

Advocacy Made Simple:

A Five-Step Guide to Getting Started

Making a change in your community is easier than you might think. Passion braided with careful planning can spark a flame of empowerment and change. These five simple steps will help you get started:

STEP 1. UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE

Become proficient in explaining the issue with facts, data and compelling information so that others understand why “this” matters. Messaging is critical...and powerful!

Identify data sources here: *(examples include US Census, YouTube, Health Dept)*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 2. BUILD A COALITION

Coalitions are the bedrock for creating change in the community. Coalitions can be successful in creating change in policy, increasing awareness and developing innovative solutions. Consider these questions:

1. Who cares as much you do? _____
2. What format is most suitable – permanent/temporary; single issue/multi issue, etc. _____

3. Do you have a leadership structure? _____

STEP 3. COLLABORATE WITH CAUTION

Have a clear and concise mission statement to guide your activities and protect the integrity of your goal. Carefully consider with whom you partner to avoid diluting your mission. Be aware of potential blind spots:

1. Trying to do too much – stay true to your desired outcome.
2. Be aware of how social media can take an issue into many directions.
3. Understand the political climate and how your efforts could be perceived as a partisan issue.

Write about something specific you would like to do — this can be something you join or start from scratch. How might you get prepared? _____

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STEP 4. STORYTELLING

There is nothing more impactful than making your issue real and relevant. Effective storytelling can mobilize people into action by appealing to the emotional impact of the story. Remember these components of effective storytelling:

- 1. Your ultimate goal is to deliver a story that is poignant, unexpected and convincing.
- 2. What happened? Why did it happen? Who was responsible? What's the solution?
- 3. Take time to develop the hook – which is typically a person who serves as a catalyst for change.

Take some time now to outline a story. Remember to capture the most compelling part of the story to be sure it is impactful.

STEP 5. SOLUTIONS, SOLUTIONS, SOLUTIONS

Advocacy is built on action – results come from doing! Naming the problem is simply not enough. Developing solutions is the pivotal difference between complaining and solving. When drafting solutions, remember these tips:

- 1. Be inclusive to demonstrate this is a “win-win” for many groups.
- 2. Be prepared to discuss the fiscal impact of your solution as well as the cost benefit.
- 3. Sometimes an unexpected benefit is the increased awareness of your issue, even though the full solution may not be fully adopted.

Based on the Advocacy Steps 1-5 above, develop a recommendation statement. _____

As you fan your flame of advocacy, pay careful attention to the personal transformation taking place within you. While serving others, you will find yourself developing a new sense of purpose for your life. Suddenly, the world seems a bit smaller and your heart is much bigger. You begin to ponder where your next spark of inspiration will lead you. Enjoy seeing the world through the lense of change and possibility.