

Most social service workers are already overworked, leaving them with little time to engage in advocacy efforts.¹⁰ Yet advocacy doesn't have to be complicated or time consuming if we know what the main criteria for effective engagement are. In this section, we will walk through what research proves to be most effective in motivating those who are currently unaware or not invested in the issue and people working on intersecting issues to join our cause. This section builds on the analysis of the state of the field and presents additional research-based insights from behavioral science for effective communications and advocacy.

If a group wants to affect lasting change today, it's no longer enough to merely command resources, we have to inspire those who are currently unaware or not invested in the issue to join the movement.¹¹

2.1 What does the research say?



Figure 1: Evidence-based tips for talking with policy and decision-makers

Be personal

Our societies are shaped by common values that define us and move us to action. We all want to create a better future for our children where they can grow to reach their full potential. We all want to live in a peaceful, just and healthy society. By putting our shared values into words, we create a frame that others can identify with and relate to.¹² Studies have shown that the number of children who have been spanked in Sweden has decreased from 90% to about 10% over a 35-year period. A campaign changing public attitudes in combination with legislative change led to a framing of corporal punishment as a criminal offence with negative consequences for children rather than as a way of disciplining and raising children.¹³

Start your communications by referring to core values that we share. Some of the values that were mentioned by interviewees related to the social service workforce are–

- **Fairness** - treating people equally or in a way that is right or reasonable.
- **Compassion** - a strong sympathy for the situation of others and a wish to help them.
- **Bravery** - having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty.
- **Resourcefulness** – being capable of creating ways and means to address a challenge.

Tell a story with data

Interviewees agreed it is important to present the emerging data on the social service workforce to policy and decision-makers to underline the effectiveness of solutions and the need to build more political priority for the field. The fact that the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that “1.5 million people died of HIV/AIDS in 2013, leaving a staggering 17.8 million children without parents”¹⁴ is tragic and requires a response. The numbers in question though are enormous and difficult for people to truly appreciate. The story of this data can also be told in a personal way, through the story of a child in your country that was left without parents but received the necessary care and support through the local social service worker. This angle puts a more human perspective on the dizzying numbers that we are talking about and which may have convinced the audience that the issue is simply too big to be fixed. It tells the story not just of the child, but of the social service worker who helped him or her. The facts and data are not left out, they are reinforced with this more personal level of context.

Most interviewees felt that policy and decision-makers don't have a good understanding of their work or their impact. Data can persuade people, but it doesn't inspire them to act. This is where the human side of the story can be brought in.

¹⁰ Heather R. Edwards & Richard Hoefler (2010), Are Social Work Advocacy Groups Using Web 2.0 Effectively?, Journal of Policy Practice, 9:3-4, 220-239.

¹¹ Harvard Business Review (2016), What Successful Movements Have in Common by Greg Satell.

¹² Michael Ganz (2009), Why Stories Matter: The Art and Craft of Social Change, Sojourners Magazine.

¹³ World Health Organization (2016), INSPIRE: Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children: http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/

¹⁴ WHO, World AIDS Day: Business Unusual: Time to end the AIDS epidemic: http://www.who.int/woman_child_accountability/ierg/news/ierg_statement_AIDS_1_december_2014/en/

Successful storytelling focuses on three factors: the story of me, the story of us, and the story of now.¹⁵ A good story explains the reason I am passionate about the issue, it explains why we must work together to solve the challenge and why we must do that now.

Provide incentives

Policy and decision-makers want to know ‘what is in it for them’ when they are asked to support an issue or take action on policy. Studies show that financial benefits alone are not sufficient to drive people to act. We differentiate here between two types of incentives: extrinsic and intrinsic.¹⁶ When we show a policymaker how their investment in a program will lead to concrete budgetary benefits, we are giving them an extrinsic motivation. When the stories we tell them convince them that taking action is something that supports their personal values and will make them feel better about themselves, we are giving them intrinsic motivation.

Highlight solutions

A study by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and Fenton Communications showed that advocates working to end violence against children were focused too much on the problem and not enough on solutions when communicating. This led to a situation where many policymakers knew that violence against children was a massive global issue, but few could name a successful violence prevention initiative – whether child-related or otherwise and so didn’t view the issue as one where they could make a difference.¹⁷ The policymakers also responded poorly to acronyms and jargon popular among practitioners, which made it more difficult for them to understand the information being presented to them.

Loss aversion

Behavioral science has shown that the pain of losing is psychologically about twice as powerful as the pleasure of gaining—we prefer to not lose \$10 than to win \$10. Loss aversion is a powerful tool for behavioral change strategies and can motivate people to take actions to avoid loss.¹⁸

Context is key

Policymakers are more likely to be interested in certain policy recommendations that are directly relevant to their situation, such as research performed or published in their own country.¹⁹ Studies show that they are more likely to read an article on a certain issue if it is of specific interest to them and addresses a topic of current debate.²⁰ 87% of US state government policymakers indicated that they are more likely to stop skimming and actually read a journal or article if it is relevant to “something I am working on”.²¹

Tip – Research shows that when people are not sure about a course of action, they tend to look to those around them to guide their decisions. They want to know what everyone else is doing – especially their peers. It is helpful to involve policymakers in the dissemination of information about the social service workforce so their peers take greater notice.¹⁸



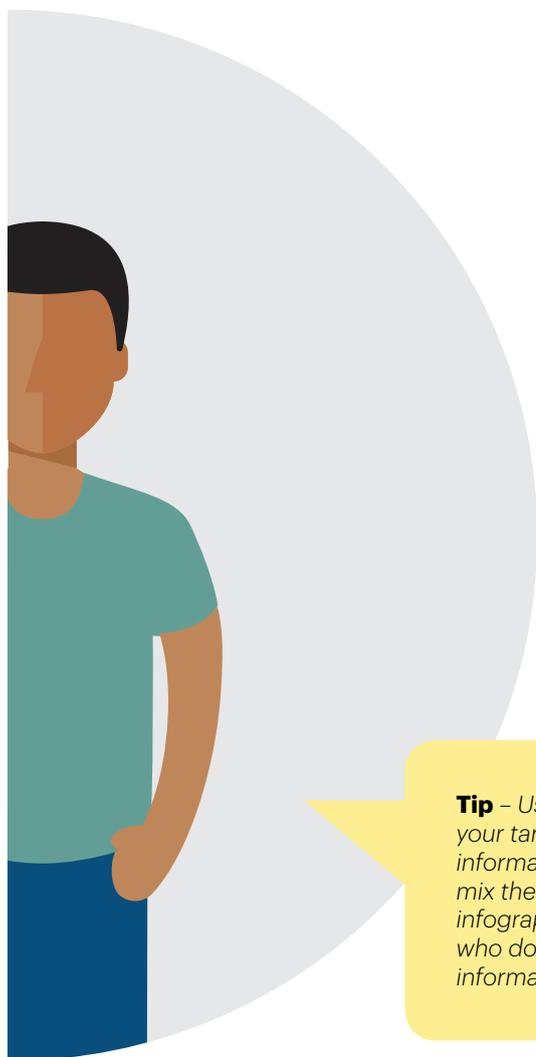
15 Michael Ganz (2009), Why Stories Matter: The Art and Craft of Social Change, Sojourners Magazine.
16 Emir Kamenica (2012), Behavioral Economics and Psychology of Incentives, Booth School of Business, University of Chicago.
17 Bernard van Leer Foundation and Fenton Communications (2013), Communicating about Violence in the Lives of Young Children: Research Findings, Messaging and Media Recommendations.
18 D. Kahneman & A. Tversky (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. Econometrica, 47, 263-291.
19 G. Emmanuel Guindon et. al. (2010), “Bridging the gaps between research, policy and practice in low- and middle- income countries: A survey of health care providers”, Canada Medical Association Journal 182(9) 362-72.
20 Diane Stone et.al. (2001) “Bridging Research and Policy”, Bridging Research and Policy International Workshop, Radcliffe House, University of Warwick.
21 Richard Sorian, Terry Baugh (2002), “Power of Information: Closing the Gap between Research and Policy”, Health Affairs 21(2): 264-273.

2.2 Communications tools

The messenger matters just as much as the message.

- **Personal Connections:** One of the best ways to change minds is through face to face interaction. Policymakers sometimes find people more helpful than reports for bringing information and evidence to bear on policy decisions and translating policy recommendations into policy action.²² These can be one-on-one meetings, discussion forums or events that allow for discussion between policymakers, researchers and practitioners.

- **Peers:** Behavioral science tells us that people are often unsure of the best course of action and consequently seek clues from the environment. A study found the most trusted and valued messenger for policymakers is likely to be another policymaker who can relate their own experience of implementing policy.²³
- **Intersections:** When seeking to address new funders or people working in issue specific organizations, it is more effective to communicate how their issue intersects with the efforts of the social service workforce. One particular intersecting issue mentioned in interviews was education. By highlighting how quality education, especially for girls, intersects with the social service workforce, advocates from both fields can find common ground on mutually beneficial solutions.
- **Champions** are vocal supporters who represent the field well thanks to experience with the social service workforce themselves. The Alliance Ambassadors are examples of champions whose expertise and knowledge, particularly in advocacy strategies, can be tapped into by others. The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance has developed an Ambassador program to work closely with selected leaders to support them in informing strategy and influencing policy at the local, national and regional level.



Communications tools

Passive communication vehicles, like web sites and newsletters, can supplement interactive efforts if the material provides targeted information to clearly identified audiences and/or more general information in a searchable form when an intervention or event generates a demand for this information. A study of social work advocacy groups in the USA and their use of communication tools revealed that social work organizations make good use of their websites for some advocacy activities, but underutilize social media engagement, such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, short films, etc., for others.²⁴ Most of the interviewees mentioned that they are engaged on social media and use their channels to advocate as often as possible for the social service workforce. Social media efforts, when used effectively, can lead to advocacy outreach that requires relatively little staff time to maintain and that can reach a wide audience of potential new supporters.

Tip – Use a combination of communications tools to reach your target audience and provide them with the necessary information about evidence-based solutions. For example, mix the detailed report with a short and visually appealing infographic to bring your point across to audience members who don't have much time but still might need detailed information during a later stage.

²² Emir Kamenica (2012), Behavioral Economics and Psychology of Incentives, Booth School of Business, University of Chicago.

²³ Alex Neuhoff et. al. (2015), The What Works Marketplace. Helping Leaders Use Evidence to Make Smarter Choices, Results for America, as of October 5.

²⁴ Heather R. Edwards & Richard Hoefler (2010), Are Social Work Advocacy Groups Using Web 2.0 Effectively?, Journal of Policy Practice, 9:3-4, 220-239.

This chapter will provide an overview of what research and behavioral science says is the best way to identify and reach your advocacy objectives. A step-by-step guide in the next section will allow you to develop your own context specific advocacy plan.

A successful advocacy plan requires sufficient preparation to develop your goals and identify your target audience and partners as well as create the advocacy tools. Preparation time for advocacy outreach depends on the objectives of the outreach—whether the outreach is event-bound or carries on for a duration of time—and which advocacy tools you plan on using. Below you can find a rough guide to how much time might be needed for each of the steps. Keep in mind that collaboration with partners can be time consuming.

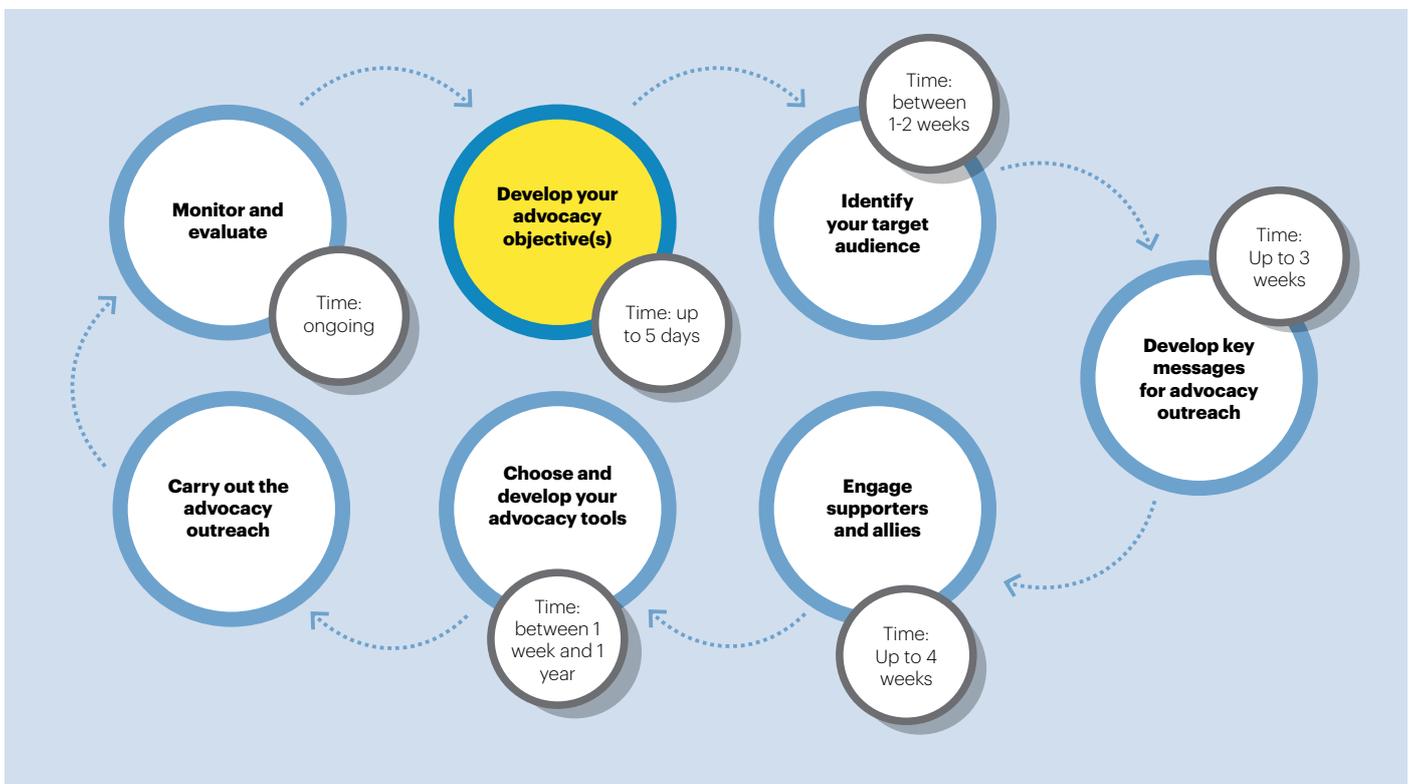


Figure 2: Steps involved in advocacy outreach

After each chapter we will provide you with guidance and tools to develop your own context-specific advocacy plan. It can be adjusted to a specific issue and address national or regional settings.

4.1 Setting advocacy objectives



The overarching long-term goal is to generate greater political and programmatic priority for strengthening the social service workforce. Yet, when we develop a context-specific advocacy plan, more specific advocacy objectives will have a narrower and time-bound focus. Advocacy objectives will be developed according to your particular needs and the local political situation. They can be adjusted to your ongoing needs over time.

The objectives of the advocacy should be judged according to the **SMART** guidelines–

- › Is the objective as **Specific** as possible?
- › Is the objective **Measurable**?
- › Is it **Achievable**?
- › Is it **Realistic**?
- › And is the objective **Time-bound**?

For example, the advocacy objective might be to–

- Source 20% additional financial support for a specific training module for social service workers in Jakarta, Indonesia by 2018.
- Carry out an annual, national review of social service workforce data to facilitate better workforce planning and budgeting.
- Provide monthly supervision for all child protection workers in South Sudan in 2018.

These objectives are context- and needs-specific and can focus on a specific political opportunity, such as a funders conference or a political event. The classification of **long-term and short-term indicators** will be helpful to measure your success in achieving goals.



Tip – People tend to be consistent with what they've done or committed to in the past. If they have expressed their support for supervision, it will make it harder for them to later cut funding for it. Research tells us that an effective way to get someone on your side is to look for an opportunity to make a small ask that could lead to greater action later.³²

³² Robert Cialdini (2006), Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion, Harper Business.

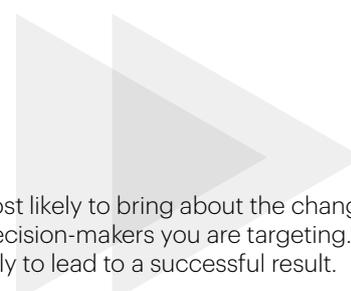
Develop your advocacy objective(s)

As a first step, identifying and analyzing the challenges and the policy issues will help you develop your advocacy objectives. This analysis can be based on recent research findings, policy changes, or general challenges the social service workforce is facing. Here you can add your advocacy objective(s) and indicators.

Advocacy goal	Bring greater political and programmatic priority for strengthening the social service workforce
Advocacy objective 1	
Advocacy objective 2 (optional)	
Outcome indicator long-term	
Outcome indicator short-term	
Data sources for monitoring and evaluation	

Advocacy objective(s) SMART checklist	YES	NO*
Are my advocacy objective(s) context and needs specific?		
Will I be able to measure success?		
Are the objective(s) achievable within the time frame?		
Are they realistic to achieve?		
Are my objective(s) time-bound?		

**If you check one or more of the 'no' boxes it might be a good idea to revisit the guidelines on how to develop your advocacy objective(s).*



The advocacy goal and objective(s) will determine who is most likely to bring about the change you are advocating for. In the next section, you will be able to note how to reach the decision-makers you are targeting. This is a crucial step that is often overlooked. Only a targeted advocacy campaign is likely to lead to a successful result.

4.2 Identifying the target audience

After establishing the key advocacy goal and more specific objective(s), we turn to the target audience, a range of individuals, agencies and organizations that must be convinced to act in order for us to reach that goal. Identifying your audience is a crucial first step in increasing the chances of success. The graphic below highlights how to reach your target audience by working with influencers, rebroadcasters, core supporters, and the public.

Tip – Think outside the box when identifying your target audience. Individuals and entities that are usually not approached to support the social service workforce might be interested in supporting the issue.



Tip – Acknowledging that every audience group has its own incentives to support a specific issue that might not translate to other sectors is helpful. Discussions with the target audience can be useful to determine their main interests.

Identifying your audience

Decision Makers: Your ultimate target - List the top names, what you want from them, how to directly contact them, what might turn them off, who do you know that knows them.

Influencers: List the top names, who they influence, what you want from them, how to directly contact them, how your issue intersects with their interests, who influences them, what might turn them off, who do you know that knows them, what they read or listen to, what conferences might they be at.

Rebroadcasters: People or organizations with large distribution channels that will be seen by your target audiences.

Core Supporters and Allies: These are your main partners. You need to know what their communications/advocacy capacity is, how to leverage it and how to support it.

Public Opinion: It is impossible to reach a general public audience without a massive budget. Instead, communicate with pre-existing groups through their existing channels - such as social media. Mainstream media, such as newspapers, tv and radio, will also reach this audience so should not be forgotten.

Figure 3: Identify your audience

Identify your audience

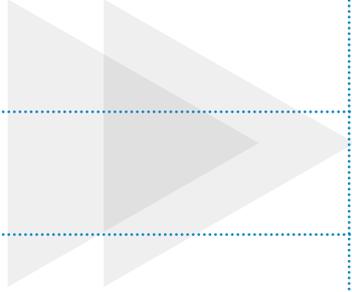
Who are the decision-makers?	
How will you contact them?	
What are their key interests?	
Who are the influencers?	
Who are the rebroadcasters?	
Who are the core supporters?	
What is in it for them/ what is their main interest?	
What direction should the messaging take?	

Identify your audience

Once you are aware of the target audience to bring about change, you can map the opportunities to engage with the target audience, most preferably during face-to-face meetings. Note the most important opportunities to reach your advocacy goal in the near future on the calendar below.

Note the global, regional, national and local opportunities

Date and Location	Event	Topic	Who represents the social service workforce
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			
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___ / ___ / 20__			
___ / ___ / 20__			



4.3 Selecting advocacy tools



The advocacy goal and the target audience will determine which advocacy tools or combination of tools will be the most appropriate ones for outreach. The following gives an overview of some of the advocacy tools available—

- › **Media:** Local or international media coverage through articles and opinion pieces (op-eds) submitted to newspapers, social media campaigns on Facebook or Twitter, blog entries on your website.
- › **Meetings:** Presentations and discussions on the issue.
- › **Information Package:** Policy briefs, evidence-based reports, case studies, newsletters.
- › **Visual tools:** Infographics, films, photo- and graphic-based campaigns.

Meetings can be supplemented by additional advocacy tools—for example by providing a new report with an infographic for a visual summary of the content. Make sure that decision-makers who don't have much time to read through lengthy reports have a briefing document summarizing the research findings on no more than two pages, but also provide access to the long version so they, or their staff, can learn more.

Tip – Before sharing the advocacy material with the target audience, let a person not familiar with the topic review it. Ask them if they understand the content.

Tip – Creating visually appealing documents is a key aspect of getting your message across effectively. More and more people are realizing that the look of a document is as important as the content. A document that is visually appealing is more likely to be opened and shared by the target audience.

The tools

Now you can select the best tools fitting your advocacy outreach. The list below is a summary of those mostly commonly used. Check only the tools you plan to use during your advocacy outreach.

Focus	Medium	Choice of advocacy tool(s)
Media	Article	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Op-ed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Blog entry	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social media engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings	Presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Panel discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Event participation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Phone call	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information packages	Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Policy brief	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Case study	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visual tools	Email campaign	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Film	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Picture	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Infographic	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Illustration	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.4 Developing messages



Once you have defined your advocacy objective(s), your audience and your tools, you can develop your specific messages. These messages will determine how your audience perceives you and your arguments. Effective messages aim at convincing policy and decision-makers to support your advocacy goal.

The following messaging story structure for greater political and programmatic priority for strengthening the social service workforce has been tested for effectiveness.

This story structure can be adapted to different contexts and can address different issues and thematic areas of the social service workforce. The story structure is the outline for an effective advocacy outreach and can be the base for an op-ed by adding a personal story. It can also be used as a guide when creating infographics, policy papers, films, or social media tools.

1. Link to a relevant event that grabs the attention of the audience. This can be a new study that has been published, new data available, or a recent news event. Refer to shared values in the context of this news to create agreement with the audience.
2. Briefly clarify the facts on the magnitude of the challenge and its negative impact.
3. Provide a definition of the social service workforce, what social service workers do, and why their work is relevant to the issue.
4. Show through reference to evidence-based solutions that strengthening the social service workforce positively impacts program outcomes.
5. Highlight the need to strengthen the social service workforce to ensure better outcomes.
6. Include a specific call to action.



Figure 4: Story structure for the social service workforce

Develop your message

The following sample messages are based on the results of the research and interviews conducted.

First, we will provide you with a general common narrative to apply to your general call for strengthening the social service workforce. The general narrative can be used by advocates who want to draw attention to strengthening the social service workforce beyond specific issues, especially on the global level.

Additionally, separate issue specific sample messages have been developed on violence against children, HIV/ AIDS and migration. These can be used by social service workers focused on specific issues who want to highlight the need for strengthening the workforce in their sector. For example, an op-ed might link the topic to a recent event in the news, while a social media campaign will have shorter and more focused messages, but all follow the story structure.

You can use the following sample messages as a guideline for creating your own context-specific messages. By personalizing the sample messages and adjusting them to current events, you can create strong messages that are more likely to reach your target audience.

Keep in mind the behavioral insights on what works when talking to policy and decision-makers while adjusting the sample messages to your context.

Behavioral insights

<input type="checkbox"/> Be personal	<input type="checkbox"/> Tell a story with data	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide incentives	<input type="checkbox"/> Highlight solutions	<input type="checkbox"/> Loss aversion	<input type="checkbox"/> Context is key
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4.5 Monitoring and evaluation



How do we gauge the results of advocacy efforts? It's important to build in ways to know what advocacy approaches have been successful and what outcomes and impacts can be attributed to advocacy efforts. Effective advocacy outreach depends upon constantly monitoring and evaluating your messages and activities. Perceptions and attitudes to an issue are sometimes hard to measure and measuring the change in perceptions is a long-term process. It's a lot easier to gauge reactions to a presentation you have given, or to track how many people share something on social media. You should be using these observations to regularly refine your communications tools.

The best indicator of a successful advocacy campaign is reaching your advocacy goals, but this might not be achievable within a short time frame. By noting the baseline, i.e. the status before an advocacy outreach, you can measure any changes and effects on your target audience.

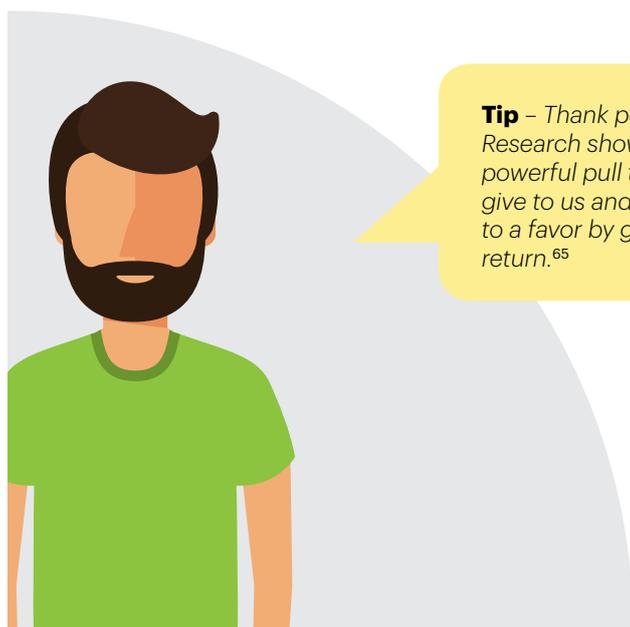
The following fictional example can help you to monitor your advocacy outreach. Depending on the scope of the advocacy outreach, the advocacy plan can have more than one objective.

Advocacy goal	Objective	Long-term indicator	Data source	Short-term indicator	Data source
Build greater political and programmatic priority for strengthening the social service workforce	20% additional financial support for a specific training module for social service workers in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2018	20% additional financial resources for training module in 2018	Government budget changes Funders annual spending priorities	Increased awareness of the importance of additional training modules for social service workers in Jakarta, Indonesia	Media coverage Parliamentary discussions on topic Topic at funders' events
	Receive monthly supervision for all child protection workers in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2018	All child protection workers in Jakarta, Indonesia have access to supervision once per month in 2018	Survey child protection workers Governmental budget changes	Increased awareness of benefits of child protection worker's supervision for children and their families	Parliamentary and event discussion on topic Additional research Internal priority for child protection workers

Figure 5: Example of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring tools that will help you to evaluate your advocacy outreach–

- Monitor **policy prioritization** of issues in policy documents, strategies, and meeting topics.
- Collect **anecdotal stories** by your target audience through face-to-face feedback or via email.
- Send out short feedback **surveys** to the target audience asking for their input.
- Monitor **media debate** to see how many times your issue was mentioned in the local, regional, or international media.
- Use an **email marketing service** to evaluate how many people read your advocacy outreach via email (many online services provide a free option if the audience is not large).
- Use **social media analytics** (such as Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube) to note the reach of your social media tools and which messages received the most attention.



Tip – Thank people for their past support. Research shows that we feel a profoundly powerful pull to give back to those who give to us and so many people respond to a favor by granting a larger favor in return.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Robert Cialdini (2006), Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion, Harper Business. Look for ways that you can support the people you're trying to persuade.

10 tips for writing and pitching an op-ed

The opinion section—op-eds and letters to the editor—in a publication are devoted to personal comments and opinions. Opinion editors aren't looking for a full analysis of a situation. They want a compelling viewpoint and an argument to inspire debate and challenge opinions. Opinion editors aren't looking for pieces that just sell a specific organization or solution—so resist the temptation to focus only on your own work and provide a view that can be applied more generally to the issue.

1. Be ready to react to the news

Getting an op-ed published is about timing. You need to link your issue to something happening in the news, and get your op-ed to editors when that news is still happening. If you spend a week getting the wording just right, you'll miss the news cycle.

Tip: Spend time in advance pulling together key ideas, data and arguments so that you're prepared to move quickly when news hits.

2. Expand your opportunities

The social service workforce intersects with many other issues, such as education, health or urban planning.

Tip: Think creatively about how your viewpoint could relate to ongoing news in unexpected ways.

3. Keep it short

The maximum word count on op-eds for most outlets is no more than 750 words. You should aim to come in just under that limit or even shorter. An editor is more likely to consider publishing if they don't have to spend time cutting word count.

Tip: Ask a colleague whether there is unnecessary information that can be cut.

4. Make one strong point

Think about the core point you want to convey and who your target audience is. An op-ed isn't the place to break news, it's a place for presenting your analysis of the news and suggesting a solution if it exists. Your readers want to know what you have to say straight off, and if you have hooked them with a strong, interesting point, they'll hang around to hear your arguments in the rest of the piece.

Tip: Sum up your central argument in one sentence—and do it early.

5. Make your analysis immediate and important

Tell the readers why they should care about this issue and why they need to start caring right now. Is there currently an opportunity for change? Is the problem so bad that it needs to be stopped as soon as possible?

Tip: Connect your argument directly to what's happening in the news.

6. Make it personal

You should bring a personal quality to your op-ed. A reader should be able to feel your passion and understand your expertise through the words that you use.

Tip: Do not be afraid to use your own voice, but make sure you establish yourself as a credible professional.

7. Keep it simple

Avoid using jargon. You are writing for an audience that does not have any of the insider knowledge that you possess, and they aren't going to know the shorthand that you use with your colleagues.

Tip: Have a non-expert review your draft for clarity.

8. End on a high note

Your closing paragraph is just as important as the opening one.

Tip: Leave the reader with a very clear idea of how your recommendation for change, call to action, or suggested solution is going to make things better.

9. Be ready to provide photos or graphics

Not all op-eds are published with a picture but it's a good idea to be prepared. Don't count on the outlet having the right photo to use on file. And if you don't have one to offer, they may end up using something that misses the point of your piece.

Tip: Have a photo of you for the byline or a picture from the field on hand—and make sure you have the right to give them permission to publish the photo.

10. Pitching your op-ed

A good pitch to the op-ed page editor will do a number of things. It will explain the connection between what you are saying and the news that is happening right now, it will give a run down of your relevant credentials and tell the editor why you're the right person to write it. Even if you are including the fully written op-ed with your email (some publications will not want you to do this, while others will), the pitch will very briefly outline what you have to say.

Tip: Follow up on the pitch. Whether the answer is yes, no, or there is no answer at all, be sure to follow up and start a conversation with the editor. Maybe you'll be the right person the next time.

How to make your own press release

A press release is an official statement issued to newspapers giving information on a particular matter. Even with growth of social media, press releases are still the primary way that many journalists will learn about your work. In many cases, the press release will contain nearly all of the information that the publication will use in their story. The press releases will likely drive how your news is framed—and whether anyone pays attention to it.

1. Catchy headline

50 or more press releases might be sent to a news desk every day. To help your release stand out, you need a headline that promises something new and notable.

Tip: Use the headline to feature your key data or finding—or challenge an accepted opinion.

2. Strong opening

A strong press release opens with the main hook of your story and suggests the angle for how journalists can approach the issue.

Tip: Capture the five Ws – who, what, where, why, and when – in your first few sentences.

3. No jargon

Every profession has its jargon and shorthand. People in every field will use acronyms and language that make their conversations with colleagues easier and assume a level of prior knowledge of the issues. It's a good idea to run it by someone outside your field to see if they understand the message that you are hoping to convey.

Tip: Do away with acronyms and jargon. No prior knowledge should be assumed.

4. Concise writing

Some wire services will limit you to no more than 400 words, and many people won't bother to read more than this anyway. A 2008 Nielsen study of online reading habits found that the average reader makes it through no more than 20 to 28 percent of the text of the average 600-word article before leaving the page. That gives you about 100 words to grab their attention.

Tip: Make your main point before busy journalists stop reading.

5. Data, data, data

Journalists will always want to see the numbers that make your story newsworthy.

Tip: Be sure that your key pieces of data have been included.

6. Compelling quotes

The quote isn't there to present any new facts, but rather to help readers understand and frame the news.

Tip: Include at least one short quote from a key player in the story that highlights something readers might not otherwise have been able to pick out for themselves.

7. Don't forget to tell journalists how to contact you

Include the phone number and email address of whoever is acting as press contact.

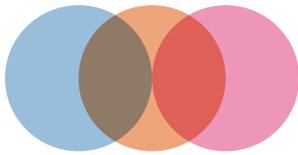
Tip: And be ready to respond with a statement or some more data to support what is in the press release.

8. Don't forget the 'release' in press release

If you want journalists to find your press release, you need to make sure they see it. Effective ways to distribute your press release include sharing it directly with journalists via social media, sending it out to your mailing list, or signing up to a news wire services, such as PR Newswire, that helps you to target your audience. Just putting it on your website is not enough.

Tip: Build a list of journalists' email addresses and Twitter names for your press list, and find a newswire that suits your distribution needs and budget.

Press release



**Put your logo
here**

PRESS RELEASE: {Enter the date on which this should be reported}

Contact: {Your Name}

T: {Your Phone Number}

Twitter: {Your Twitter Name}

Email: {Your Email Address}

{This is where you put the **headline** – it should be short but informative}

{This is optional. You can put a **second, longer headline** here to add to the first and mention something else from the press release}

{Name of city where the news is happening}: {The date of the press release} – {Your first paragraph should start with a punchy sentence summing up in one line the point of the whole press release – this should be the main message that you are trying to communicate. The rest of this paragraph should tell us where the story is happening and when it is happening. It should be no more than about 100 words.}

{This is the paragraph where we talk about why this news is happening – maybe it will be to achieve a goal of your organization or maybe it is to coincide with something in the news or a big event. This is the paragraph where you can go in to a bit more detail on your message. You can break this paragraph up in to two if you have a lot to say but be careful not to have too much text – a maximum of about 100 to 150 words}

{In this paragraph you should have a quote from a senior member of your organization about the news. They should be telling us why it is important and how it fits in with the organization's bigger plans and future goals. 100 words is more than enough}

{You can follow the above quote with a quote from someone outside of the organization in this paragraph – maybe they are from a partner organization or they are a government official. 50 to 100 words is enough}

{You're nearly ready to finish things off here. If you have some more background information that you want to tell people about the news item go ahead and do it here. Since the most important points have all been hit in the first few paragraphs you can go long here if you like (but not too long). 100 to 150 is as much as anyone will read}

{Finish off the press release with a short description of your organization. This will probably be the same for each press release that you send out so take some time to get the wording right.}

Remember:

Keep your press releases to no more than one or one and a half pages.

Best Practice

for

Social Media Campaigns

1

USE PHOTOS TO TELL STORIES

Visual content gets 94% more views and 150% more retweets. Use photos and infographics to tell visual stories. Photos should be properly sized to ensure their message is not lost in the image preview and can engage the audience without clicking.



2

SHARE QUOTES AND DATA TO INCREASE CREDIBILITY

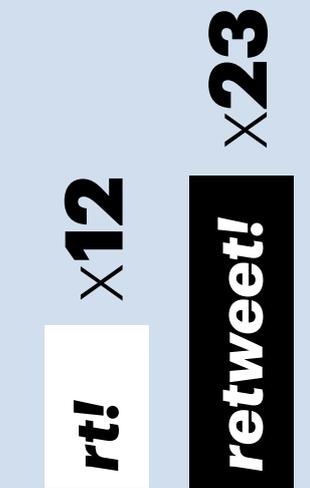
Give the audience interesting quotes and data that they can share and that will quickly build the story of the social media campaign. Ideally these can be integrated with custom made images. 56% of people who support nonprofits online say they do so because of compelling stories told through social media.



3

ASK FOR RETWEETS AND DON'T SHORTEN IT TO "RT"

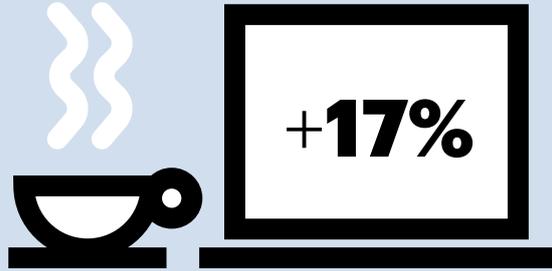
Posts that ask for a retweet are 12 times more likely to actually be shared by followers. And those that spell out the word "retweet" rather than using RT are 23 times more likely to receive engagement than those that use RT.



4

TWEET ON THE WEEKEND TOO

Tweets on the weekend receive up to 17% more engagement than during the week. Scheduling weekend tweets is an important way to increase engagement with audience members with more time on their days off.



5

INCLUDE A CALL TO ACTION AND PROVIDE A WAY TO SIGN UP FOR MORE INFORMATION

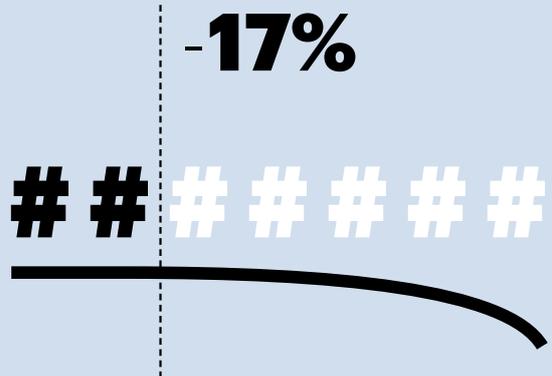
Organizations should use an email newsletter sign up box or a social media follow button and ensure that their websites are responsive for mobile devices. Responsive websites are 34% more likely to convert click-throughs from social media in to donations.



6

USE HASHTAGS* BUT DON'T OVERDO IT

Hashtags are an implicit call to action and double post engagements. However, tweets with more than 2 hashtags have a 17% drop in engagement.



* A Hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media, especially Twitter, to identify messages on a specific topic.

7

INCLUDE A LINK IN THE POST

92% of all Twitter interactions happen when readers click on a link. Posts with links are also 86% more likely to get retweeted.

