conducted a landscape analysis, including policy, legislative, media, and movement research; identification of existing resources and information gaps; and conducting nine in-depth stakeholder interviews.

The goal of each interview was to assess stakeholders' perspectives on the information and resources that would strengthen advocates' appropriations advocacy knowledge and skills based on existing challenges and opportunities. Each stakeholder interviewed (see below) was selected to capture the diverse circumstances of state-based advocacy: geography, political landscape, policy focus, and more, while securing input from key demographics: past and present lawmakers, legislative staffers, and movement leaders, each of whose approach to appropriations campaigns is unique.

1. **Joel Ryan**, Executive Director, Washington State Head Start
2. **Jay Love**, Contract Lobbyist, Jay Love Consulting
3. **Libbie Sonnier**, Executive Director, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children
4. **Elizabeth Gaines**, Founder and CEO, Children's Funding Project
5. **Jacob Vigil**, Deputy Policy Director, New Mexico Voices for Children
6. **Jeremy Spittle**, Legislative and Policy Director for Massachusetts State Senate Ways and Means Chairperson, Senator Michael Rodrigues
7. **North Dakota State Senator Tim Mathern**, North Dakota State Senate, North Dakota State Senate Appropriations Committee
8. **Darlene Adams Rowland**, Executive Director, Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA LA)
9. **Chris Bernard**, CEO, Hunger-Free OK

M+R Win then provided a set of recommendations for the resources to include in the final toolkit, addressing needs identified by the Voices team, the stakeholders interviewed, and findings identified via the landscape research and analysis.

PHASE 2: DEVELOPING AND LAUNCHING THE TOOLKIT

Utilizing the analysis of information captured throughout Phase 1, the M+R Win team built a state budget and appropriations toolkit with a strategic overview, 20 original resources, three case studies, and an appendix of resources from top experts in the field.

The toolkit was designed to be additive to existing resources from NCIT and peer organizations and user-friendly. The finished product includes two overarching modules: influencing the inside game, which houses budget and lobbying resources, and demonstrating people power, which features campaigning, communications, messaging, and organizing and mobilizing resources. The final section, **additional resources**, provides advocates with case studies from stakeholders with experience in the field, a glossary of definitions, and an appendix of essential resources.

Voices for Healthy Kids and M+R Win collaborated to design and execute a toolkit and curriculum launch plan that would be attention-grabbing and differentiate this product as unique from previous collateral focused on policy advocacy circulated throughout the movement.

Following the launch of the toolkit, the team circulated a survey designed to capture NCIT members' input on how to engage with the content from the toolkit moving forward. The survey identified NCIT members' key areas of interest, where additional support would be worthwhile, and the ways in which they would be interested in learning about each topic (e.g., webinars with expert speakers, brief explainer videos digging into a topic, access to experts in an office hours setting).

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Guided by the insights from the post-launch survey of dozens of NCIT members, M+R Win recommended a training curriculum and cadence to meet NCIT members' needs and interests. The resulting curriculum was split into two modules, reflecting the same format as the toolkit: **influencing the inside game** and **demonstrating people power**.

The resulting training curriculum consisted of **THREE WEBINARS, TWO OFFICE HOURS, AND FOUR BRIEF EXPLAINER VIDEOS**.

To support the design, development, and dissemination of each product, M+R Win provided strategic counsel to the Voices for Healthy Kids team to conceptualize the goal and speakers for each event, draft planning and support materials to prepare experts ahead of all speaking engagements, and provided design and video production support.

OUTCOME & IMPACT: APPROPRIATIONS ADVOCACY TRAINING CURRICULUM

WEBINAR #1: TOOLS FOR WINNING STATE APPROPRIATION CAMPAIGNS

The toolkit, [Tools for Winning State Appropriation Campaigns](#), was launched via a webinar attended by over 120 NCIT members on Thursday, April 4, 2024 ([click here for the recording](#)). The webinar previewed the contents of the toolkit, demonstrating its practical value and introducing a training curriculum focused exclusively on state appropriations advocacy. Speakers included:

- **Lori Fresina**, Vice President and Executive Director, Voices for Healthy Kids
Lori spoke about why appropriations advocacy matters and provided a high-level overview of the toolkit, sharing her experience running state appropriations advocacy campaigns.
- **Danielle Patterson**, State Government Relations Director, Voices for Healthy Kids
Danielle provided a high-level overview of state budget and lobbying based on her expertise as an in-house lobbyist.
- **Joshua Harris**, Senior Manager of Communications, Voices for Healthy Kids
Joshua provided a high-level overview of state advocacy communications best practices based on his insight as an advocacy communications expert.
- **Elizabeth Gaines**, Founder and CEO, Children's Funding Project
Elizabeth provided a brief explanation of why budgets matter and the value of appropriations advocacy, sharing professional anecdotes from her 25 years in children's advocacy.
- **Libbie Sonnier**, Executive Director, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children
Libbie spoke to the value of coalitions and creativity in appropriations advocacy campaigns, based on her two decades of experience in system-wide initiatives for the betterment of children.



WEBINAR #2: INFLUENCING THE INSIDE GAME: POLICY ADVOCACY ON STATE BUDGETS & APPROPRIATIONS

The second webinar in the training curriculum focused on the “inside game,” which took place on Thursday, May 9, 2024 ([click here for the recording](#)). The webinar digs into the basics of understanding state budget and appropriations processes and equips advocates with the necessary information to navigate budget lobbying strategically and successfully. Over 70 people attended the webinar, which featured the following speakers:

- **Joshua Harris**, Senior Manager of Communications, Voices for Healthy Kids (moderator)
- **Whitney Tucker**, Director of State Fiscal Policy Research, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Given her deep expertise in state fiscal policy, Whitney discussed the basics of how the state budgets and appropriations work, from timelines to tricks for understanding how to read a budget to spotting riders or preemption language.
- **Jacob Vigil**, Deputy Policy Director, New Mexico Voices for Children
Jacob shared his perspective as a state advocate in New Mexico, digging into how advocates should define their appropriations asks to ensure they are rooted in fiscal realities and ambitious enough to spark change.
- **Alea Simons**, Senior Policy Associate, Children’s Funding Project
Alea highlighted the Children’s Funding Project as a resource for NCIT members seeking to find and leverage money in their state budgets and demonstrated how advocates can do fiscal research as part of their campaign efforts.
- **Dustin Holfinger**, State Government Relations Director, American Heart Association
As an experienced state lobbyist, Dustin discussed how to engage with state agencies and the governor’s office, including the most effective timing for when those conversations should start happening.

WEBINAR #3: DEMONSTRATING PEOPLE POWER THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND MOBILIZATION

The final webinar of the training curriculum took place on Tuesday, June 11, 2024 ([click here for the recording](#)). The webinar highlighted how advocates can demonstrate ‘people power’ through effective communications, leveraging polling, and mobilizing supporters. Speakers underscored the importance of strong coalitions and offered guidance on strategic moments and methods to display the strength of the prenatal to three movement. Nearly 90 people attended the webinar, which featured the following speakers:

- **Katie Bishop Kendrick**, Senior National Advocacy Consultant, Voices for Healthy Kids (moderator)
- **Charli A. Cooksey**, Founder and CEO, WEPOWER
Charli’s panel focused on how advocates can effectively build, maintain, and leverage coalitions to demonstrate the strength of their movement during pivotal campaign moments, drawing on her successes.
- **David Masur**, Executive Director, Penn Environment
David’s shared takeaways from his experience successfully leveraging earned media as a tactic at the state level during appropriations advocacy campaigns to demonstrate the value of communications and media advocacy.
- **Darlene Adams Rowland**, Executive Director, Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA LA)
Darlene discussed how to effectively mobilize supporters and deploy the power of a coalition during critical campaign moments – and the groundwork required to get to that point.

OFFICE HOURS

The training curriculum included two sets of office hours for NCIT members seeking to ask questions, learn from their peers, and brainstorm ideas in smaller groups of five to ten participants. The purpose was to provide direct and convenient access to experts across the topics discussed in the toolkit, with a focus on where NCIT members indicated interests and needs in the post-launch survey: budget and lobbying basics and polling and communications basics.

The budget and lobbying office hours took place on Wednesday, May 22, and featured two experts from Voices for Healthy Kids: **Danielle Patterson**, State Government Relations Director and **Benjamin Schmauss**, National Senior Advocacy Consultant. Both Danielle and Ben have deep experience running lobbying campaigns at the state level, navigating advocacy spaces, working with contract lobbyists, and reviewing complex state budgets.

The communications and polling office hours, held on Thursday, June 20, featured two Voices for Healthy Kids experts with experience leveraging polling and communications as valuable tactics in an appropriations advocacy campaign: **Philip Noyes**, Senior Policy Analyst, and **Maura Devine**, National Grassroots Manager.

EXPLAINER VIDEOS

In addition, the Voices and M+R Win teams collaborated to develop and distribute to NCIT members a series of four explainer videos to delve further into key concepts from the toolkit. Four Voices for Healthy Kids experts shared their insights in these videos, drawing directly from their experience to provide practical guidance.

1. **Raquel Bueno-Morales**, National Senior Advocacy Consultant, outlined [how and why advocates could leverage a contract lobbyist in appropriations campaigns](#).
2. **Danielle Patterson**, State Government Relations Director, discussed the [pros and cons of lobbying in-house](#) and building power and relationships within advocates' organizations.
3. **Joshua Harris**, Senior Manager of Communications, highlighted [best practices for talking about budgets and appropriations](#).
4. **Maura Devine**, National Grassroots Manager, provided an overview of [the five elements of a successful state appropriations advocacy campaign](#).