

Most people think that advocacy and lobbying are synonymous. Lobbying is a form of advocacy, but there are so many more ways to advocate for your nonprofit's mission.

What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy makes your voice heard regarding the issues most closely related to your organization's purpose or mission. Advocacy can be used by all nonprofit organizations to help further their goals, regardless of tax-exempt status or IRS designation.

Advocating for your mission may include:

- Contacting your city, state, and federal representatives to share your mission and information about the work that you're doing.
- Inviting representatives or members of the community to visit your site or to engage in informational sessions about your organization.
- Creating an email or social media campaign to share information and to promote events, projects, or initiatives.
- It is an ongoing effort to engage representatives, policymakers, the community, donors and other stakeholders. It's more about education and promotion of services than trying to make a particular legislative change.

What Is Lobbying?

Lobbying supports or opposes a specific piece of legislation or regulation. Staff or volunteers may work to influence legislation or legislators on behalf of the organization or an organization may ask for public support on a specific issue. Types of legislation that nonprofit organizations frequently lobby for or against include laws, resolutions, nominations, initiatives, proposals, and referendums.

Lobbying efforts take place most often right before a vote. However, some organizations do lobby in support of a specific piece of legislation, long before it's voted on by legislators or the public.

Taking the powerful, free, and easy 501(h) election

Sometimes called the best, easiest, and cheapest insurance in America, this little known form can simplify life for most 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofits advancing their missions through advocacy. (PLEASE NOTE: make sure you are not using government funding to resource your lobby work, including staff time funded by government monies. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-election>)

Resources

<https://le.utah.gov/>

- Maps of where meetings are held, calendar and agendas for upcoming meetings, and where you can find your representative

<https://www.nonprofitvote.org>

- Nonprofit VOTE works with nonprofits to help the people they serve participate and vote, includes nonpartisan resources to help integrate voter engagement into ongoing activities and services

<https://standforyourmission.org>

- Tools and resources to help engage your board of directors in your advocacy efforts.

Start your advocacy journey today!

- You can take action in many ways, including on your own, pulling on the experiences and knowledge of others who do the work, or partner with others who are working on similar subjects
- What can you invite representatives to attend with your organization (free is best!)?
- Go on a tour of the Utah State Capitol Building
- Start attending meetings to get the lay of the land and become acquainted with the processes
- Reach out to others who are already involved in Public Policy and ask for help