

fact sheet #13

for Friends and Foundations

CHECKLIST FOR ADVOCACY

Friends can make the difference between a budget increase and a budget cut for their libraries. As much money as you raise through book sales and other activities, a 1% increase in your library's budget can add up to tens of thousands of dollars or more depending on the size of your library's budget. Not only that, but many libraries across the country owe their new additions or new buildings to an effective advocacy campaign waged by the Friends to ensure community support. You can make a long lasting and significant difference for your library through advocacy. Here's how:

1. Work with library management and Trustees to define the goal you are working toward. It can be a change in local legislation, the passage of a library bond issue or referendum, a campaign to increase the library's operating budget, even a campaign to ward off a potential budget cut. One advocacy goal per year is a realistic target.
2. Determine when your goal must be accomplished and develop a timeline for implementation that will culminate at the point where it will have the best effect.
3. Develop a clear, specific strategy with limited, easily understood objectives for advocacy and ensure they are strategically placed on the timeline. Identify the number of volunteers and resources that will be needed for the accomplishment of each objective.
4. Objectives can include such activities as letter-to-the-editor campaigns, a post card campaign (to influence decision makers), development of flyers to place around the community, articles in the Friends' newsletter, direct mail campaigns, telephone trees, and posts on Facebook and Twitter. These are just a few ways to get the word out and influence your desired outcome.
5. Get as many volunteers on board with the campaign as possible – the wider the reach, the more likely you'll be to have a positive outcome. Be sure each volunteer understands his or her task and be sure they have the resources needed to accomplish it. Set a deadline and follow-up!
6. Find ways to communicate your story. Form a communications task force to work with the local media. Develop a one-page fact sheet as a hand-out and to post digitally. For a very large campaign with a lot at stake, you might want to hire a professional public relations firm to help highlight the campaign. If you can't afford to hire professional assistance, don't hesitate to ask for *pro bono* help.

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7. Ask library-friendly local politicians to be of assistance. They may be willing to endorse your campaign or help to influence other decision-makers.
8. Evaluate the outcome. Were you successful? What worked, what didn't? What would you do differently? Begin thinking about future goals, taking advantage of what you learned.
9. Establish permanent contacts with your local decision-makers. The personal touch is very important for the long-term support of your library.
10. For more information, check out *Making Our Voices Heard: Citizens Speak Out for Libraries*, a CD-ROM and workbook available from United for Libraries. Members can access this resource on the members-only area of the website.
11. For additional information about advocacy, see *Even More Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends*, available from United for Libraries.
12. Information about advocacy campaigns can also be found in Fact Sheet #24, "Advocacy Campaigns – Legal Limits on Spending for Non-Profits."

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