



Tips on Funding Advocacy

Source

Investing in Change: Why Investing in Advocacy Makes Sense for Foundations, The Atlantic Philanthropies, p10

1. Get informed from a variety of perspectives

To define clear long-term goals for change and take advantage of short term opportunities, seek perspective from current or former political players and advocates who can help you understand the dynamics of the issue and potential strategies. Ask grantees for their opinions, but don't rely solely on the analysis of current or prospective grantees.

2. Think broadly about how to support effective coalitions

Support building the right kind of capacity, including powerful and effective advocacy organisations and coalitions. Some coalitions reflect and grow from the grassroots level, while others might consist of established groups. Some might be homogeneous, and others might feature unusual partners or "strange bedfellows" (e.g., business and labour, conservative and liberal think tanks).

3. Consider all of the options in the advocacy tool kit

A variety of tools can be wielded to bring about change, including direct legislative lobbying, litigation, and pressuring public and private-sector organisations to change policies and practices.

4. Consider the various models available to manage campaigns

Once a grantmaker decides to support an advocacy campaign, there are several options for how to manage advocacy-oriented funding. Determine early on whether there is 1) a grantee, or coalition of grantees, that is already actively involved in a campaign or can easily take leadership; 2) a third party group that should be contracted to act as the manager for a new campaign initiated by the funder(s); or 3) the campaign would best be managed directly by foundation staff. Each approach has its own benefits and risks depending upon the issue and the funder(s).

5. Establish clearly identified, central co-ordination of campaigns

Clear co-ordination is essential to the success of campaigns. Local, grassroots, state and national efforts must be united toward a common goal, while respecting the autonomy of local, state, provincial and regional groups.

6. Be prepared to empower nonprofit leaders

Facilitate, guide and collaborate, but do not dictate to the leaders who are championing the cause.

7. Whenever possible, provide general operating support

Though it is tempting to focus exclusively on specific initiatives or campaigns, it is just as important to help grantees build their organisations' strength, and specifically, build their advocacy strength.

8. Incorporate long-term funding into advocacy grantmaking

Advocacy campaigns rarely fit into the one- or two-year funding periods of most foundations. Long-term funding gives organisations the ability to plan more realistic strategies that do not require yearly fundraising breaks.

9. Communicate effectively

When explaining the cause to elected officials, the media, and other influential individuals and organisations, deploy tested messages and well-prepared and carefully selected spokespersons. Funders of advocacy must be transparent about their objectives and stand behind them, so long as these objectives are relevant to the policy debate.