



GLOBAL POLICY SOLUTIONS

Making Policy Work for People

BUILDING AN ASSET HOUSE: POLICIES TO CLOSE THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

Presentation by

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The Perfect Storm

- **Demographic Shifts:** the U.S. Census Bureau projects the U.S. will be a majority-minority nation by 2042.
- **Racial Wealth Gap:** Children of color in the U.S. disproportionately receive a lower quality education contributing to lower college attendance and completion rates, poorer workforce preparedness, higher rates of poverty, lower rates of savings and wealth accumulation, higher incarceration rates, and higher rates of uninsured, disabled, and early death. Housing segregation by race and income underlies every facet of disadvantage.
- **Globalization:** because U.S. jobs face competition from abroad, today's competitive worker must be highly-skilled and knowledgeable.

Anatomy of a Tipping Point



**A POORLY EDUCATED MAJORITY-MINORITY
POPULATION WITH LOW SKILLS, LOW
INCOMES, AND POOR HEALTH EQUALS
ECONOMIC DISASTER FOR THE UNITED
STATES.**

Barriers to Solving the Problem

- Issue Silos: Public policies that can address the challenge is splintered into multiple and competing areas of interest.
 - Education policy vs.
 - Health policy vs.
 - Workforce development policy vs.
 - Income security policy vs.
 - Housing policy
- Policy/Politics Disconnect: Policy is treated as if it is disconnected from politics

Barriers cont...



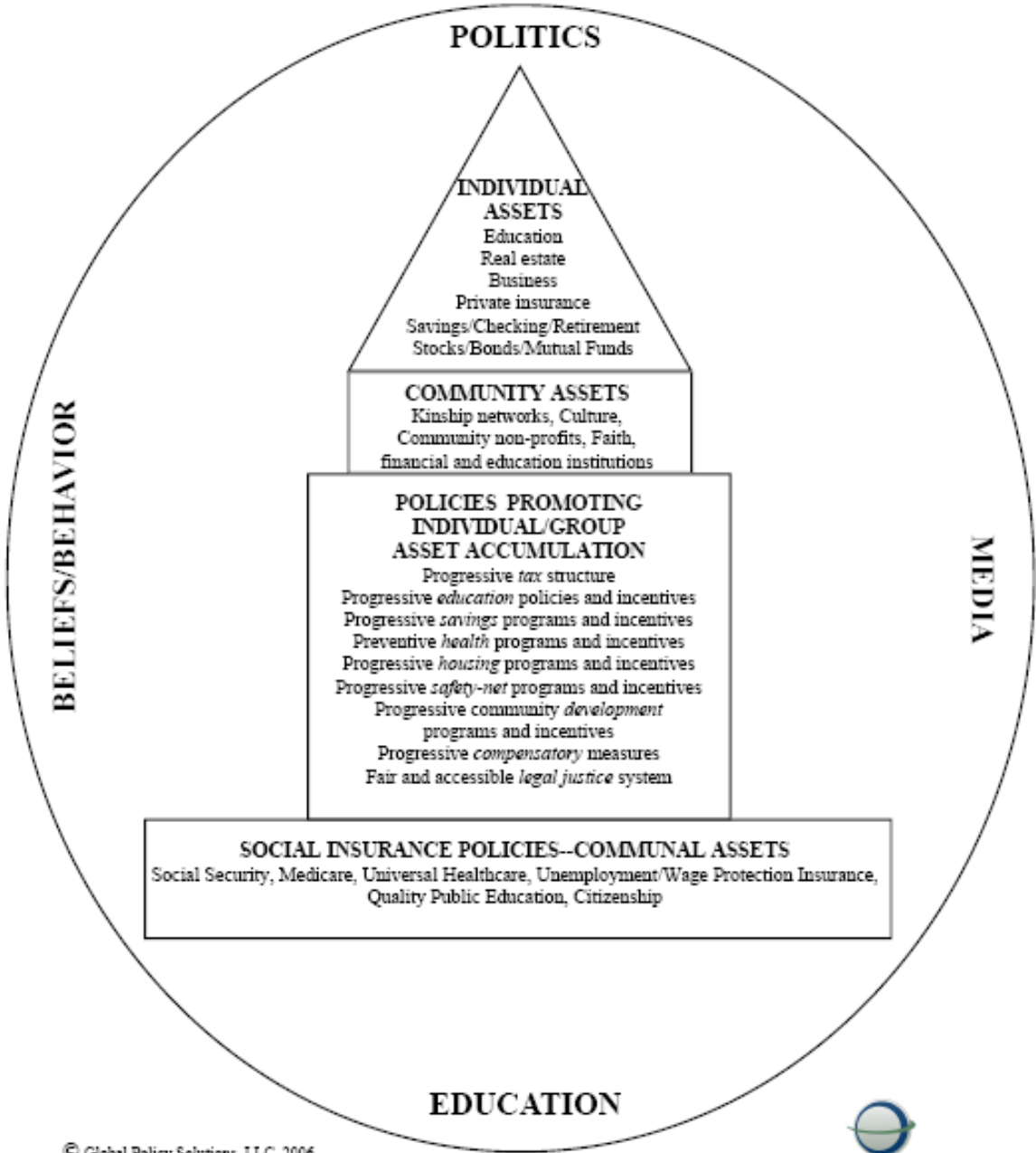
- Policy does not exist in a vacuum. It is powered by and contextualized within a political system.
- Political power is a prerequisite for securing desired public policy.
- Political power has been concentrated in the hands of the majority population
- This population has reaped the policy benefits of centuries of power
- Democracy is undermined in the absence of countervailing forces

Solution



- We must develop a comprehensive, holistic approach to closing the racial wealth gap.
 - ▣ Bridging policy silos
 - ▣ Connecting smart politics to policy

BUILDING A STRONG ASSET HOUSE



Asset House Concept



- There is a methodological framework for building assets
- Individual asset accumulation is made stronger by group-derived community assets and policy-driven communal assets
- The base or foundation of the house should protect individuals and society broadly against risk and poor outcomes (e.g. Social Security, Medicare, Universal health care, etc.)
- The frame of the house should be comprised of progressive policies that facilitate asset accumulation at the individual and community level (e.g. quality public education, progressive tax system, business development, system of equal justice, etc.)

Asset House Concept cont...

- The house is insulated by the community assets that provide individuals with strong cultural and institutional networks (e.g. kinship networks, community-based organizations, faith institutions, etc.)
- Once these building fundamentals are in place, the roof of the house—individual asset accumulation—can be installed (e.g. savings, investments, business, etc.)
- No one part is sufficient in and of itself.

Factors Shaping the Asset House

- The design of the house is largely determined by the political process:
 - Who votes for elected officials
 - Which elected officials run for office and are elected
 - What elected officials consider as policy and introduce as legislation
 - Who writes, calls, and visits elected officials to share their policy views
 - Which policies are adopted into law
- If interest groups and individuals are not aggressively involved in the political process, the house will not be designed to benefit them.

Factors cont...



- The strength of the asset house is also determined by:
 - ▣ The beliefs and behaviors of interest groups and individuals
 - ▣ The influence of the mass media
 - ▣ People's awareness of or knowledge about the multiple factors important for asset accumulation

What can we do?

- Education
 - ▣ Know what's going on
 - ▣ Develop skills to interpret data and facilitate access to what is available
- Organization
 - ▣ Create leadership group
 - ▣ Mobilize Grassroots in Diaspora
 - ▣ Develop materials to make case
- Action
 - ▣ Advocate to City Council/Mayor, State Legislature/Governor, Capitol Hill/White House
 - ▣ Disseminate materials
 - ▣ Engage media in your message

The Future



- Given expected demographic shifts, the U.S. economy cannot continue to thrive and survive without ensuring people of color have equal access to policy vehicles that facilitate asset accumulation
- The future of this nation depends on the economic, social, and political vitality of people of color.

Asset Building and Protection Policies



- Housing and Homeownership
- Financial Assets and Income
 - ▣ Individual Development Accounts, Child Savings Accounts, Pensions and Retirement Accounts, Removing disincentives to savings, Access to safe banking products
- Businesses and Jobs
- Education
- Healthcare
- Social Insurance

ADVOCACY 101



Checks & Balances

EXECUTIVE BRANCH	LEGISLATIVE BRANCH	JUDICIAL BRANCH
President	Congress	Supreme Court
★ Makes treaties with other nations	★ Makes laws	★ Interprets laws
★ Carries out laws	★ Can override a President's veto by 2/3 vote	★ May decide that some laws made by Congress are unconstitutional
★ Vetoes bills Congress passes if s/he thinks they are wrong	★ Can impeach a President for misconduct	★ May decide that some laws made by the President are unconstitutional
★ Appoints judges in the Judicial Branch for a life term	★ Must approve presidential appointments for judges and justices	
★ Proposes the budget	★ Can remove judges from office for misconduct	
	★ Approves budget spending and treaties	

Actors in the Policy Process

Individuals

- Voters, Citizens, Residents, Experts

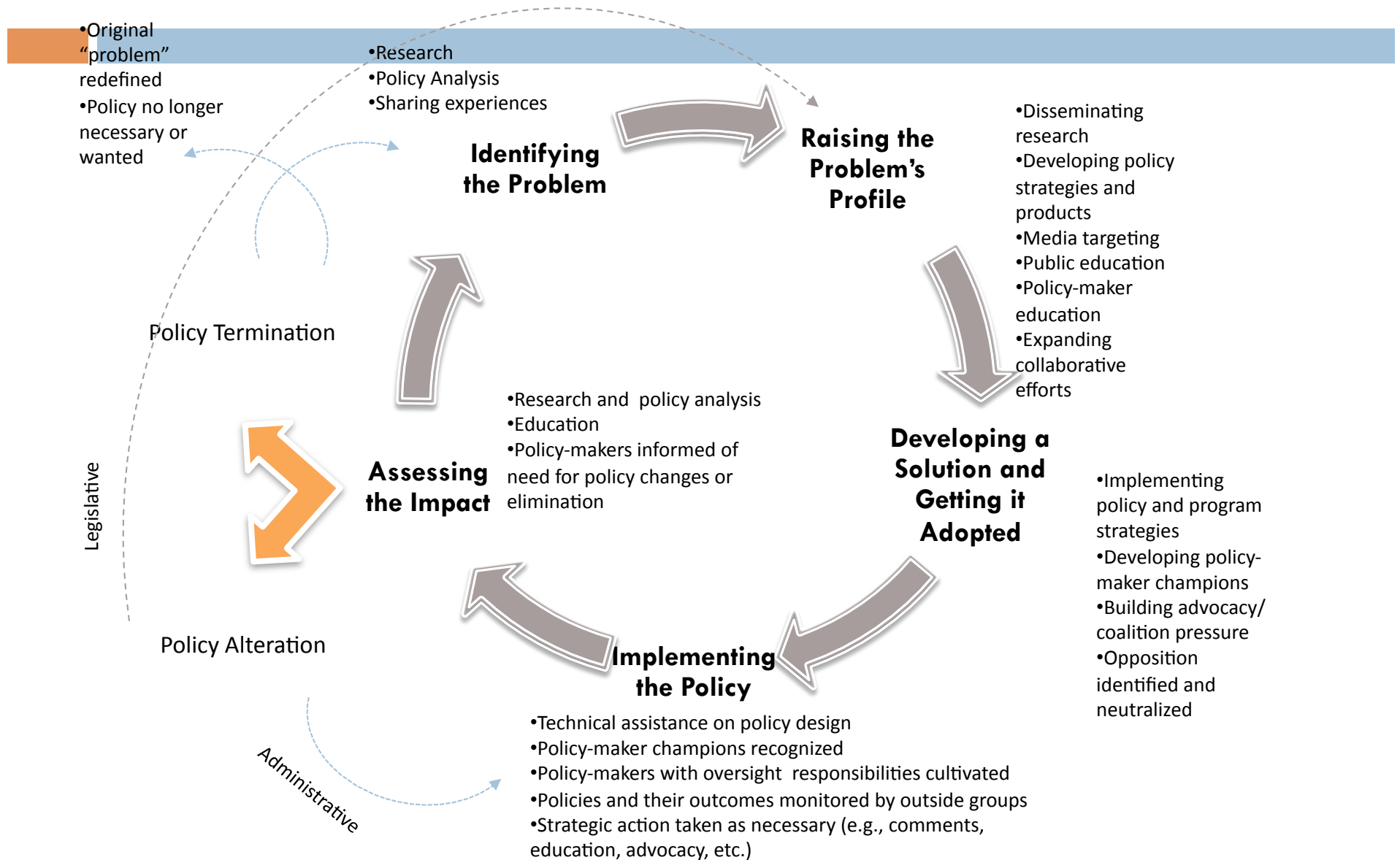
Organizations

- Corporations
- Unions
- Associations
- Non-profits
- Universities/Schools
- Media

Governments

- Local, State, Federal, International, Tribal

What to Do at Each Stage of the Policy Process



Steps to Policy Change



Assess the Policy Environment

- What policy changes are needed in the school, community, and/or social environments?
- Where are key policy decisions made and who controls such decisions? At what level and branch of government?
- What channels exist for people to participate in the decision-making process?
- Are the relevant issues widely discussed? Is this a topic of interest for the general public? Has news regarding the issue or related policies recently been featured in the media?
- Is the issue a priority on the public agenda? Are there plans to make changes to existing rules, regulations or practices?
- Do policy-makers lack information for making good policy decisions?
- What related policies were approved or rejected in recent years?

Identify Targets for Policy Change



1. Select/define policy need(s)
 - ▣ What aspect of aspect of the economic or social environment are you trying to change?
 - Asset Building
 - Asset Maintenance & Protection

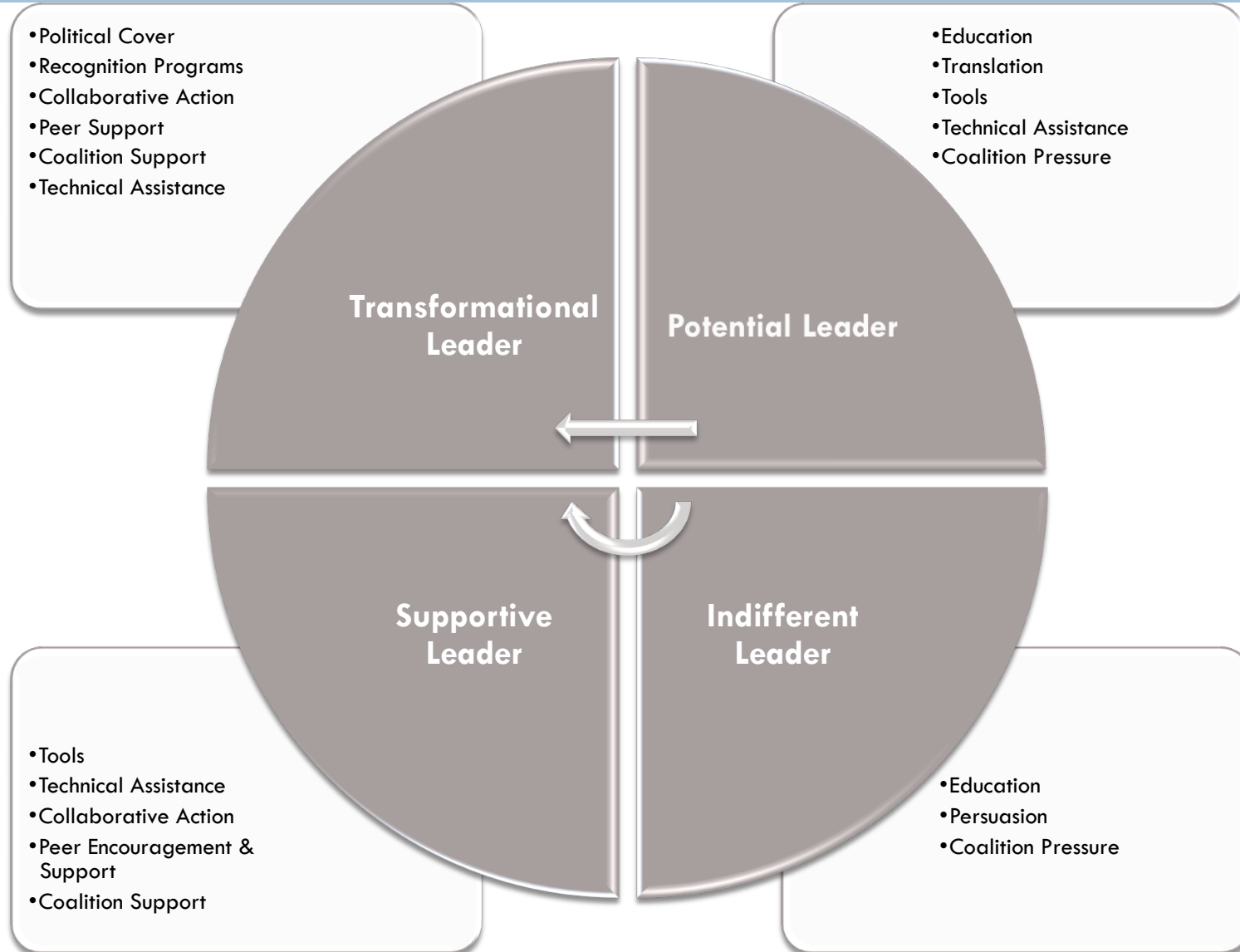
Create and Implement an Action Plan

1. Identify target audience/institution
 - Can the policy be changed through non-governmental means?
2. Develop short, intermediate and long term policy goals and objectives
 - What stages of the policy process are you seeking to influence?
 - Which tactics or strategies are appropriate for that stage?
3. Define benchmarks for success
4. Recruit strategic allies and identify opponents
5. Develop policy message and supporting materials
 - Create arguments and informational tools that strengthen champion support, attract indifferent actors, and neutralize potential opponents
6. Act!

Engage Policy-makers

- Plan activities that will best convey your message to policymakers who are influential in your issue area.
- Be sure to coordinate your activities and the delivery of your message with the appropriate stages of the policy process.
- Pay attention to level and branch of government when assessing the strategic significance of your policy-maker target.
- Make sure that the messenger resonates with the policy-maker.
- Strategic activities include: meetings, calls, emails, briefings, hearings, sharing information, rallies, etc.

Building Political Will: Interventions by Policy-maker Type



Engage the Media

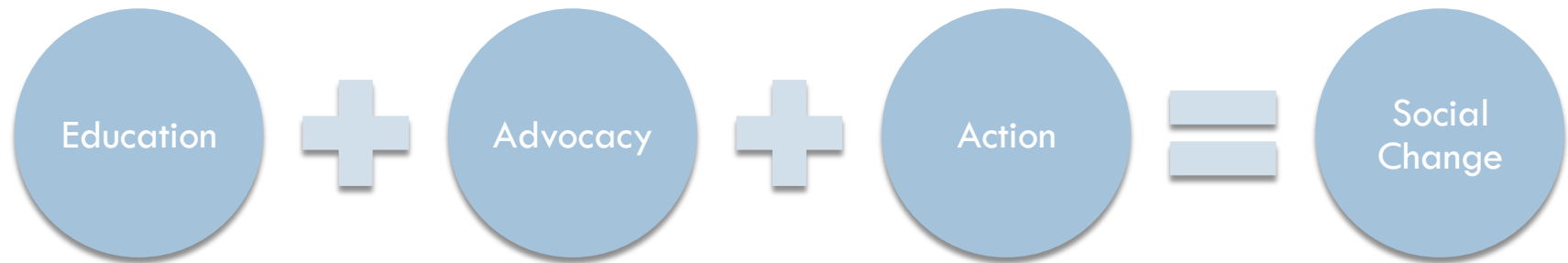


- Only engage if appropriate to strategy.
- Write articles, opinion editorials, and blogs.
- Talk about your position on television, radio and the Internet.
- Use photos, videos and art to underscore your point of view.

Monitor Outcomes and Evaluate Results

- If desired policy change is achieved:
 - ▣ Is the policy change fully funded?
 - ▣ Does the policy have to be reauthorized?
 - ▣ What challenges may undermine success?
 - ▣ How will the change be implemented?
 - ▣ Did the policy change encompass every desired change?
- If desired policy change is not achieved:
 - ▣ What obstacles prevented adoption of proposed change?
 - ▣ How can the advocacy plan be modified to facilitate attainment of goals?
 - ▣ What additional evidence is needed?

Social Change Formula



The Office Visit



Five Key Elements of Effective Communication



1. Identify the issue.
2. Cite a personal connection or describe its local impact.
3. Use key facts to support your case.
4. Make a specific “ask.”
5. Say thank you and request follow-up.

Hints for a Successful Meeting

(Before the Meeting)

- Meet with your group before hand to plan your strategy.
- Don't be offended if you meet with a legislative aide
- Be on time!
- Dress appropriately.

Hints for a Successful Meeting

(During the Meeting)

- Begin with introductions.
- Be courteous.
- Be focused on your discussion.
- Get verbal commitments from Legislator or staff.
- Remember that your personal story is the most compelling advocacy tool that you have.
- You are the expert!
- If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, be honest and tell them you don't know.
- Keep a list of what the office wants and questions that are raised during the meeting.
- Work as a team.
- Be sure to provide your legislator or staff person with a fact sheet.
- Leave business cards.
- Thank them for the meeting.

Hints for a Successful Meeting

(After the Meeting)

- Select someone to write a thank you letter from the group within a week.
- Immediately after the meeting, meet as a group to debrief.
- Make sure someone in your group reports back on the meeting.

Scenario 1: Staff Listens but Doesn't Commit

- Ask if there are questions you can answer or if there is additional information you can provide that will help the member determine their position.
- Try to get a sense if there are any concerns or issues that you can address.
- Ask if the member has been contacted by others who support or oppose the issue.
- Tell the staff person that you will follow up in the future to find out more about the member's position.

Scenario 2: Member Supports Your Position

- Be respectful of their time and recognize that you do not need to .preach to the choir.. Instead, begin by thanking them for their support.
- Ask them what they are hearing about your issue in the capitol (particularly from other members in your area). This intelligence is very helpful to the lobbyists who will be working on your issue in Sacramento or Washington, D.C. on a day-to-day basis.
- Ask them what else they think should be done to broaden support for your issue.

Scenario 3: Member Opposes Your Position

- Listen to their comments or ask questions to determine why exactly they are opposed to the issue.
- Respond to their concerns respectfully, using supporting facts and data, if possible.
- Ask if the member will at least agree to stay neutral, rather than opposing the issue.
- Ask if there is specific information that would lead the member to change his or her position (such as additional information about how the issue affects constituents in the district), or possible amendments that would address his concerns.
- If you find yourself in a meeting where the staff person becomes hostile, remain professional. Answer any questions they may have, but try to end the meeting as quickly as possible.



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