Advocacy in Times of Crisis

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2020
2:00 - 3:00 PM, ET
Equipping social entrepreneurs to become better, bolder advocates.
Special Update: SBA Loans + Paycheck Protection Program

- On April 24, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act was signed into law – “CARES Act Part II.”
- Provides $484 billion in funding for small-businesses, hospitals and for COVID-19 testing.
- Specifically, provides $310 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program, originally created under the CARES Act, that provides loans to small businesses and nonprofits which may be forgiven if businesses maintain their payroll.
COVID-19 Relief Package State of Play

• The first COVID-19 relief package included $8.3 billion in emergency funding for vaccine development, research and equipment stockpiles, and supporting State and local health budgets.
• The second package provided $1 billion in nutritional aid and expanded access to COVID-19 testing and expanded sick leave benefits.
• The third package provided $2 trillion in emergency funding for States, businesses and individuals, and included education funding.
• Currently Congress is working on a fourth package and there could be more.
Non-COVID-19 State of Play - Appropriations

- The FY2021 appropriations process is underway
- Appropriators are holding meetings, considering requests and listening to stakeholder priorities
- Timing of committee markups is unknown, possibly delayed due to COVID-19, but staff are working on FY21 appropriations
While COVID-19 is dominating staff time and bandwidth, staff are still interested in gathering ideas for bills and legislation even if it is setting the stage now for something they will tackle next year.
Is it Appropriate to Advocate at this Time?

- **YES** - Advocating now on the issues we work on is **NOT** seen as opportunistic.
- At this time, more than ever, **our voices are critical**.
- The pandemic has shed a light on long-existing issues with which we **have deep on-the-ground experience**.
- **Policymakers want to hear from you** and learn how you are helping communities at this time and what supports the field truly and immediately needs.
- Advocating at this time keeps up drumbeat of engagement which helps to **build relationships** and establish you organization and our coalition as a go-to-resource for offices.
Remember: You are the Experts!

- Members and their staffers want to hear from you.
- **Localize your story** - Members and their staff want info from their States & districts.
- **Personalize your story** - share the story of those you serve and know.
  - Better yet, include community members or practitioners who can directly and succinctly share their stories of impact.
Technology Tips for Going Virtual

- Be device flexible, but know ahead which device / platform for each call (may differ depending on the office and the specific staffer.)
- Find a quiet place for the call.
- Test out all technology.
- If more than one person from your team is joining, make a plan to ensure meetings run efficiently with introductions, content and follow up - coordination is even more crucial when you are joining remotely and separately.
Tips for Successful Hill Meetings

● Know that time is limited - usually 30 minutes - maybe less with COVID-19.
● Remember, effective advocacy does not always take the form of a bill or funding - sometimes warding off bad policy threats is a win.
● Remember, staff are the lifeline to Members of Congress, and building relationships is at the heart of advocacy.
● Be prepared to answer how COVID-19 is affecting the communities we serve.
Questions to Anticipate?

Context - COVID-19

Try to have answers to these questions:

● What is the situation in the member’s state / district?
● How is COVID-19 affecting children and families in the communities you serve? (Consider economic and mental health impacts as well)
● Are in-person services being provided? If not, are there virtual services being provided? Are there barriers to doing so?
● What additional funding or flexibilities are needed to better serve children and families during this time?
● Are there barriers to accessing much needed public benefits at this time?
● What are your short-term and long-term needs?
Coalition Member Insights on Advocacy During COVID-19

Pam Cantor,
Founder & Senior Science Advisor,
Turnaround for Children
Questions?
Resources, Engagement, and Outreach

● Access support through America Forward’s partnership with We The Action
  ○ Free legal assistance to help navigate the COVID-19 crisis (from SBA loans to grants/contracts compliance to employment issues, and more)

● Get informed by America Forward’s weekly federal updates on legislative activity and support in light of COVID-19

● America Forward recent blogs:
  ○ Latest on COVID-19 related legislation
  ○ AF Weekly Tip Sheet

● Amplify your organization’s impact and COVID-19 response - share your stories via the survey we sent to the Coalition, so America Forward can lift up your impact to policymakers (fill out survey COB Monday, 5/4)

● Join the America Forward Coalition Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/AmericaForwardCoalition

● Teacher Appreciation week, May 4-8: Join E4E’s #SendTeachersLove social media campaign
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