



Introduction to Policy Advocacy Training

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Agenda

- Welcome!
- Advocacy presentation
- Questions and Answers
- Practice activities
- Close out



Introductions

- Please introduce yourself in the chat:
 - Name
 - Pronouns
 - Organizational affiliation
 - One thing that scares you about advocacy



What is policy?



- Think about policy like a set of rules!
- These rules outline what a government body should and should not do. Public policy guides government programs, spending, and activities.
- It also shows what a government values. You can see these values expressed in laws, regulations, budgets, and other measures that prescribe steps that will be taken to support, enforce, and promote those values.
- Policy shapes the playing field – it can enforce the status quo or create and support equity.
- Policy can be proactive, and move towards a goal, or reactive, to try to avoid an outcome.



What is policy?



- State constitution - lays out rights of citizens and structure of government for the Commonwealth, and the overall values of the government.
- General Laws - the set of statutes that describe programs and practices that will uphold the values expressed in the constitution.
- Regulations - set rules for how state agencies administer the programs or regulate the practices expressed in the laws. written by government agencies to implement legislation passed by the Legislature. As new rules are created, the general public is invited to provide feedback on drafts through formal public comment periods.



MA municipalities' responsibilities:



- Passing local ordinances
- Maintaining positive revenue from taxes on real and personal property, distributions from the Commonwealth under a variety of programs and formulas, local receipts (eg, vehicle excise tax) and appropriations from other available funds
- Various structures: board of select-people, town/city manager, mayors and city councilors.



What the Legislature is responsible for:

- Creating state laws
- Making changes to existing laws
- Passing a balanced annual budget



Who is the Legislature?



- House
 - 160 Representatives
 - Leadership:
 - Speaker of the House
 - House Ways and Mean Committee Chair
 - And others!
- Senate
 - 40 Senators
 - Leadership:
 - Senate President
 - Senate Ways and Mean Committee Chair
 - And others!



Who is the Administration?



- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Executive Offices
 - Example: Energy and Environmental Affairs
 - Oversees several state agencies in a given subject area
 - Secretaries
 - Staff of executive offices
- State Agencies
 - Example: Department of Agricultural Resources
 - Commissioners
 - Staff of state agencies



The Basic Process of Passing a Law in Massachusetts

A bill is proposed.

A Massachusetts senator or representative files a bill. Other members of the legislature's chamber sign on in support as co-sponsors.

A hearing is held.

The bill is assigned to a committee that works on issues related to those addressed in the proposal. A public hearing provides an opportunity for input.

The committee moves the bill.

The committee either rejects the bill, or votes to support it, referring it to another committee for its consideration.

Changes are considered.

The second committee debates the bill, proposes and considers changes and amendments, and approves the revised version.

Full chambers votes on the bill.

The House or Senate then votes to approve or reject the bill. If it is approved, it is sent to the other chamber for consideration and approval.

The Governor signs or vetoes the bill.

The legislature sends the bill to the governor for consideration. The governor can sign or veto the bill, or propose changes and return it to the legislature.

This is a broad overview of the process. Complex and controversial bills often go through many additional steps, and some urgent items can move much more quickly.





The budget



Fall: Departments and agencies submit their budget requests to the Governor.

Early January: Governor proposes budget.

January-March: The House Committee on Ways and Means (HW&M) holds public hearings and drafts a budget proposal.

April: HW&M releases its budget proposal to full House. Members offer amendments and debate the bill and amendments, and the full body votes each up or down.

May: The Senate Committee on Ways and Means (SW&M) holds hearings and drafts a budget proposal.



The budget continued...



June: SW&M releases its budget proposal to full Senate. Members offer amendments and debate the bill and each amendment, and the full body votes each up or down.

June: A conference committee is formed to reconcile the Senate and House budgets and propose a joint budget for both chambers to vote on. This cannot be amended.

By June 30*: The governor signs, vetoes, or vetoes parts of the budget, and also suggests changes for the legislature to consider. This often comes down to the wire, or isn't completed in time, and a short term budget is passed so that the state government can continue to function while the budget is being finalized.



Why be a policy advocate?



Why are YOU here?



Why be a policy advocate?



Because YOU can create change!



What is advocacy?



Advocacy: Explaining and promoting an idea, cause, or organization.

You can identify a problem to solve and develop an ask, sign on to another organization's campaign, or engage in other ways!



Lobbying vs Advocacy



Lobbying: Supporting a specific position on a piece of federal, state or local legislation. For example, asking your legislators to vote yes on a HIP budget amendment to increase funding to the program.

Food system organizations with tax-exempt status are often under the misconception that they cannot be active in the political arena. In reality, **most nonprofits with 501(c)(3) status are allowed to participate in lobbying activities, as long as they don't represent a “substantial” part of the nonprofit's activities.** The IRS offers more information on how they define “substantial” [on their website](#), but for most organizations, a “substantial” amount translates to more than 20% of the org's activities (based on expenditures). So, there's no need to shy away from lobbying if you're monitoring how many hours and dollars are spent on the efforts.

Public employees: Generally, lobbying should be done on your own (private) time.



What advocacy can look like:

- Asking for a meeting with a decision maker
- Writing and sending an email
- Making a phone call / leaving a voicemail
- Sharing an ask in a newsletter
- Asking your neighbors to write in to decision makers!
- Posting an ask on your social media and tagging your legislators



State-level advocacy timing



Some opportunities to get involved:

- Each legislative session is 2 years long
- By February 19, 2021*: Legislation is introduced
 - Bills can be introduced late!
- February 2, 2022*: Deadline for a bill to move out of its first committee
- July 31st, 2022*: End of the formal session usually sees a rush of activity
- Various: Committee hearings for bills
- Various: When votes are taken by the House and Senate
- Various: Annual budget process



Getting buy-in



At the organizational level:

- Share why this campaign or ask is important to the work of the organization
- Engage your members, partners or clients!
- Engage your colleagues and share with your director!



How to respond to a call to action



- Figure out who your legislators are:
 - <https://malegislature.gov/search/findmylegislator>
- Make a phone call!
- Send an email to decision-makers!
- Post on social media!
- **Share YOUR unique story!**
- Lawmakers will have data and they need to hear from their constituents about WHY an issue matters to them, and HOW a policy would affect them!



Relationship building



- How has the policymaker acted on related issues?
 - Be prepared to thank them for past support or address possible concerns.
- Are there other important pieces of legislation being considered that relate to your ask?
- Does your proposal have a cost? How could that cost be offset?
- How does your issue affect this policymaker's constituents?
- What other policymakers support your position?
- What organizations and policymakers oppose your position? How could you respond to that opposition?
- What process will your proposal have to go through? What action steps are required, and how can the policymaker help?
- What other questions might the policymaker or staff have?



How to make the ask



- Demonstrate:
 - Need
 - Ease
 - Credibility
- An ask should be:
 - Clear
 - Specific
 - Directed at the appropriate agency or governing body
- Build relationships with allies who will also make the ask, and lend credibility to your work!
- **Data + story = maximal impact!!**

This is the basis of creating a campaign!



Relationship building



- Ways to meet with legislators:
 - Briefings
 - Lobby Days
 - Invitations
 - Office Hours
 - Drop-in or scheduled meetings



Relationship building



During a meeting:

- Be on time.
- Know the names and positions of people you're meeting with.
- Have handouts to leave behind that:
 - clearly state your ask;
 - state facts that support your ask; and
 - include your contact information.
- Ask how familiar they are with the issue, so you know how much background information to give.
- Don't just read from your handouts in the meeting. Instead, share compelling stories about what your proposal will mean to you and to people, businesses, and institutions in the policymaker's community.
- Ask directly whether or not they support your position.
 - If they do, thank them, and ask what you can do to help get their colleagues onboard.
 - If not, ask what their concerns are.



Relationship building



After a meeting:

- Follow up!!
- Remember, legislators work for you!



Current state level policy work:



Mass Food System Collaborative projects:

- Campaign for HIP Funding - email Becca, rebecca@mafoodsystem.org to get involved
- Equity in Agriculture - email Norris Guscott, norris@mafoodsystem.org to get involved
- Elections - email Becca, rebecca@mafoodsystem.org to get involved
- Food Waste - email Brittany Peats, brittany@mafoodsystem.org to get involved
- Food System Literacy - email Brittany Peats, brittany@mafoodsystem.org to get involved
- Network of local food policy councils - email Brittany Peats, brittany@mafoodsystem.org to get involved



Campaign for HIP Funding

Ask: Fund the Healthy Incentives Program to operate year-round without interruption, reach new SNAP households and add new farmers.

In the fiscal year 2023 budget, we are advocating for \$20 million for HIP!

S108 / H250 An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program

More info: hipma.org



Equity in Agriculture

The Ag Equity Network is made up of and led by Massachusetts farmers who identify as BIPOC.

S.502/H.860, An Act Promoting Equity in Agriculture

The Network helped craft a bill to address core areas of equity in Massachusetts's agricultural landscape. The bill will create a commission comprised of BIPOC farmers and leaders that would look at:

- Policy recommendations that support racially equitable investments and practices;
- Resource and program accessibility of current programs; and
- Recommendations related to equity in existing laws and regulations.



Elections



The Collaborative will be partnering with other food system organizations around Massachusetts during the 2022 election cycle to educate state level candidates for representative, senator, and governor about issues facing the local food system.

So far, we have received more than 30 responses from candidates to our questionnaire!



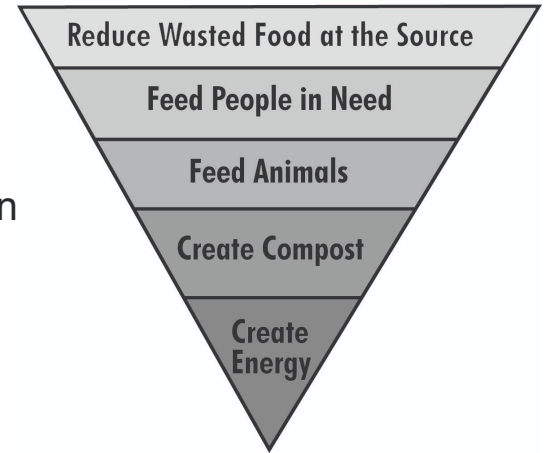
Food Waste

The Collaborative facilitates a network of organizations that are helping to reduce wasted food in Massachusetts, including food rescue organizations, gleaning organizations, composting organizations and farms, and environmental groups. This network shares information and builds relationships across the sector.

[S.954 / H.1702](#) An Act encouraging the donation of food to persons in need

[H.2326](#) An Act relative to the promotion of food donation

[S.1338 / H.2327](#) An Act decreasing food waste by standardizing the date labeling of food



Food System Literacy

The Collaborative is leading a campaign to ensure that all students in grades K – 12 have access to food system education in school so they can learn about agriculture, nutrition, food justice, and culinary skills.

The Collaborative is now pulling together a coalition of teachers, nonprofit educators, school administrators, parents, students, and community members who will work to expand food system education. The coalition will identify key recommendations that resonate most with the group and advocate for actions to bring forward those recommendations.

Food Literacy in Massachusetts Local Successes, Statewide Opportunities



Additional state level campaigns:



- [Universal School Meals](#) (Project Bread) - join [here](#)!
- Close the SNAP Gap (MLRI) - join [here](#)
- [Hunger Free Campus](#) (Food banks, nonprofits, & public and private colleges or universities) - email Molly Kepner, Senior Govt. Relations Coordinator, mkepner@gbfb.org to join!
- [Farm to school grants](#) (Mass Farm to School) - join [here](#)
- [MA Food Trust](#) (MPHA, others) - join [here](#)
- Lift Our Kids MA - join [here](#)
- [Pesticides \(NOFA-MA\)](#) - Reach out to Policy Director Marty Dagoberto at marty@nofamass.org to get involved!





Questions?



Practice activity 1



Imagine: You are a staff member at a nonprofit social service agency that assists people who are food insecure with accessing public benefits and runs a food pantry. You notice some of your clients are starting to come to the food pantry more often, as their benefits are cut off when they work more hours. You want to help them but are unsure of next steps.

Using what you learned today, what tactics would you utilize to begin to solve this problem?



Practice activity 2



Imagine: You are a farmer that is part of the HIP program. Midway through the growing season, the HIP program runs out of money and your customers lose access to farm fresh produce.

An advocacy coalition has called an emergency lobby day at the state house. Using what you have learned today, how would you approach your state representative and senator to make the case for additional funding for this program?



Practice activity 3



Imagine: you are a resident of a community with few healthy, affordable food stores. Many of your neighbors have to take the bus or travel in their cars for long distances to shop at an affordable grocery store, or shop at the local corner store without many fresh, affordable options.

Using what you learned today, what tactics would you utilize to begin to solve this problem?





Thank you!





