

Local Primer

A REPORT OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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NATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH

**Building Blocks for Change:
A Primer on Local Advocacy
for Reproductive Health, Rights,
and Justice**

The National Institute for Reproductive Health

(National Institute) works in states and localities across the country to promote reproductive rights and expand access to reproductive health care, including abortion; reduce unintended pregnancies; and empower youth to make healthy sexual and reproductive decisions.

The National Institute develops and implements innovative and proactive approaches to galvanize public support, change policy, and remove barriers to care. By working through a partnership model to support state and local advocacy, the National Institute addresses issues of national significance and helps to shift the overall culture.

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Contents

1	SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION
2	Why local advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spotlight On: Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health
5	About This Guide
6	SECTION 2: IDEAS THAT WORK
9	SECTION 3: WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Note: Doing Your Research
10	Mayoral Leadership
11	Understanding City Council <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chart: Key Things to Consider When Working with City Councils• Spotlight On: Support for Restoring Insurance Coverage
14	Administrative Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Note: Implementation Strategy• Chart: Key Things to Consider When Working with City Agencies
16	Boards
17	SECTION 4: BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT
17	Engaging the Grassroots <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spotlight On: Roundtables
19	Engaging the Grasstops <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chart: Key Things to Consider When Planning a Roundtable
21	Hosting a Bootcamp <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chart: Key Things to Consider in Hosting a Bootcamp
21	Holding Community Forums
21	Engaging the Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Note: Media Prep• Chart: Key Things to Consider in Crafting a Communications Plan
24	Sharing Lessons Learned and Best Practices
25	SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

SECTION 1

Introduction

The communities in which we live have always been at the center of the work that reproductive health, rights, and justice advocates do every day. This has never been truer than it is now, in a time when anti-choice politicians are steadily chipping away at access to the resources and information people need to make the reproductive health decisions that are best for themselves and their families. In the face of the antipathy to reproductive health and rights that characterizes many statehouses across the country, our own localities can provide fertile ground for innovative strategies to mitigate attacks on reproductive health care. As this *Primer on Local Advocacy* will show, it is in our own backyard that we can forge ahead with proactive policies and programs.

Introduction

WHY LOCAL ADVOCACY?

Cities and towns have long been known as our nation's laboratories. Localities are often able to accomplish what seems impossible on the state or federal level, because local officials are more enmeshed with and responsive to the realities of their constituents and are often willing to be more experimental than their state or federal counterparts. Many times, these leaders operate in a political climate that makes their localities liberal or progressive pockets, even in the most conservative states.

That's why in 2007, amid years of frustration and setbacks to reproductive health and rights, the National Institute for Reproductive Health (National Institute) developed the Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health. Local-level advocacy presented an exciting opportunity to move beyond the defensive strategy necessitated by the political environment of the time and a chance to pursue a new strategy of developing and implementing reproductive health policies that improve access to these services.

In launching the Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health, the National Institute took great inspiration from the progress of our sister organization, NARAL Pro-Choice New York, in New York City. We were also inspired by the leadership of then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who not only used his power to improve access to reproductive health care in a variety of ways, but provided a blueprint for how local leaders could take action to improve reproductive health in the absence of such leadership at the state and federal levels ([See Page 10—Mayoral Leadership](#)).

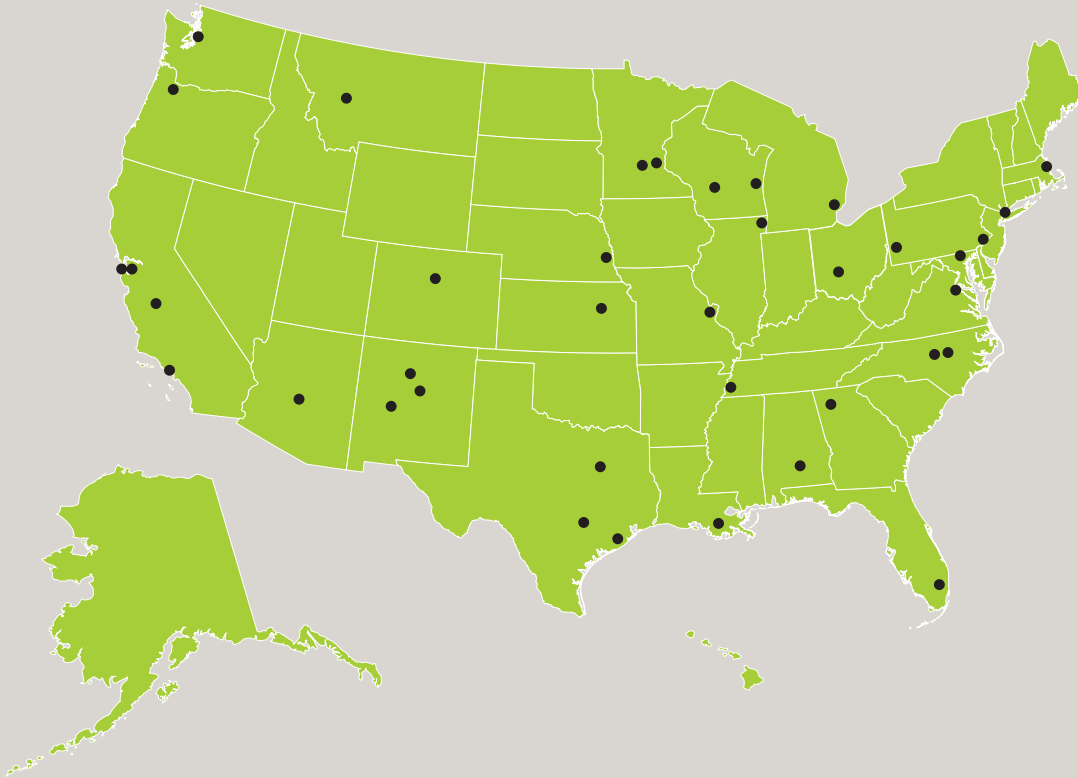
Understanding that dynamic local leaders already possess the regional knowledge and networks necessary to improve reproductive health in their communities, the National Institute's Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health operates through a partnership model to provide funding coupled with strategic, hands-on technical assistance to advocates and stakeholders on the ground, enabling them to develop or adapt innovative and bold ideas and strategies that meet their community's unique needs. Now, eight years after its launch, the need for local solutions to problems on the state and federal levels is more apparent than ever.



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health

Since 2008, the Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health has provided more than a million dollars in grants and strategic hands-on support to 61 organizations in 38 cities spanning 27 states to improve the reproductive, sexual, and maternal health of their residents. During this same period, it has created and sustained a robust network that now connects more than 1,000 advocates, local elected leaders, and public health officials across the country. The Urban Initiative and its partners have also created a track record of important local wins. **Highlights include:**



Austin, TX: passed an ordinance requiring crisis pregnancy centers to inform women about the limited services they provide (NARAL Pro-Choice Texas Foundation, 2010 National Institute partner).

Baltimore and Montgomery County, MD: enacted the first-in-the-nation ordinance requiring crisis pregnancy centers to disclose the limited nature of their services (NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland Foundation, 2009 National Institute partner).

Boston, MA: created a citywide coalition to provide recommendations to the Boston Public Health Commission on adolescent reproductive health; the coalition's advocacy was instrumental in achieving the 2014 passage of a holistic health curriculum that included comprehensive sex education (NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts Foundation, 2009 National Institute partner).

Spotlight on: Urban Initiative for Reproductive Health

Chapel Hill, NC: adopted a resolution in the Town Council opposing the deceptive practices of crisis pregnancy centers (NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina Foundation, 2011 National Institute partner).

Columbus, OH: adopted a resolution calling for fair hearings for the state's Prevention First Act, a bill which would increase access to birth control, emergency contraception, and comprehensive sex education in Ohio (NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio Foundation, 2009 National Institute partner).

Denver, CO: passed a resolution aimed at the Denver Public Schools Board of Education supporting comprehensive sex education. This helped lay the groundwork for a campaign that ultimately yielded a statewide comprehensive sex education mandate in Colorado (Denver Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership, 2009 National Institute partner).

Los Angeles, CA: created a Reproductive Health Working Group within the Los Angeles County Department of Women's Health that succeeded in expanding access to emergency contraception in urgent care clinics and emergency departments and created a new Expedited Partner Therapy model, among other wins (Public Health Foundation Enterprises, Inc., 2010 National Institute partner).

Memphis, TN: developed and distributed a guide to teen-friendly reproductive health care providers in the city (Memphis Teen Vision, 2011 National Institute partner).

Minneapolis, MN: adopted strong health standards and implemented science-based, comprehensive sex education curriculum in middle and high schools across the city (Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting, 2009 National Institute partner).

Missoula and Helena, MT: school boards adopted improved comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in middle and high school (NARAL Pro-Choice Montana, 2010 National Institute partner).

New York, NY: passed and successfully defended an ordinance regulating crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) that, in addition to requiring CPCs to note whether or not they have a licensed medical provider on staff, also required CPCs to abide by standard medical confidentiality practices (NARAL Pro-Choice New York, 2011 National Institute partner).

Pittsburgh, PA: created and successfully defended clinic safety zone legislation and developed a guide to passing similar legislation in other communities (Women's Law Project, 2009, 2015 National Institute partner).

San Francisco, CA: created the Healthy Nail Salon Recognition program to incentivize nail salons to stop use of products containing the "toxic trio" (California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, 2010 National Institute partner).

Travis County, TX: passed a resolution in the Commissioner's Court recognizing the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and calling for comprehensive reproductive health care coverage and restoration of family planning funding in the state (NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, 2012 National Institute partner).*

* For more on this strategy, see the Spotlight on Local Support for Restoring Insurance Coverage for Abortion Care on page 13.

Introduction

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Building Blocks for Change: A Primer on Local Advocacy for Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice reflects the National Institute's years of experience working on the local level. Grounded in lessons learned and designed to be responsive to the needs identified by our partners and allied organizations, it includes the tools to begin or strengthen reproductive rights and advance reproductive health and justice in your own community.

While this primer is not intended to be an exhaustive guide to changing local policy, the strategies and recommendations included here emphasize what advocates need to know about how local work differs from advocacy on the state or federal level. It also includes examples of the exciting work of the National Institute's partners, which can serve as models for identifying the local issues that matter most in local communities and potential strategies to address them. Because each city and county is different, with its own culture and unique governmental structure, this primer sits alongside advocates' own expertise and understanding of individual communities. The recommendations in this guide will always be more effective when tailored to a community's unique needs, and the National Institute remains committed to supporting such efforts.

The National Institute offers funding, individualized strategic and technical assistance, and other resources to partners on the ground. For more information on the support we can offer, please visit our website at **www.nirhealth.org**.

SECTION 2

Ideas that Work

As will be noted throughout this guide, local advocates are in the best position to know what is right for their community, understanding the needs of its residents, and what will and won't work there. This is what drives innovation in the development of public policy and public health programs. Knowing this, the National Institute has identified some of the key types of initiatives that have worked on the local level.

This list should be seen as neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. For more information on any of these recommendations and how to implement them in your community, contact us at info@nirhealth.org.

[Note: Although there are many names for the governing bodies on the city and county level, we will use the term "city council" throughout this guide to refer to local bodies of government.]

ABORTION ACCESS

Ensure Local Zoning Codes Treat Abortion Providers Fairly

Anti-choice groups have begun using zoning regulations to drive abortion clinics out of business, creating a local strategy modeled on successful state-level Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP). To ensure that abortion providers are treated fairly within their borders, local city councils could modify their zoning codes to make it explicit that facilities where abortions are performed be regulated in the same manner as similar types of medical offices.

Protect Access to Abortion Clinics

Ordinances that ensure patients and clinic staff are able to access an abortion clinic free of harassment and obstruction are an important tool. In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *McCullen v. Coakley*, many communities are reevaluating buffer zone ordinances already on the books, or second-guessing this strategy altogether. The National Institute believes that such regulations can still hold up to judicial scrutiny if developed to address the unique needs of the community. If such an ordinance is not right for a particular community, city councils can also implement programs to support clinic access, such as holding and promoting clinic escort trainings and ensuring such programs are sufficiently staffed.

Minimize Deception at Crisis Pregnancy Centers

Crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs) often engage in deceptive practices designed to trick women who believe they may be pregnant into thinking they are receiving legitimate reproductive health care and, ultimately, to prevent them from choosing abortion. These entities

Ideas that Work

pose a great threat to women’s health, as they can delay or even deny a woman the ability to get timely reproductive health care, including abortion. Across the country, the anti-choice movement considers them an essential part of their local strategy.

There are several ways to minimize the harm these entities can do on the local level. A locality can require CPCs to maintain confidentiality of personal information or limit their ability to engage in deceptive advertising. The local government can implement policy refusing to contract with any organizations that do not provide comprehensive options counseling. A signage ordinance can ensure that CPCs indicate whether or not they have a licensed medical provider on staff; while signage ordinances have historically faced legal challenges, this provision has been upheld in the most recent litigation.

HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

Endorse Insurance Coverage of Abortion

Communities have become a key voice in the fight against federal and state bans on insurance coverage of abortion. Local leaders can send a powerful message of public and political support when they are willing to stand up for the right of all women to have access to the care they need. Resolutions can be a general call for the repeal of the Hyde Amendment and other bans, and can also highlight state policy, whether the state allocates its own resources for Medicaid coverage of abortion or not. If the state is facing a ban on insurance coverage of abortion, resolutions are an effective strategy for demonstrating that the community does not support this policy and can raise awareness of this issue. This work should be complemented by a strong grassroots campaign to educate the larger community about the harms of these bans.

Provide Local Funding for Abortion

Local government may be able to set aside some funding for abortion care at county hospitals for low-income women who are residents of that county. The county may provide funding for abortions or it can agree to absorb the cost of the procedure that falls beyond what patients can pay. This is an excellent strategy for circumventing the insidious Hyde Amendment and similar funding bans. Counties must use local tax dollars to support this service.

Establish Policy and Allocate Resources for Immigrants to Access Reproductive Health Care

Depending on their status and their length of residency in this country, immigrants may face many obstacles to accessing reproductive health care. A city can allocate funding to provide free or low-cost services to undocumented immigrants and others who may not be able to access insurance on the state or federal health exchanges or through other means. By declaring your city a “sanctuary city,” it can broadcast to immigrants that they can access reproductive health care at government-supported clinics without fear of their status being reported to the authorities.

HEALTHY YOUTH

Mandate Comprehensive Sex Education

A comprehensive sex education mandate is a vital step forward in ensuring that students have access to the information they need to make healthy decisions about their sexuality and relationships. Mandates are generally passed by the school board, but this strategy can be supported by city council hearings on the topic that give young people an opportunity to make their views heard. The most effective mandates will include mechanisms for enforcement and evaluation. Pursuing a mandate or issuing other guidelines related to comprehensive sex education are strategies especially well-suited to the local level because the majority of education-related decisions are the responsibility of local bodies.

Allocate Resources for Comprehensive Sex Education

Comprehensive sex education policy is only effective if it is implemented. Understanding that teachers and school administrators struggle with limited time and resources, it is important that local government support them in as many ways as possible. This could include developing or distributing recommended curricula, holding trainings for teachers and other school staff, or allocating funding to support community-based organizations that provide sex ed who can go into the classroom.

Ideas that Work

Support Pregnant and Parenting Youth

Pregnant and parenting youth often face unique challenges in completing their schooling, and administrators can ensure that they have access to programs and support, such as in-school child care, to make it easier for them to graduate. It is also important that pregnant and parenting youth feel respected by staff; adopting a “Bill of Rights,” for instance, makes clear that the school system is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for these youth.

Support School-Based Health Centers and Enable Them to Offer Reproductive Health Care

School-based health centers are a great resource for teens to access health care, and reproductive health care is no exception. Policy and resources are necessary to establish school-based health centers initially, and when a community is first considering establishing a school-based health center, advocates should call for reproductive health care to be built into its guidelines. Once school-based health centers are already in place, government can pass policy, provide financial resources, and establish oversight mechanisms that enable providers to offer reproductive health care. An easy way to begin is by enabling school-based health centers to provide free condoms. In a school system without school-based health centers, working with the administration to permit school nurses or guidance counselors to make condoms available can also be effective.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Advocate for or Against State-Level Bills or Ballot Initiatives

Working with local government to pass resolutions stating opposition to a harmful state or federal bill — or in support of a positive bill — is a good way to connect local advocacy with a statewide campaign. Passing such resolutions in multiple places across the state can amplify a positive message and encourage local leaders and community members to become engaged in the statewide fight. In Tennessee, the anti-choice movement included such a resolution strategy as part of their local work and ultimately achieved passage of resolutions urging voters to support the anti-choice Amendment One during the 2014 election in more than twenty communities. Advocates for reproductive health, rights, and justice are beginning to do the same.

Establish an Administrative Office on Women’s Issues

Working with local government to establish an office that focuses on women’s issues can be helpful in ensuring you have an ally within local government who is attentive to reproductive health, rights, and justice issues. This type of office may go by a range of names, including Council, Commission, or Office, but its establishment strongly signals the importance of women’s issues to the administration. In addition to marshaling resources, the office can also be an important conduit between advocates and other members of local government.

SECTION 3

Working with Local Government

Every local body of government has its own idiosyncrasies, both official and informal. A local advocacy strategy can focus on the mayor's office, city council, a specific administrative agency, or all of the above.

While there are basic commonalities that most local governments share, it is important to do your own research to prepare for action if you are not already familiar with the structure in your community. Exploring a government website, attending meetings and hearings, and reading local news is informative about how government operates and gives insights into representatives' approach to and position on issues.

In some cases, it may be clear which avenue is best. If the mayor wants to adopt reproductive health as a focal point in her administration, then working directly with the mayor's office can be a clear path forward. An ordinance—such as regulating crisis pregnancy centers—requires city council support, while implementation of such a law can be pursued through the appropriate city agency. For those situations in which any of these bodies could address an issue, determining which strategy to pursue depends on local politics, advocacy goals, and advocates' relationships.

Consider the level of support in the government and then evaluate whether or not allies in government wish to be visible as supporters of an issue. If their stance is not clear, talk with colleagues at other organizations who can provide insight, attend events with elected officials and relevant stakeholders, meet with elected and agency officials and their staff, and seek feedback from your base of supporters. All of this information-gathering will shed clarity on what would be the most effective avenue.

Even with strong allies in local government, it may be necessary to build a campaign that demonstrates considerable momentum and grassroots support behind the issue. A grassroots campaign can be targeted at a city agency if necessary, but this strategy is usually best suited to the mayor's office or city council, both of which are designed to respond to pressure from constituents. A campaign focused on an agency may require some time educating a community on its function and processes.

If elected officials support an issue, it's important to understand whether they want to be viewed as leaders or if they prefer to support work behind the scenes. An ambitious city councilmember looking to raise her profile as a champion of an issue or a long-time leader who is well-established as a supporter of reproductive rights may be enthusiastic about leading a policy campaign. But if an issue is seen as controversial or politically tricky, working through a city agency can be a quieter way to accomplish that goal. It is also possible that a combination approach is necessary; for instance, if an elected official is willing to advance only part of an agenda, a multi-layered approach could be useful, such as pursuing a public legislative route coupled with a more discreet administrative fix. A combination approach may also be necessary if one body is reluctant or dragging its feet. In that situation, the mayor, city council, or an agency can raise an issue's profile or apply pressure for action.

Working with Local Government



SPECIAL NOTE:

Doing Your Research

Understanding your issue from many points of view will help direct your advocacy. Having answers to the following questions is helpful as you begin your work:

- How does your base of supporters and allies feel about the issue?
- What is the stance of organizations in allied social justice movements?
- What are elected officials' positions on the issue and other policies related to reproductive health and rights?
- What are elected officials' motivations? Are any looking to establish themselves as champions of reproductive rights or distance themselves from the issue?
- Are there other policies or programs already in place that may impact—or be impacted by—your issue?
- Which agencies play a role in regulating or implementing policies on your issue, and how do they operate?

MAYORAL LEADERSHIP

The mayor sets the city's priorities and agenda, and is usually the most visible person in the community. With the power of the bully pulpit, supportive mayors can bring attention to advocacy efforts, influence the conversation taking place on the streets and in the press, and raise public awareness. If the mayor wants to make an issue a part of her agenda, advocates can work with her office to set a tangible and measurable goal that can translate easily in the media. Mayors are

also responsible for appointing key agency officials across local government. If advancing comprehensive sex education is a goal, for instance, advocates can work with the mayor to help identify candidates for key positions such as a head of the department of education who understand the importance of the issue.

Mayors are extremely effective at bringing important people together, so a good time to engage a mayor is when there are certain individuals or groups whose buy-in is necessary to move a program forward, but who may be otherwise difficult to access. For instance, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, responding to a NARAL Pro-Choice New York report based on several years of advocacy and research into current residency practices around abortion, committed during his 2001 campaign to increase training opportunities in abortion provision for medical residents and combat the stigmatization of abortion provision documented in the report. Upon his election, Mayor Bloomberg and NARAL Pro-Choice New York brought together leaders of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), the largest network of public hospitals, with other stakeholders to develop a strategy that would be viable within HHC's structure. This commitment resulted in the Residency Training Initiative, which integrated routine abortion training into the OB/GYN residency program and upgraded its clinical services and facilities for abortion. All hospital staff participated in system-wide training sessions. This combination of initiatives effectively brought the procedure out of the shadows in the hospitals that form the backbone of New York's safety net health care system. Further, the strength of this commitment by the Mayor and by HHC led the New York City Council to commit funding to improving facilities, further supporting advancement of the program.

Mayors can also issue executive orders, which set policy concerning implementation or enforcement of laws or mayoral policy for the executive branch. These rules are binding and are therefore an extremely effective way of making change at agencies. For example, Mayor Michael A. Nutter of Philadelphia issued a 2011 executive order that required all agencies to implement breastfeeding-friendly policies. Not only did this move ensure that

Working with Local Government

employees of city administrative agencies would have access to the resources they need to breastfeed, it also served as a public affirmation of the importance of breastfeeding and as a benchmark for other employers across the city.

Mayors can also be important allies in helping to move policy through the local legislative body by setting the city's agenda, calling on councilmembers to take action, and bringing their own influence into the conversation.

Clearly, having the support of a mayor can be tremendously valuable, but it is also important to use a mayor's support strategically and selectively. Conversely, if a mayor is not particularly attuned to an issue, it can be more difficult to gain their attention and support than it is to engage other government entities.

UNDERSTANDING CITY COUNCIL

Politics are central to the work that gets done in cities and counties, just as on the state and federal level, so many traditional advocacy strategies will be applicable here. However, the political calculus itself may be different. In some communities, local elected officials are not aligned with any particular party or sometimes their party affiliation may not directly correlate to their views on an issue. If a locality has never voted on an issue dealing with reproductive health and rights, a councilmember's position might be unknown. Regardless, demonstrating real community need or widespread public support for a policy is often powerful.

Depending on the makeup of the city council, the culture of the community, and the specific policy, community sentiment can overcome political sensitivities or partisanship. Councilmembers who have to face their constituents every day may be more likely to offer support, more so than may be typical on the state level. In Hamilton County, TN, for example, the County Commission initially voted to reject a \$600,000 family planning grant under the misguided belief that the grant funded abortion, due to the Commissioners' conflating of medication abortion with emergency contraception. Urged by the local Health Department to reconsider, the County

Commission then elected to table their final decision until they could learn more about the family planning services the county provided. Chattanooga Organizing for Action quickly mobilized, leading a well-attended rally for family planning services and several residents submitted letters to the editor opposing the commissioners' decision. The commissioners subsequently reversed their vote, unanimously approving the contract at the next meeting. A year later, when the contract came up for renewal again, the commissioners approved \$2.9 million extension authorizing the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health department to provide family planning services in the community for five years.

A city council's strong dedication to address an issue can have a long-lasting and positive impact. The New York City Council's longstanding commitment to clinic safety, sparked by the 1998 murder of abortion provider Dr. Barnett Slepian outside Buffalo, NY, and ongoing clinic violence across the state in the years that followed, led to passage of a local clinic safety ordinance in 2009. The City Council, witnessing the ongoing harassment providers and patients faced, further followed through by creating a city-sponsored clinic escort program in 2012. In partnership with the National Institute's sister organization, NARAL Pro-Choice New York, they also hosted a roundtable that included providers, escorts, and advocates in 2013, providing a forum for exchanging ideas about improving relationships with local law enforcement, among other topics. This focus has fostered a conversation amongst stakeholders that continues to this day to ensure that local laws reflect the current needs of New York City providers.

Some city councils include a structure that enables direct and ongoing involvement from residents through the creation of issue-based commissions (which may go by a different name in your community). Commissions generally focus on a specific topic, such as civil rights, women, or housing, and serve in an advisory capacity to the city council on that topic. Usually, residents may apply to sit on a commission and are then appointed by the city council. Commissions are designed to serve as the community's voice on their particular focus

Key Things to Consider... When Working with City Councils

CHAMPIONS



Allies on the city council can help get your issues on the agenda. If you don't have connections to elected officials, set up a meeting with your councilmember to open a conversation. Emailing, calling, activating supporters and community members to lobby, or even tweeting at a councilmember are all places to start forging these important connections.

FUNDING



As on the state and federal level, policies that have a price tag attached to them can be more difficult to pass. If your policy requires financial support from the city, consider your city's current financial situation and be prepared to address cost, including identifying potential funding streams and gauging the cost-benefits of your proposal.

BASELINE KNOWLEDGE



How your issue already resonates with your community should impact how you decide to run a campaign. If you need to demonstrate strong community support for an issue that is relatively unknown and unlikely to attract media attention, consider factors like the size and connectedness of your community (e.g. it will be much more costly to mount a community education campaign in a metropolis than in a small town).

OPPOSITION



A strong opposition to your issue is not inherently a bad thing. Healthy debate can be helpful in getting your base fired up and in earning media coverage. However, do your best to ensure that you are not visibly outnumbered by your opposition in the press, at city council meetings (in attendance or in testimony), or at rallies or other public convenings. Your champions on the city council should also be warned in advance if the policy might garner significant controversy or opposition. It is helpful to prepare and distribute talking points that counter your opposition's arguments, as local elected officials may need support in preparing for this type of debate and will look to you for that help.

POLICY LANGUAGE



Your champion(s) may wish to draft their own policy language, but it can be helpful to have a draft of your "dream" language on hand when you first approach them with an idea. If you know that they would like to write the policy themselves, come prepared with a list of the items that are most important to include. It is often valuable to get input from community partners and allied organizations to develop this list and/or the language itself.

TIMING



Timing matters on the local level just as much as at the state level. Be sure to begin your advocacy at an opportune time; take into account the election cycle, the budget cycle, and anything unique to your community that might occupy the council's attention at any given time. You should also consider any context that might detract from your issue; perhaps councilmembers recently debated another policy related to your issue and will not want to revisit it so soon, or perhaps a local controversy will have made councilmembers hesitant to raise the issue in the community at this particular time.



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Support for Restoring Insurance Coverage

Current federal policies and a host of copycat state laws withhold insurance coverage for abortion from people who qualify for government-sponsored insurance programs. Since 2012, the National Institute has prioritized insurance coverage for abortion care in its local strategies, supporting advocates working with their city councils and local boards of health to ensure that all women have insurance coverage for abortion care.

The National Institute, in partnership with the All* Above All campaign, has worked with several cities to demonstrate elected leaders' support for comprehensive reproductive health care for all women, calling on federal and state politicians to reinstate coverage for abortion services.

Travis County, TX (January 2013)

In Travis County, TX, the Commissioners Court unanimously passed a resolution on January 22, 2013, honoring the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* and affirming a woman's right to access abortion care. Responding to the battle to defund providers in the state, it also urged state lawmakers to restore family planning funding. Activists from NARAL Pro-Choice Texas (2012 National Institute partner) and the Lilith Fund testified in support of the resolution.

New York, NY (January 2013)

National Institute sister organization NARAL Pro-Choice New York worked hand-in-hand with the New York City Council to pass a resolution on January 23, 2013, honoring *Roe v. Wade* and calling on the U.S. Congress to restore federal funding for abortion. Several other reproductive rights and justice advocates testified in support of the resolution, which passed unanimously.

Philadelphia, PA (February 2013)

The Philadelphia Board of Health unanimously passed a resolution supporting comprehensive reproductive health care coverage on February 14, 2013. Citing the direct impact of restrictions on insurance coverage of abortion on Philadelphia women, the resolution called on state lawmakers to vote against a state-level ban on abortion coverage and urged federal lawmakers to reinstate abortion coverage for every woman who needs it, regardless of the source of her insurance. Advocacy

efforts were led by local abortion fund, the Women's Medical Fund (2012 National Institute partner).

Cambridge, MA (April 2013)

Two Cambridge, MA, residents and activists from the EMA Fund learned of the resolutions passed in other localities and began working with the Cambridge City Council to replicate this success, passing a resolution on April 1, 2013. This resolution called for the reinstatement of abortion coverage and emphasized that such coverage is essential to ensuring socioeconomic status does not impact a woman's health care access. Several local advocates testified in support of the resolution.

Seattle, WA (September 2014)

On September 10, 2014, the Seattle City Council voted unanimously to pass a resolution calling on federal lawmakers to repeal all bans on public insurance coverage of abortion, making Seattle the first jurisdiction in the Northwest to declare its support on this issue. Legal Voice (2012 National Institute partner) drafted the resolution and led the effort, with many other organizations participating in the resolution hearing.

Madison, WI (March 2015)

On March 17, 2015, the Madison Common Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for increased funding for abortion care, citing the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin women who are denied insurance coverage of abortion. The National Institute worked closely with the sponsor, and hearing testimony from members of the Women's Medical Fund Wisconsin emphasized that repealing the bans on insurance coverage of abortion is part of the larger struggle against inequity that marginalized communities face.

Resolutions are an effective strategy even in states that use their own funding to provide Medicaid funding for abortion. In Massachusetts, New York, Washington, and the 14 other states in this camp, women who qualify for insurance from other federal insurance programs still face discriminatory bans.

Working with Local Government



SPECIAL NOTE:

Implementation Strategy

Working toward implementation of an already-passed affirmative policy, or toward mitigation of a harmful policy, is just as important as the work to get good laws or programs adopted in the first place. This strategy is essential to ensuring that our wins translate to reality on the ground.

In Massachusetts, where an anti-shackling law was recently passed, the Prison Birth Project (2015 National Institute partner) is working with incarcerated pregnant women in a regional jail to ensure that their rights under the new law are not violated when giving birth, and advocating within the jail's administration to update its practices and policies to align with the law. They are also engaging formerly incarcerated women and allies in a campaign to educate community members on their rights when pregnant and giving birth while incarcerated.

At the same time, Prisoners' Legal Services (PLS) (2015 National Institute partner) is working with health care providers, attorneys, and other service providers to ensure they are aware of the law and its implications. PLS is also working with women to document their experiences and advocate for their rights under the law. This work not only serves to ensure that incarcerated women are able to give birth in a safe environment, but also engages the community and allies in this advocacy work on an ongoing basis.

area, so reaching out to these commissioners—or applying to sit on a commission yourself—can be a helpful way to connect with the city council. For instance, Seattle has a Human Rights Commission and a Women's Commission. In 2014, Surge Northwest (2014 National Institute partner) invited members from both Commissions to participate in a local roundtable on improving access to reproductive health care for immigrants. Commission members were able to bring to the Seattle City Council what they learned, including the suggested solutions that surfaced at the roundtable, such as the need to create a guide to the resources available in the community.

ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCIES

Each city will have a range of administrative agencies set up to meet its needs. Several may be relevant to a given policy goal. It is important to research a city's administrative structure to find out which agencies and, ideally, which officials and staff within those agencies are responsible for working on a given issue.

Departments of health and departments of education (which may go by slightly different names in different cities) are common to most cities, and both of them have a role to play in reproductive health care. Departments of health are generally responsible for implementing public health initiatives across the city, and may be a good partner for projects like conducting public awareness campaigns or setting guidelines for reproductive health care clinics administered by the city. In Minneapolis, the NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center (2014 National Institute partner) organized the North Minneapolis Chlamydia Partnership, a coalition of many social service organizations and agencies with the long-term goal of lowering the neighborhood's persistently high rates of chlamydia. Members of the Minneapolis Department of Health provided input on clinical issues and accessible STI testing and care, and members of the school-based health centers run by the Minneapolis Department of Health contributed to the work of building a youth advocacy component to the campaign.

Departments of education are generally responsible for overseeing public education in the city or district's school

Working with Local Government

system, and may be a good partner for work on issues such as implementing comprehensive sex education in schools or supporting pregnant and parenting youth in high school. The Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (2009 National Institute partner), working to protect and advance the rights of pregnant and parenting youth, focused on the Chicago Public Schools. They called on these officials to implement policies that would address the Title IX rights violations these students faced and to adopt a Pregnant and Parenting Youth Bill of Rights.

Many cities also have departments that focus on women, gender, civil rights, and/or human rights. These agencies

may be open to working on issues such as reducing health disparities in the city system. For work on clinic access, the rights of incarcerated women, and more, the police department may have a role to play. In New York City and in Pittsburgh, for instance, the respective police departments proved to be important to helping clinics and advocates determine a strategy for clinic defense that would be both effective for clinics dealing with protesters and enforceable by police departments.

If no relationship with the relevant agency exists, relationship-building is in order. Reach out to allies who work with the agency and ask them for information on

Key Things to Consider... When Working with City Agencies

FUNDING



If your policy needs financial support in order to move forward, you should understand what the cost is and have a sense of the agency's budget, which may be set by the mayor or city council. Be prepared to work with the agency to think creatively about how to fund your project. You may also hear that the money simply isn't there, no matter how supportive the agency is. If this is the case, you can work on finding your own funding stream, if possible, or shift your focus to first advocating for funding from the city.

RESEARCH



While political strategies may still be effective when working with a city agency, research and data are often the driving force needed to make the case for your proposal. Think about what information will prove that your problem is real and that your solution will make an impact, and gather the data to back it up. You may want to prepare a report, a fact sheet, or a presentation to share with the agency. Ensure that you have this data at hand whenever you go into a meeting with agency staff.

TIMING



Consider the special impact of elections on city agencies. While most of the staff at the agencies will be regular employees, their leaders are often appointed by the mayor or city council. After an election, if there is a new administration in place, a new agency head could have new priorities for the agency. The first few months following a new appointment can therefore slow down progress within an agency. If your work is happening around the time of an election, think about what the impact could be and be prepared for all outcomes.

Working with Local Government

how the agency operates and who the right contact person might be. To obtain a meeting with the New York City Department of Education, for example, the Sex Ed Alliance of New York City started by submitting a formal letter of request for a meeting. They found this to be a useful exercise in that it created a record of outreach to the agency and it also helped them clearly outline their goals for the meeting in advance. Continued follow up via email or phone is appropriate if you do not get a response within a reasonable amount of time.

BOARDS

Boards, such as the board of health or the board of education, are often responsible for setting policy, issuing regulations, or making recommendations to the city council. Boards are generally comprised of experts in their particular area, and may be appointed or elected. As a body of experts, they can be a good partner for work on issuing resolutions, advocating for resources from the city council, and setting policies such as a comprehensive sex education mandate. This was an effective strategy in Philadelphia, where the Philadelphia Board of Health issued a resolution in support of repealing the insidious Hyde Amendment. As nonpartisan public health leaders, they provided a new voice in the debate by demonstrating that comprehensive abortion coverage is a public health issue in Philadelphia and across the state.

Other boards, including those who are elected, may be able to become involved in a broader range of issues, including those that can be seen as more partisan. In Denver, members of COLOR's youth program—Latinas Increasing Political Strength (LIPS) (2014 National Institute partner)—connected with members of the Denver Board of Education on their #wheresoursexed campaign, and were able to testify to the entire Board on this work. They gained support from key officials who continue to work with LIPS activists on implementing comprehensive sex education in schools across the district.

If no relationship with the relevant agency exists, relationship-building is in order. Reach out to allies who work with the agency and ask them for information on how the agency operates and who the right contact person might be.

Other government organizations that focus on health care may present another option for moving a specific program. Oakland's ACCESS Women's Health Justice (2012 National Institute partner) identified a pattern of barriers to Medi-Cal coverage of abortion based on calls they received to their community hotline for reproductive health information and pregnancy options. To address these obstacles, they met several times with the County of Alameda Medi-Cal office to share their findings and propose solutions. In the process of helping Alameda County with their goal of providing care to residents and serving ACCESS' own constituency of women seeking abortion care, ACCESS built a stronger relationship with the local Medi-Cal office.

SECTION 4

Building Community Support

In any type of issue advocacy, it is essential to engage with and lift up the voices of the people who are most impacted. This is all the more true and applicable when advocating on the local level. Working for positive change right in one's own front yard may make it easier to engage stakeholders, because the effect of advocacy will be immediately felt in the community. Organizing and engaging on the local level is also logistically easier than expecting people to travel to a state capital or Washington, D.C.

ENGAGING THE GRASSROOTS

Often, issue advocacy can only be amplified by taking the time and opportunity to educate community members and activate stakeholders as fellow advocates. The cost of this engagement locally is often lower than it is on the state level, although it is by no means insubstantial.

There are many ways to go about engaging grassroots support. In 2013, SisterReach (2013 and 2014 National Institute partner) developed a multi-pronged strategy of engaging the community to educate the Shelby County School Board on the importance of comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education (CSE). This included developing a core group of youth leaders who organized their "Choose2Wait" campaign, while reaching out to parents by providing CSE at meetings in their own communities and discussing advocacy strategies with them at the same time. SisterReach also held focus groups with youth, parents, and teachers to understand the reality of growing up and raising a family in Memphis and developed a report based on their findings, giving

local officials an opportunity to hear the voices of people of color on CSE for the first time. These stakeholders were then activated as organizers and participants in a rally on the state of reproductive and sexual health in Memphis that called for comprehensive sex education.

The components of organizing employed by SisterReach are worth detailing. First, they talked with youth, who were the people most affected by the proposal they were pursuing. Creating a core group of stakeholders—whether they are called an action team, super volunteers, or core stakeholders—is a good way to activate and empower a small group to take responsibility for the success of a campaign. As happened in Memphis, that core group then becomes the ambassadors for the campaign, and draws in a wider range of people interested in the campaign. SisterReach also enumerated and engaged all the adjacent people affected by the proposal—in this case, parents and teachers. Finally, SisterReach offered varied activation opportunities, so that advocates and community stakeholders could be



SPOTLIGHT ON:

Roundtables

Since the Urban Initiative's launch through a series of summits in 2008 and 2009, community-centered roundtables have been a keystone strategy of the National Institute's work. Roundtables are an ideal tactic for gathering grassroots leaders together to genuinely and substantively engage with an issue. Because people live, work, and access health care at the local level, direct service providers, city agency officials, and leaders of community-based organizations have a deep knowledge base and strong relationships with the communities you hope to serve.

Roundtables provide an opportunity to learn from each other, pool resources, and help earn buy-in for your campaign. Hosting a roundtable is a strategy particularly well-suited to the beginning of a campaign or to addressing a complex or controversial challenge. The National Institute has supported roundtables across the country on a diverse range of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice topics. Some examples are listed below.

Chicago, IL

In 2009, the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH) (2009 National Institute partner) worked to protect and advance the rights of pregnant and parenting youth by calling on Chicago Public Schools officials to implement policies that would address Title IX rights violations and to adopt a Pregnant and Parenting Youth Bill of Rights. A 2009 roundtable brought together advocates with local officials from city government, Chicago Public Schools, and the Chicago Department of Health, enabling ICAH and its allies to educate this audience about the challenges pregnant and parenting youth face. One of the most important outcomes of the roundtable was giving parenting youth a voice to share their ideas for improving the lives of pregnant and parenting youth with participants.

Memphis, TN

Memphis Teen Vision (MemTV) (2011 National Institute partner) hosted a roundtable that brought together public relations and marketing experts with providers and advocates to create a strategy for promoting teen-friendly reproductive health care providers in the city. This first-ever meeting allowed for a discussion of

effective strategies for getting the research that MemTV had already done on the city's medical providers into the hands of teens and policymakers who needed to know about them. The roundtable led to the creation of the county's first comprehensive guide to teen-friendly medical providers.

Missoula, MT

With the goal of winning passage and implementation of a new comprehensive sex education curriculum in Missoula middle schools, NARAL Pro-Choice Montana Foundation (2010 National Institute partner) hosted a roundtable in partnership with the Blue Mountain Clinic. This roundtable included local elected officials, public health officials, and coalition partners to allow for in-depth discussion of the proposed curriculum, emphasizing to these key stakeholders the importance of comprehensive sex education. Simultaneously, members of the organization's Students for Choice group and other young activists participated in an advocacy training where they, too, learned about the curriculum and wrote letters in support to the school board. This valuable relationship-building and show of community support led to passage of the new policy soon after the roundtable.

San Francisco, CA

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (2011 National Institute partner) hosted a roundtable that brought together country social and health service organizations, public defenders, law enforcement officials, funders, legal services organizations, prisoners' rights organizations, and other advocates to discuss current practices in Bay Area county jails and juvenile detention facilities. Advocates learned from prison officials about the challenges and considerations that went into their jobs, while these officials heard directly from formerly incarcerated women and the people who work with them. The solutions developed from that roundtable not only served to strengthen the services that LSPC provided to its constituents, but also helped build momentum in the community towards the ultimate passage in 2012 of a statewide anti-shackling ban.

Building Community Support

engaged in different ways, with the activism culminating in a public rally and has since progressed to local and state advocacy led by SisterReach.

“One-on-ones” are particularly well-suited to local organizing as a way to engage with volunteers individually to discuss mutual passion for the issue at hand and discover the most effective way that each person can contribute to the campaign. This strategy can also be used in small groups to allow for intimate discussion. For instance, COLOR (2014 National Institute partner) holds regular *cafecitos* with Latino community members in their homes and other safe spaces; this strategy allows COLOR to meet the community wherever they are, engaging in an in-depth exploration of reproductive justice issues that affect their lives and those of their families and neighbors. House or dinner parties are popular for local work because they provide a fun avenue for these core supporters to expand your reach by engaging their own personal and/or professional networks. North Dakota Women’s Network (NDWN) (2013 National Institute partner) hosts “Feminist First Fridays” in cities across the state, where community members meet at a local bar on the same night every month to connect with each other, plan for upcoming initiatives, bring in and educate friends about NDWN’s work, and engage in self-care in a safe space.

Many organizations might struggle with where to find volunteers or how to engage the people who should be interested in an issue campaign. Community events should not be overlooked as both fertile ground for new volunteers and opportunities to allow current volunteers to get active. Community events calendars offer opportunities for local events that are appropriate and relevant to local initiatives, such as summer street parties, local holiday events, or community health fairs. Common tactics include reserving a table, calling for volunteers to assist in a petition drive, or even becoming an event sponsor. Many reproductive rights organizations across the country, for instance, have a long-standing presence at Pride parades, providing the opportunity to engage current and new supporters as well as to demonstrate the organization’s support for allied progressive movements.

ENGAGING THE GRASSTOPS

As with any campaign or advocacy effort, it is rare to achieve success by going it alone. Partnering with community-based leaders such as the heads or board members of other non-profit organizations or agencies, faith leaders, and widely recognized speakers or thinkers, is essential. These are some examples of people known as “grasstops,” or leaders who represent and are connected to a range of community members who can be supportive of a campaign or initiative. Building and maintaining strong relationships with community leaders and the groups they represent will make it easier to reach these officials. One way to build these relationships is by remembering that this is a two-way street; be prepared to offer the same type of support to these partners when they call on you.

On the local level, building this type of community support is particularly important. Grasstops leaders may often have personal relationships with elected and other public officials, whether they are neighbors, run in the same social circles, have children attending the same school, or even grew up together. In addition, in a local setting, where it seems like everyone knows each other, it is easy to see when genuine engagement with community leaders is happening. It is important for any organization or coalition to be viewed as a respectful partner.

Engaging the grasstops can often mean going beyond the bounds of the community leaders with whom advocates normally work. The expertise and support of leaders focused on other social justice issues will only strengthen a campaign. For example, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (2010 National Institute partner) led a partnership with several local community groups with the support of its national partners—National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum and Women’s Voices of the Earth—to advocate for a San Francisco ban on the “toxic trio” of chemicals commonly used in products in nail salons. After meeting with nail salon owners who raised significant concerns that a ban could be punitive and put them out of business, they changed their strategy. Instead, they campaigned to recognize nail salons that did not use the toxic trio and implemented recommended workplace health and safety practices as “Healthy Nail Salons.” The

Key Things to Consider... When Planning a Roundtable

BASELINE KNOWLEDGE



Think about the levels of knowledge attendees are likely to have about your issue and the basic information they need to participate in a productive conversation. You can provide materials for attendees to read in advance, but don't count on the fact that everyone will read them.

DOCUMENTATION



Plan in advance how you will document the discussions, as these notes will be extremely useful in crafting your next steps. In addition to keeping notes on white boards or easel pads during discussion, consider bringing in note takers from your staff or a pool of volunteers. Graduate students are great candidates for this. If you are planning breakout sessions, consider assigning a note taker to each one. Immediately after the event, have your note taker(s) type up their notes and circulate them to the group so everyone can refer back to the same information later. Take high-quality pictures throughout the day to share on social media or use in later materials.

AGENDA



Identify the Roundtable outcomes that are most important, and ensure that every item on the agenda is geared towards achieving them. It is rare to get so many busy people in one room, so every moment should count. Once you have developed the agenda, stick to it as closely as possible—but be prepared to be flexible if the discussion veers off into an unexpected but valuable direction.

SOCIAL MEDIA



Determine whether and how you would like people to engage with social media during the event. Most likely, social media will not be essential to a successful roundtable, but if you have a reason to promote the discussion or share thoughts on social media, determine a hashtag to use throughout the day. Conversely, if you would like to keep conversations confidential, establish an official policy and be explicit about it from the outset.

NEXT STEPS



A plan can be necessary to keep attendees engaged after the roundtable. This may mean signing people up to a listserv, asking them to commit to an action, or getting buy-in for a future call or meeting. Implement your agreed-upon strategy as soon as possible. Excitement and engagement can be quickly lost once people return to their regular routines and responsibilities, so you should capitalize on the event's energy immediately.

MATERIAL CREATION



Issuing a report that summarizes the discussion and findings of the roundtable can be extremely valuable, particularly if new information was uncovered. If the conversations highlighted gaps in information that may be valuable to your campaign, conducting research to address those gaps can be an important next step. The report should also highlight areas for future research and discussion. When appropriate, engage attendees in this work.

Building Community Support

Collaborative's work with a variety of stakeholders was critical to finding the most appropriate avenue for their advocacy and meeting the true needs of their constituency, and was essential in engaging a broad base to win ultimate passage of the San Francisco Nail Salon Recognition Program Ordinance. The Collaborative has worked with other local county and city agencies throughout California to expand upon the San Francisco model and established Healthy Nail Salon Recognition Programs in Alameda County, San Mateo County, Santa Clara County, and the city of Santa Monica.

HOSTING A BOOTCAMP FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND THEIR STAFF

Elected officials are a crucial constituency to any legislative campaign. Bootcamps provide an opportunity to engage policymakers and leaders who are less familiar with an issue in an intensive skills-building workshop that will enable them to better understand and, in turn, become advocates for an issue. The National Institute has long championed bootcamps as an excellent way to build relationships with elected officials and to provide essential training and opportunities for discussion with allies and potential allies alike.

Planning a bootcamp should begin by focusing on the stakeholders most essential to an advocacy effort and the skills that are most important for them to develop in order to lend their support. Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC) (2013 National Institute partner) hosted a bootcamp designed not only to educate key stakeholders on reproductive rights issues in Georgia but also to de-stigmatize abortion by featuring a clinic tour as a centerpiece of the event. Attendees were able to see firsthand what an abortion clinic looked like, and were better able to understand the needlessness of TRAP and other restrictions. The bootcamp also included opportunities for coalition members to strengthen relationships with policymakers, who were trained in the issues FWHC had prioritized for the coming year. Given that TRAP ordinances are a growing threat on the local level, this is an excellent model for communities looking to proactively defend against such attacks, or to de-stigmatize the abortion procedure itself.

HOLDING COMMUNITY FORUMS

Community forums are a valuable way to promote an issue, enabling leaders to present their ideas in the real world. These types of events preview the public's response to your initiative and can help you identify areas that are problematic or controversial, giving you time to address these challenges or adjust your messaging before going to policymakers or a larger audience. Forums focused on specific groups you hope to engage provide leadership opportunities for the grassroots leaders who can speak directly to those groups. A community forum should also often have a "carrot" to improve attendance. Recently, for instance, there has been an influx of excellent films on a range of reproductive health, rights, and justice issues. A forum on access to abortion might begin with a screening of the film *After Tiller*, which explores the topic of third-trimester abortions in the wake of the assassination of Dr. George Tiller, and use it as a jumping off point for discussion about the issues a community faces and the ideas for addressing them.

Whatever an event will be, its format and topics must complement the ultimate goal. If those goals include building your base or gaining a better understanding of how people feel about a given issue, it is important to take notes, sign people up, and give them a way to stay involved with your organization. If working towards passing a policy, ensure that the date, time, and content of your events are strategic and fit into your campaign's timeline. Events can be held throughout the campaign, or at a specific time when it will be most effective.

ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Public awareness can often make or break an issue advocacy campaign. Before putting the time into building a media plan, it is important to determine the importance and goals of media coverage to an issue advocacy campaign. Does the community need to be educated about an issue? Will elected officials only advance a proposal if the media has paid attention to it? Is it necessary to change the conversation or reframe an issue? Setting goals and targets is crucial and helps avoid pointless and irrelevant media relations work (which can be quite time-intensive).

Key Things to Consider... In Hosting a Bootcamp

TIMING



Planning early will ensure you can get on the calendars of the people you deem most important to be there; you can also get on the calendars of their staff, who may have to come in their stead if their schedule changes at the last-minute. Don't be disappointed if legislative staff attend—these staff are often the people responsible for writing legislation or advising an elected official on taking a position.

AGENDA



When planning the agenda, consider legislators' needs. Often, messaging and communications support is invaluable. Legislators need to be able to speak authoritatively on a range of issues, and appreciate feeling prepared if they are asked questions or need to deliver remarks. You should also spend some time talking about the current status of reproductive rights, health, and justice in your community. However, ensure that there is plenty of time for conversation and questions.

INVITEES



Who you decide to invite to your bootcamp will vary, depending on the political climate of your community and the makeup of your local government. Consider bringing in your staunch supporters as well as newer elected officials who show promise to become champions. Key committee members and administration officials are also valuable to have on your side. Inviting abortion providers and reproductive health, rights, and justice advocates is helpful in providing context to conversation, showing the breadth of support for your issue in the community, and building necessary connections.

MATERIAL CREATION



Have plenty of clear, concise materials to share. If elected officials aren't able to attend, their staff can bring these documents back to the office. They will appreciate you doing some of the work for them in reporting out on what they learned.

SOCIAL MEDIA



As with roundtables, you should determine whether and how you would like people to engage with social media during the bootcamp. Most likely, this event will not be suited to social media. If so, let invitees know as soon as possible that you do not want them to share about the event publicly. Those who are especially active on Twitter may share about their excitement for the event when they receive the invitation or before the day starts, so including your policy on the invitation or in your follow-up outreach is wise.

NEXT STEPS



Issuing a report that summarizes the discussion and findings of the roundtable can be extremely valuable, particularly if new information was uncovered. If the conversations highlighted gaps in information that may be valuable to your campaign, conducting research to address those gaps can be an important next step. The report should also highlight areas for future research and discussion. When appropriate, engage attendees in this work.

Building Community Support

It is sometimes difficult to garner mainstream media attention for local policies and campaigns. Media coverage is more likely if an issue is controversial, if you are able to lift up compelling stories from local residents, or if your achievement is somehow noteworthy in another way, such as being the first in the nation to pass a given policy or implement a public health program.

The local media is a good place to start. It tends to be the low-hanging fruit that is most receptive to community messages, but also represents the outlets to which a local community—and local elected officials—are most likely to pay attention. In terms of press outreach, a good start is reaching out to the press corps assigned to cover the mayor, city council, or a particular beat like “health” or “education.” Doing editorial board meetings—which involves advocates meeting with the editorial board of a local newspaper—is a high-bar but crucial media relations endeavor, as they can help to determine the position a newspaper takes on an issue.

All of the responsibility for media relations does not rest on the advocates’ shoulders. A great way to demonstrate community support, raise an issue’s profile, and engage with supporters and volunteers is through op-eds and letters to the editor (LTEs). Having a champion from the city council write an op-ed or LTE is a particularly effective strategy for raising the profile of the issue, and can also be helpful for the councilmember in getting publicity and becoming known as a champion on the issue. Likewise, asking a supporter to respond to an article by writing an LTE goes a long way in proving that the community is engaged and paying attention to an issue. You may need to support your champion or community members by providing them with talking points or writing a first draft.

Local blogs, radio stations, podcasts, or other media important to the community should also have a place in a campaign media plan. For example, several National Institute partners have passed or are working to pass resolutions supporting the repeal of the Hyde Amendment and calling for public coverage of abortion. In these instances, garnering media attention amplifies the power of the resolutions. In Cambridge, MA, the EMA Fund



SPECIAL NOTE:

Media Prep

A media kit prepared in advance will ensure you are prepared to seize opportunities to get in the media as they arise. You can create one kit for allies and another for the press:

FOR ALLIES:

- Highlight key messages
- Draft talking points
- Provide sample social media posts, memes, and hashtags
- Draft op-eds
- List media contacts

FOR PRESS:

- Draft a media advisory for any events
- Draft a press release
- Collect statements/quotes from supporters and champions on the issue
- Provide a one-page backgrounder on the issue for supporters and champions

(2013 National Institute partner) drafted and pitched a post to local blogs and used Twitter to publicize their victory. An advocate from the organization also partnered with the Women’s Medical Fund (2012 National Institute partner) of Philadelphia, PA, to write an op-ed on the importance of this strategy to repeal Hyde by linking the passage of resolutions in both of their cities.

Social media is crucial in engaging supporters, interacting with leaders, and raising the visibility of an issue. Using a well-publicized hashtag and live-tweeting the proceedings of any meetings or hearings can help supporters follow along with what is happening. Live-tweeting also creates

Key Things to Consider... In Crafting a Communications Plan

CAMPAIGN MESSAGES



Determine your key message and create materials tailored to different audiences. Approach your issue from many sides so you are able to articulate why your issue should matter to a range of diverse communities and stakeholders.

KEY SUPPORTERS



Reach out to supporters who can serve as spokespeople by testifying at city council hearings, speaking in the press, giving quotes for press releases, and serve as trusted voices among key constituencies.

DRAFT TESTIMONY



Using your campaign messages and talking points, develop draft testimony adapted to the personal stories and backgrounds of your key supporters who will testify. They should edit the testimony so that it feels comfortable and authentic for them and reflects their personal speaking style, but most will appreciate having something written to start with.

a record of what happened at the meeting, and reviewing a hashtag later on is likely much easier for interested supporters than exploring a city council website to find meeting minutes. When the Madison Common Council introduced and passed its resolution supporting insurance coverage of abortion, local activists in the room livetweeted the proceedings using the hashtag #ThinkLocalEndHyde, while activists across the country added to the conversation by providing support and congratulations via the same hashtag.

SHARING LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The nature of local work means that organizations, coalitions, and campaigns are often hidden from the national spotlight, even when they are successful or otherwise noteworthy. People across the country are working in their communities to develop programs that reduce unintended pregnancy, increase access to abortion, and ensure youth have access to the resources they need, but too often they are disconnected from each other. To some extent, this makes sense. Each community is unique, and what works in one place may be unimaginable in another. Nonetheless, there are best practices and lessons that advocates can gain from

sharing with each other. Just knowing that there are other organizations working towards similar goals, even if they are going about it differently, can be motivating and provide valuable food for thought.

Whether you are successful or not in any local advocacy work, it is likely that you learned some lessons about how to implement an effective campaign or engage your community on an issue and developed good ideas about how to address a challenge you were facing. Both as a resource for similar work and to serve as an example for advocates in other places, it is extremely valuable to share what you have learned. The National Institute has developed a Promising Model format that enables you to share the basics of your work and what you have learned with colleagues across the nation. You can use this format as a template, or come up with a way of sharing your model that works for your organization and your story. However you choose to do it, working with all of your partners to develop and share your model will help the impact of your work spread beyond your city lines.

For a copy of the Promising Model template, contact us at info@nirhealth.org.

SECTION 5

Conclusion

Some of the programs and policies that most impact people's lives—school-based health centers that provide reproductive health care and comprehensive sex education; requirements that crisis pregnancy centers protect confidential health information and practice truth in advertising; clinics that provide reproductive health care for immigrants—are achievable on the local level. Nonetheless, local-level work has often been under-resourced by advocates and overlooked by the media in favor of state or federal politics. And the reality is that many challenges within our movement can only be addressed in state capitols or Washington, D.C.

Yet we need look no further than our allies in other progressive movements, or the successes of our opponents, to see the leading role that local-level policy can play. Progressive ideas that once seemed untenable in our current climate started as local level policies and have moved to the President's State of the Union address. And anti-choice leaders have long been comfortable with the strategy of working in communities to foster their ideology, develop leaders, and test out seemingly extreme policies.

To turn the tide and advance access to reproductive health, rights, and justice for all, it is important that we take action at every level of government and in every community. We are grateful to our many partners across the country whose advocacy has improved the lives and health of their neighbors and made the case that local work is vital, and to the many more organizations and advocates unnamed in this report who work every day to build their communities.

Today, there remains tremendous untapped potential for building our movement through local work. In times such as these, no strategy can go underutilized and no community can be ignored. The National Institute hopes that this guide will encourage more organizations, advocates, and supporters of our movement to consider the new issues they can address, communities they can engage, and lives they can improve by focusing on their hometowns. While remaining committed to the work that must happen on the state level and federal level, we invite more of our partners, and new allies, to join us in building a world where all people have access to the care they need—starting in your own backyard.

The National Institute hopes this guide will serve as a starting point for advocates looking to begin or strengthen their work and presence on the local level. The National Institute also offers funding, individualized technical assistance, and other resources to partners on the ground. If you are interested in learning more about our partnership opportunities, please visit our website at www.nirhealth.org.

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