



SMART Advocacy

Achieving policy and funding change

USER'S GUIDE

2021

The SMART Advocacy guide: A letter to the committed

Dear fellow advocates,

Welcome to the SMART Advocacy guide. SMART Advocacy has enabled many individuals and groups, from grassroots organizations to global fora, create effective advocacy that fuels progress. It is based on years of experience in developing and carrying out successful advocacy strategies. It is both practical and transformational.

The SMART Advocacy approach focuses on what you can achieve in a short time—setting a SMART, near-term objective and determining how best to achieve an “advocacy win.” The approach is designed for a group of like-minded advocates, whether in a small, informal group or in a larger, more formal coalition.

The process consists of nine steps divided into three phases. This guide takes you through these steps and provides customizable tools to help you plan concrete, specific actions tailored to your issue and environment. Along the way, you will make essential strategic choices so that, by the end, you will have an evidence-driven strategy and a SMART objective that everyone involved can take forward confidently. Repeating the process to forge a chain of related advocacy wins can lead to policy decisions that achieve your ultimate goal.

Although the SMART Advocacy approach was refined focusing on family planning, it is designed for easy adaptation

to any health or development issue. Many have done just that and so helped decision-makers make choices that have improved health and well-being and upheld human rights across a range of issues.

Whether you are a seasoned advocate or a beginner, we believe that SMART Advocacy will strengthen your work and produce results. As you use this guide, we encourage you to share your thoughts with us on how to improve the approach further.

In partnership,



Beth Fredrick



Duff Gillespie

Advance Family Planning

Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health, Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
615 North Wolfe Street, W4506
Baltimore, MD 21205
Phone: +1 (410) 502-8715
Email: jhsph.afp@jhu.edu



Table of Contents

Develop a SMART Advocacy Strategy4

**PHASE 1
BUILD CONSENSUS** 11

STEP 1. UNDERSTAND THE LANDSCAPE..... 12

STEP 2. DECIDE WHO TO INVOLVE 19

STEP 3. SET A SMART OBJECTIVE.....24

**PHASE 2
FOCUS EFFORTS**32

STEP 4. KNOW THE DECISION-MAKER32

STEP 5. DETERMINE THE ASK..... 39

STEP 6. CREATE A WORK PLAN..... 49

**PHASE 3
ACHIEVE CHANGE**56

STEP 7. PRESENT THE CASE57

STEP 8. MONITOR THE PLAN62

STEP 9. CAPTURE RESULTS.....80

Conclusion86

Glossary89

Develop a SMART Advocacy Strategy

All advocates dream of big change. The SMART Advocacy approach creates a roadmap to achieve that change. But how do you identify the right person to advance a critical policy? Or build a coalition of allies? What is the best way to deliver compelling arguments that support a decision and achieve the results you seek?

Whether you are new to advocacy or a seasoned professional, the SMART approach answers these questions and helps you make the choices needed to succeed. It builds on time-tested concepts and the experience of advocates in a range of health and development issues.

In this section, you will learn:

- What is SMART Advocacy?
- The SMART Advocacy cycle
- Guiding principles for success

Become an Effective Advocate

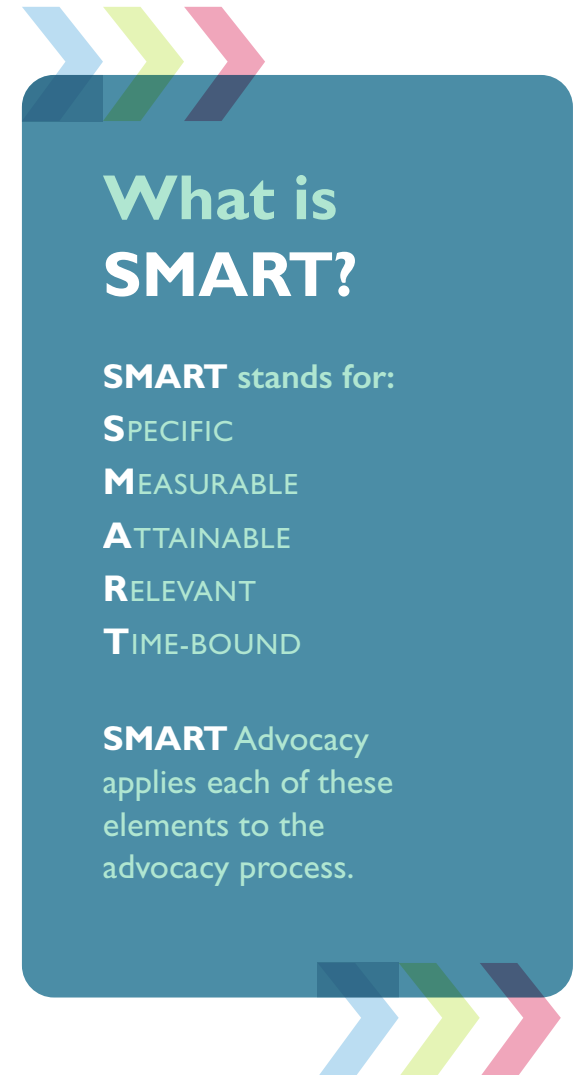
At the end of this section, you will understand SMART Advocacy and how to apply it.

What Is SMART Advocacy?

Advocacy is action by individuals or organizations designed to influence the decisions of individuals or groups. The most skilled advocates focus energy and attention on actions that have the highest potential for impact in the near-term. These incremental changes—termed “advocacy wins”—are discrete policy and funding decisions critical to advancing an issue. **The SMART Advocacy approach provides a framework to achieve the near-term advocacy wins needed to reach broad, long-term goals.**

SMART Advocacy focuses on decision-makers—that is, the specific people with the power to act on requests from well-prepared champions. It prepares advocates to anticipate what information and insights will convince a decision-maker that taking a particular action will achieve their goals and yours.

The success of SMART Advocacy rests on identifying what can be achieved within discrete timeframes and which policy change has the potential to advance a larger, long-term goal.



What is SMART?

SMART stands for:

- S**PECIFIC
- M**EASURABLE
- A**TTAINABLE
- R**ELEVANT
- T**IME-BOUND

SMART Advocacy applies each of these elements to the advocacy process.

SMART Advocacy is one way of advocating. Rather than seeking reform through tactics like activism or mass media campaigns, SMART Advocacy seeks to reach and work with a specific person who controls the lever of change. It emphasizes the benefits of a specific policy or budgetary change that is within the control of the key decision-maker. SMART Advocacy helps match the advocacy objective to those with the authority to make changes—policymakers, government officials, private actors, or donors.



How does SMART Advocacy differ from activism and social behavioral change communication? All three methodologies seek change, and they share some tactics, but they use different means.

**SMART
Advocacy**



*Leverages key
decision-makers who
can enact change*

Activism



*Builds collective
action for change*

**Social behavioral
change communication**



*Shifts norms
and behavior*

Beginning in 2009 the Advance Family Planning (AFP) initiative, based in the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, adapted the SMART approach to increase funding and political commitment to quality, voluntary family planning. Since its inception, AFP can count thousands of advocacy wins in Africa, Asia, and Latin America through the use of SMART Advocacy. But the SMART Advocacy approach is easily adapted to any topic, location, or advocacy need.

SMART Advocacy also benefits from being applied and refined in resource-limited settings, which makes it scalable to different budgets and political jurisdictions. This user guide will help you to refine a strategic vision, identify and motivate key players, implement a plan, manage and overcome setbacks, and monitor, evaluate, and learn from success to take on the next advocacy challenge.

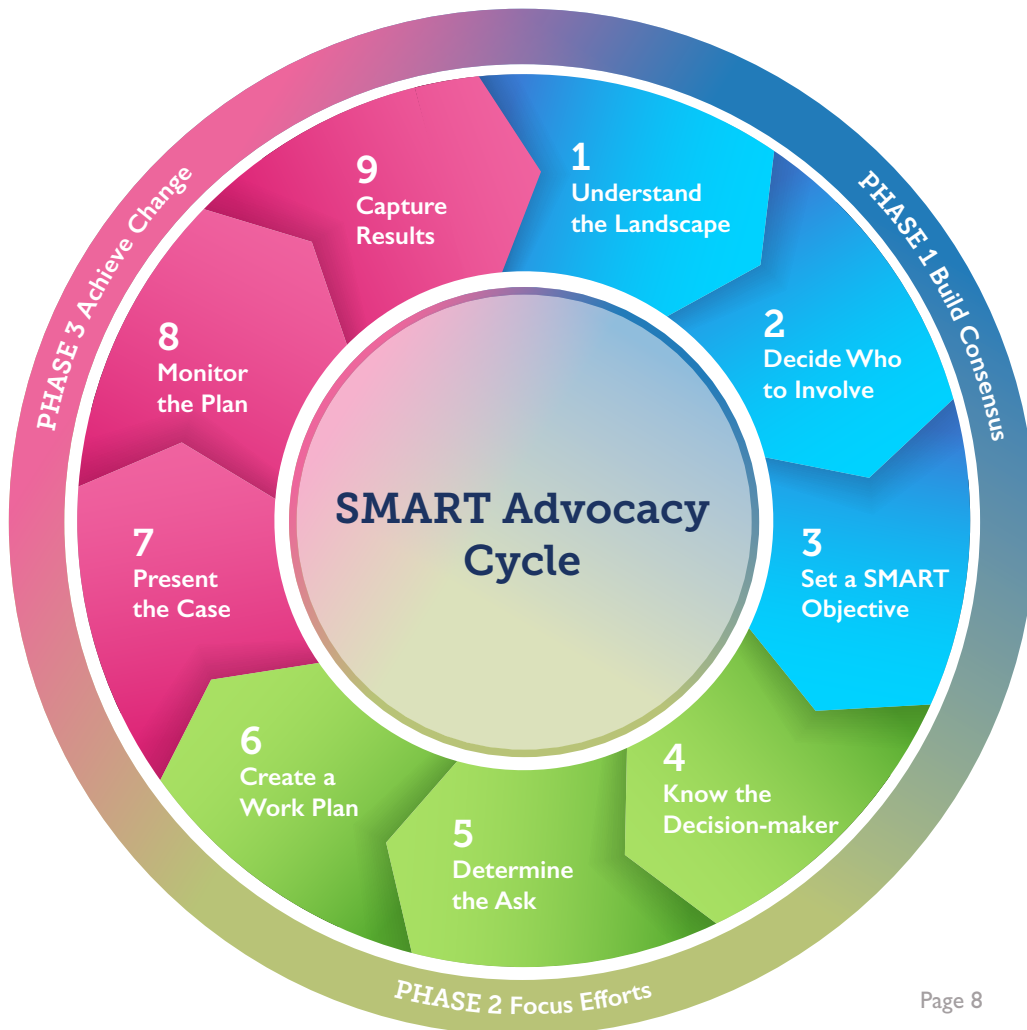
Why Use SMART Advocacy?

Applying a SMART approach breaks down the advocacy process into manageable steps that accommodate both seasoned advocates and beginners. Taken together, the steps provide a comprehensive roadmap to develop, implement, and evaluate a focused advocacy strategy from start to finish. Used separately, they can refocus a working group or inject life into an initiative that has lost momentum.

SMART Advocacy builds consensus from the start and it incorporates monitoring, evaluation, and learning throughout. It is focused, grounded in the best available evidence, and reflects and adapts to the local context. You will learn to break down your advocacy goal into objectives. These objectives are further broken down into specific activities that are easy to monitor and to correct mid-course as the advocacy environment changes. This monitoring, evaluation, and learning process allows you to identify what worked and what did not work and to apply that learning to your next round of advocacy.

The SMART Advocacy Cycle

The SMART Advocacy Cycle has nine steps across three phases: 1) build consensus, 2) focus efforts, and 3) achieve change. A full advocacy cycle moves from identifying advocacy opportunities to setting an objective, implementing a strategy that aims for a specific policy or funding decision, and learning from your effort to take on the next challenge in reaching your goal.




The cycle illustrates that the need for advocacy is ongoing and evolves along with new realities. It also supports a series of advocacy wins that contribute to achieving a larger health or development goal.

PHASE 1 Build Consensus
 Helps you make evidence-based decisions within the current context, recognize important actors and allies, and make strategic choices to narrow your advocacy efforts.

PHASE 2 Focus Efforts
 Guides you in selecting a key decision-maker and refining an advocacy 'ask' or request for action, and determining the activities to reach your objective.

PHASE 3 Achieve Change
 Explains how to execute the advocacy strategy, assess and learn from setbacks and success, and help others learn from your experience.

 Throughout this guide, look for the symbol of an infinity loop in a pink circle for key monitoring, evaluating, and learning moments. These signposts enable you to pause, reflect, and self-assess along the way to your final strategy.

The breakdown below outlines the nine steps in each phase for you to customize a plan to develop and implement an advocacy strategy that meets your needs.

PHASE 1

**Build
Consensus**



STEP 1. UNDERSTAND THE LANDSCAPE

Review the internal and external factors that may affect the ability to succeed. Assess opportunities and challenges in the environment. Identify the evidence you will use to focus on a specific health or development need and monitor the success of advocacy.

STEP 2. DECIDE WHO TO INVOLVE

Ensure that all relevant players are at the table: those with influence, expertise, resources, and/or skills in facilitation.

STEP 3. SET A SMART OBJECTIVE

Be clear on a shared long-term goal. Set a SMART objective to achieve incremental progress or an advocacy win that contributes to accomplishing your goal.

PHASE 2

**Focus
Efforts**



STEP 4. KNOW THE DECISION-MAKER

Identify the specific decision-maker(s) with the power to achieve your objective. Use knowledge about the decision-maker(s) as you develop a strategy.

STEP 5. DETERMINE THE ASK

Consider evidence-based, emotional, and ethical arguments to support your advocacy ask and align with your decision-maker's interests and priorities. Develop a targeted message and identify the right messenger.

STEP 6. CREATE A WORK PLAN

Select specific advocacy activities to progress toward your SMART objective. Create a detailed timeline with assignments and financial resources.

PHASE 3

**Achieve
Change**



STEP 7. PRESENT THE CASE

Prepare to meet with your decision-maker. Create supportive communication products. Execute your work plan.

STEP 8. MONITOR THE PLAN

Create a plan to monitor your progress. Identify and use benchmarks to assess progress and ensure that you are on track. Be flexible enough to adapt to new developments, add activities, revise messages, and/or know when to re-strategize.

STEP 9. CAPTURE RESULTS

When you achieve an advocacy win, celebrate and thank your decision-maker, document the process, and learn from your win. Decide the next steps to restart the advocacy cycle and achieve the next advocacy win toward your goal.



Guiding Principles

As you move through the SMART Advocacy cycle, seven guiding principles will improve your chances of success:

- 1 Locally-driven**—Local champions set priorities and lead strategies.
- 2 Focused**—Efforts are targeted and pinpoint the key decision-maker who controls funds and sets policies.
- 3 Evidence-based**—Advocacy based on data drives practical and impactful change.
- 4 Collaborative**—An inclusive process gains consensus and leverages diverse resources.
- 5 Influential**—Those affected by the issue are the most powerful advocates.
- 6 Accountable**—Specific performance benchmarks help you monitor, evaluate, and learn from progress as well as from setbacks.
- 7 Sustainable**—Advocacy results are more likely to be sustained when advocacy capacity is built into local processes, organizations, and systems.

If you come across an unfamiliar term or usage of a term in this Guide, please visit the glossary on page 89.

PHASE I

Build Consensus

- ▶ **STEP 1**
Understand the Landscape
- ▶ **STEP 2**
Decide Who to Involve
- ▶ **STEP 3**
Set a SMART Objective

Before you embark on a journey, you need a map. Likewise, to develop an effective advocacy strategy, you need an in-depth understanding of the overall landscape or sociopolitical environment surrounding your issue.

In this phase, you will learn to:

- Assess and understand the landscape surrounding your issue;
- Decide who to involve and build your advocacy working group; and
- Identify advocacy opportunities and set a SMART objective.

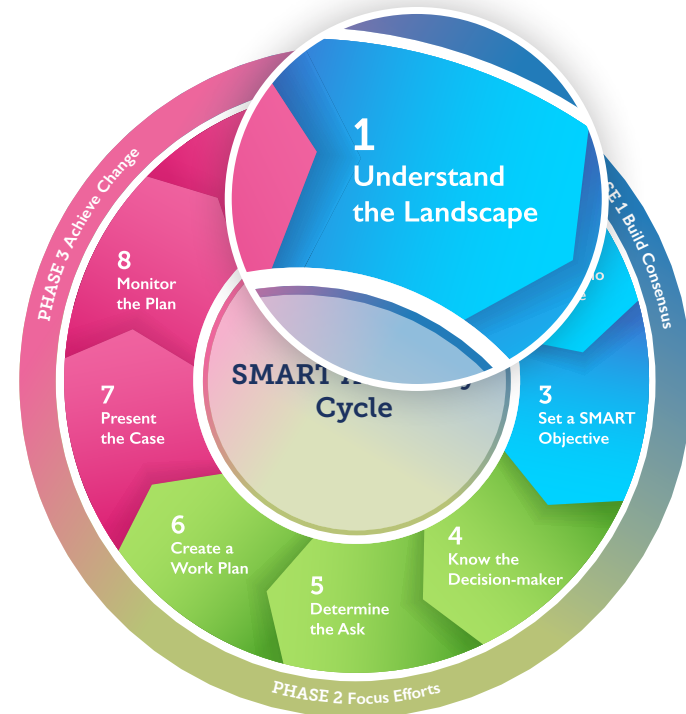
STEP I Understand the Landscape

By the end of this step, you will have a list of strategic advocacy opportunities based on evidence.

Assess Advocacy Opportunities

A landscape assessment focuses on the most strategic investments for your time and resources. It involves gathering quantitative and qualitative data on the issue you seek to influence. You can begin to gather information on your own or bring together a small group to review factors that can influence success or failure.

The landscape assessment process will help build consensus within your advocacy working group as everyone participating shares knowledge and learns from one another. The end result helps you to look beyond your initial assumptions about what is possible. It helps you to recognize which policy and funding decisions are most likely to make a difference and identify advocacy opportunities—the potential evidence-based changes to policies, financial investments, or political commitments.



The purpose of an evidence-based landscape assessment is to:

- Deepen understanding of geographic or political context and priorities;
- Identify the people and processes that are critical to delivering advocacy wins; and
- Ensure that local experience and advice are used to interpret the information collected.

Who assesses the landscape?

Most often a small group with shared values completes the landscape assessment needed to identify advocacy opportunities, determine if all the right people and groups are at the table, and build an advocacy working group.

1.1 ASSESS THE LANDSCAPE FOR YOUR ISSUE

Use evidence and knowledge to understand how to focus your advocacy. Use the pages below to detail and consider everything you know or can learn about your issue—from official statistics to expert opinions to knowledge from fellow advocates. Gather as much detailed relevant information as you can, starting with the questions in the boxes below. With the working group, begin with a holistic view of the issue. Identify knowledge gaps and seek additional information. Then, use everything you know to specify precisely where, how, and with whom you will focus your advocacy.

ENVIRONMENT

1. What issue will your advocacy strategy address?
2. What are the opportunities for and obstacles to addressing the issue (e.g., elections, natural disaster)?
3. What is the level of support and opposition?
4. What related issues are of higher priority on the decision-makers' agenda?
5. What are alternative proposals for action on your issue or other issues that are competing with yours for policy-makers' attention?



ACTORS

6. Which specific decision-makers are best able to take action on policy or funding related to your issue?
7. Which civil society organizations, religious groups, businesses, etc. play a leadership role on the issue?
8. Who are the champions and influential experts on the issue?
9. Who else is working in this advocacy arena, and what are their goals?
10. For all actors, what are their values and viewpoints?



EVIDENCE

11. What data define the scope of the issue?
12. Who is affected by and who will be a beneficiary of a policy or funding decision?
13. What policy actions will be effective in addressing the issue? How strong is the information?
14. In what ways are current policy and funding priorities aligned or not aligned with existing evidence?



POLICY

15. What are the current or promising policy and funding priorities that address the issue?
16. What is the policy-making process in your context?
17. What is the current budget, spending, and budget process on the issue?
18. Which other policies, events, or directives (existing or pending) are more relevant to your issue and how?
19. How has your issue been addressed in official plans, commitments, or strategies?
20. Are there also advocacy efforts at the regional, national, or global level?

1.2 FIND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

Identify your strategic openings. What advocacy opportunities and obstacles do you see in your landscape? Which of these opportunities—new leadership, policy developments, community needs—would allow you to achieve an advocacy win *within the next six months*? Weigh opportunities against the obstacles.



MONITOR, EVALUATE, & LEARN:

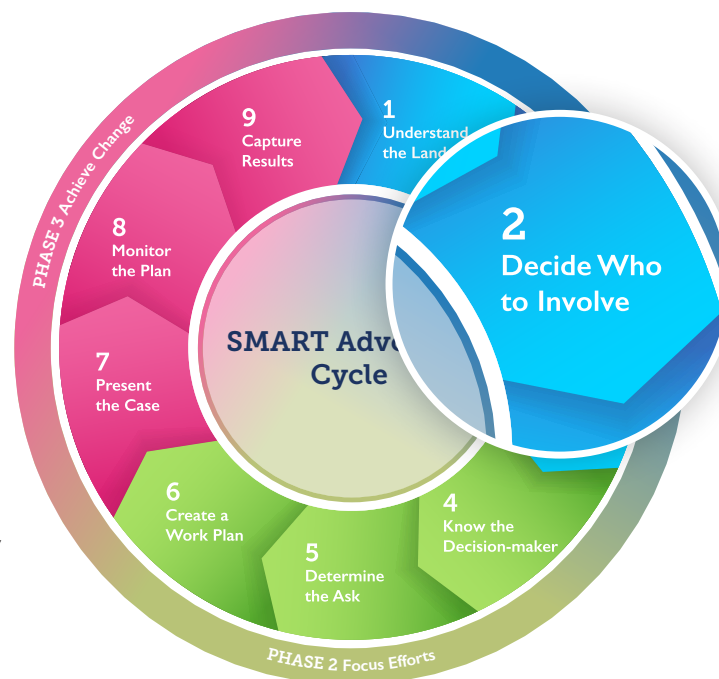
The landscape is never static. The landscape assessment should be updated periodically to keep refining your strategy. The assessment serves as a benchmark for comparing any changes from the current situation surrounding your issue as you pursue your desired goal. You will come back to this starting point, or “baseline” data, to monitor and assess the progress of your advocacy.

STEP 2 Decide Who to Involve

At the end of this step, you will have developed an inventory of key stakeholders.

Build Your Advocacy Working Group

The chances for success increase when you bring the right people into strategy development. Who will help you achieve results? A broad range of actors—like-minded activists, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, researchers, economists, healthcare providers, and journalists—can all contribute their expertise. The ideal size of an advocacy working group is 10 to 15 people—large enough for diversity but small enough to make decisions quickly. You may also identify key players and organizations that do not share your goals. It is important to keep an eye on them and their potential to affect your efforts.

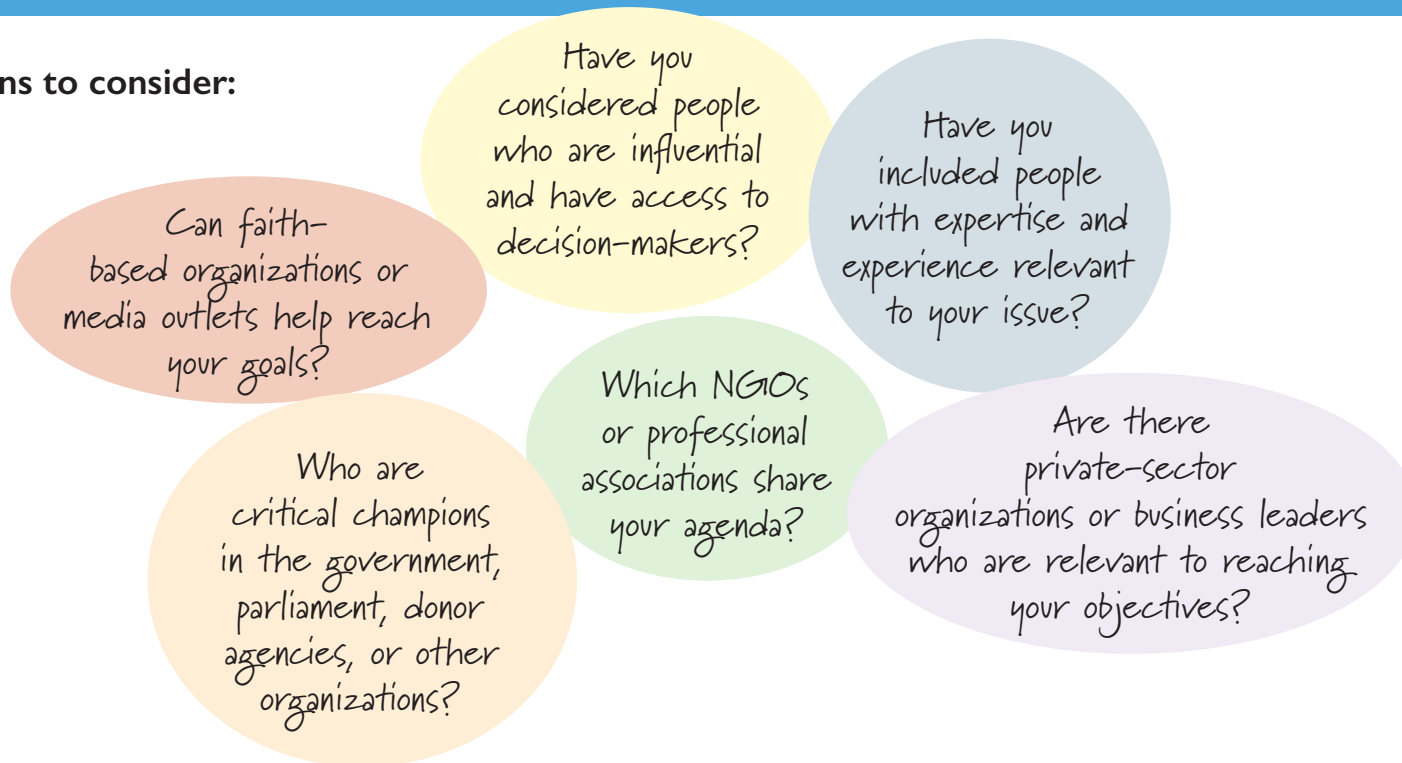


2.1 INVENTORY ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Who do you need in your advocacy working group to help you act on your advocacy opportunity?

Brainstorm individuals and organizations that can be potential allies. Add their contact information to the chart below and put a check in the "Priority for Inclusion" column if the contact would be critical to your advocacy effort.

Questions to consider:



CHECKLIST

Does your advocacy working group include:

People with influence and access to those in power

Professionals with relevant expertise

Informants who can shed light on government processes

Healthcare providers, other professionals, or community members with first-hand knowledge of your issue

A monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) expert with access to key data

Potential beneficiaries of a policy or funding decision

A facilitator who can lead positive discussions, mediate disagreement, and keep the group on track.

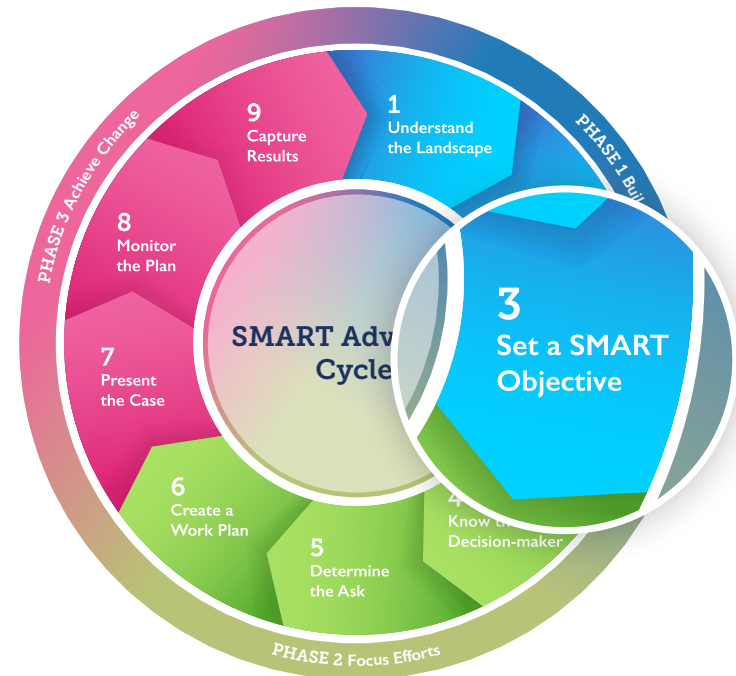
STEP 3 Set a SMART Objective

At the end of this step, you will have specified an advocacy goal and set a first SMART objective.

Advocacy Goal

Now that you know the landscape, it is time to determine your destination. The next step guides you through specifying a goal and then selecting the first SMART objective for your advocacy effort, based on the opportunities identified in your landscape assessment.

A goal is an ambitious, long-term change. It describes the ultimate purpose of your advocacy and requires multiple advocacy wins and significant political and financial support over time to achieve. A goal should be focused on an overarching issue and a longer timeframe—for example, “Reduce maternal deaths in the country by 20% in the next decade”, “Children in my neighborhood have a safe, clean place to play” or “Ensure that all public and private family planning providers are able to offer the full range of contraceptive methods.”



Review your landscape assessment to formulate or build consensus on a goal that states clearly the change that you hope to see as a result of your efforts. If your working group or coalition already has a goal, it is useful to review it and ensure that everyone agrees. If you are formulating a goal for the first time, consider various options, including what will best inspire strong commitment. Regardless, take the time to discuss and debate. This is the most important step to gaining the consensus. It is the critical unifier in establishing or energizing an advocacy working group.

3.1 AGREE ON A LONG-TERM GOAL

In the space below, state a concise advocacy goal to help guide and focus your first SMART objective.



SMART Objective

Building consensus around a SMART objective is important. It will be the focal point of your strategy, and its achievement will signal your success.

For advocacy to be robust and a win to be achievable, the objective must meet the SMART criteria. SMART is a mnemonic device to help you remember the essential elements of an advocacy objective:

Specific. State who will do what, when, and where.

Which decisionmaker will take action within a discrete timeframe? What contribution will that action make to the overall goal? What in particular will be achieved if advocacy efforts are successful? The more focused the advocacy objective is, the more likely it is that an advocacy strategy will succeed. Being specific in framing your objective also helps the working group mobilize behind the desired outcome and come back together to re-strategize when it has succeeded or there is a setback.

Measurable. Set clear parameters to track progress and establish when an advocacy objective is met.

To ensure clarity in the advocacy 'ask' and to know whether expected results have been achieved, use quantitative and/or qualitative descriptors to frame the objective. This framing allows someone inside or outside of the advocacy effort to objectively observe and verify the same results.

Attainable. Make achieving your objective within reach.

Questions to ask yourself: Is the result achievable with the available resources? Is the result possible in the timeframe we have set? Is there existing support for this action within the government and among other key stakeholders? Setting an attainable objective requires careful consideration of the human, technical, and financial resources on hand and whether these resources align with the objective and are sufficient to achieve the objective.

Relevant. Contribute to the goal of your advocacy efforts.

There should be a plausible and close link between the advocacy objective and the overarching goal. The opportunities and obstacles identified in the landscape assessment will help you formulate objectives relevant to your desired outcomes.

Time-bound. Establish deadlines to promote action.

Calibrate your objective to what you can achieve in a specific amount of time. To make your objective manageable, consider a 6- to 12-month timeframe. Agreeing on a particular schedule also helps with planning the deployment of resources (e.g., staff or volunteer time, finances) and activities (e.g., policy briefs, budget analysis, meeting minutes).

3.2 CREATE A SMART OBJECTIVE

Let's review your landscape. **What is the first step to reaching your goal?** What is achievable in a six to 12-month timeframe?

Making an objective SMART can be difficult. Pause here to review how SMART your objective is and take the time to make your objective very SMART. It will be worth the effort.



MONITOR, EVALUATE, & LEARN:

A SMART objective is crucial to anchoring the MEL strategy. It defines the key data to be tracked to assess your progress. You will also monitor key policy events or windows of opportunity that can help determine the best time to implement your plan and achieve your SMART objective.

3.3 ASSESS YOUR OBJECTIVE'S "SMART-NESS"

Is the objective SMART? To find out, answer these questions:

	Check if "Yes"
<p>Specific Does the objective clearly lay out the desired outcome, including the decision-maker and the action or decision you seek?</p>	
<p>Measurable Are there specific quantitative or qualitative indicators that can measure or verify whether your advocacy objective is met, and to what extent?</p>	
<p>Attainable Is the objective feasible within the determined timeframe, given the current landscape and available resources?</p>	
<p>Relevant Based on available evidence, will the objective contribute to the overall goal of the advocacy effort?</p>	
<p>Time-bound Does the objective explicitly state an anticipated date by which the advocacy objective will be achieved?</p>	

If your objective does not meet every criterion of SMART, rewrite your SMART objective.

Once you have set your objective, it is worthwhile to revisit who is in your advocacy working group. Are there additional people who would be helpful with your specific objective? See exercise 2.1.

Your SMART objective only tackles one part of the overall goal. A goal is achieved by reaching multiple SMART objectives. This means going through the nine-step SMART Advocacy approach for each SMART objective. Below is a depiction of an advocacy effort to reduce maternal mortality. As you can see, some objectives can be achieved simultaneously, while others must build on previous ones.

Example of SMART objectives on the path to the goal of reducing maternal mortality



**MONITOR,
EVALUATE,
& LEARN:**

Once you are satisfied that your advocacy objective is SMART, take a moment to ensure that you consider how you will track progress and know when you have succeeded. Measuring advocacy can be a challenge. Defining success from the outset clarifies what you expect to happen when the SMART objective is met. Metrics for success that are quantifiable and verifiable are important. In Step 8 you will build a detailed plan to track your progress.

Congratulations! You have completed Phase I

Before moving on, review the work of the previous sections. Place a check next to each question if the answer is “Yes”.

Does your objective reflect the current advocacy opportunities?

Do you have the correct people in the advocacy working group to achieve your goal?

Does your SMART objective contribute significantly to your goal?

PHASE 2

Focus Efforts

- ▶ STEP 4
Know the Decision-maker
- ▶ STEP 5
Determine the Ask
- ▶ STEP 6
Create an Action Plan

Now that you know where you want to go and the first destination in your journey, developing a strategy is essential. Strategy development helps the advocacy working group agree on a way forward and share the work needed to lay the foundation for change. The likelihood of success increases when your advocacy effort focuses on a specific person with decision-making authority and tailors an advocacy ask to their interests and possible objections. In this phase all working group members will come to agreement on the best case to be made and think through who is in the best position to make the request. You will end this section with a work plan to achieve your advocacy win.

In this phase, you will learn to:

- Identify and get to know your decision-maker;
- Determine what to ask your decision-maker to do to achieve the change you want; and
- Create a detailed work plan to reach your decision-maker with your request.

STEP 4 Know the Decision-maker

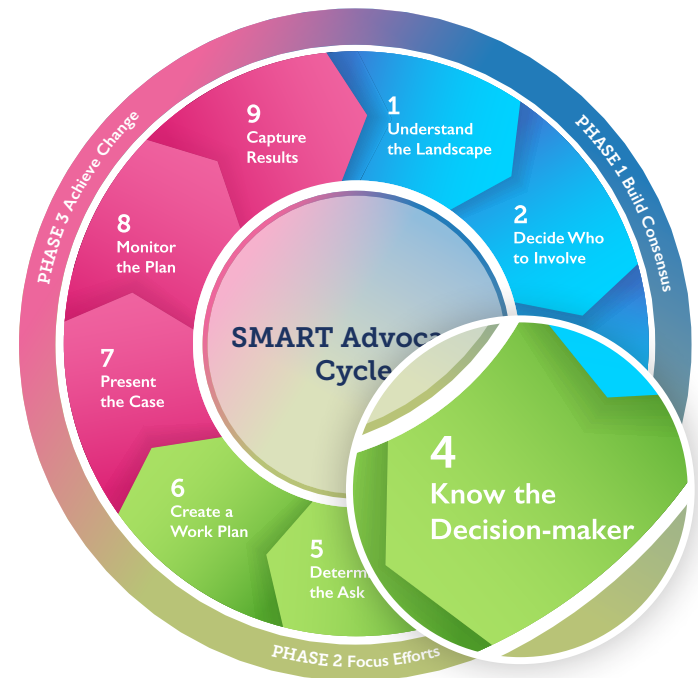
At the end of this step, you will confirm that you have identified the right decision-maker and have an understanding of their values, interests, and possible objections to your request.

Key Decision-maker

You have a SMART Advocacy objective. It identifies a person who, you believe, can do something in the near-term that will contribute to reaching your goal. This step focuses on that person. In some cases, you may be working with a group of decision-makers, but the process is the same. At this point, you need to ask one important question:

Who has the power to make your SMART objective a reality?

Remember, if you have made your objective attainable, you may not have focused on the highest-level decision-makers such as a President or the Minister of Health or Finance. Instead, you may have focused on a government official who provides technical support or the leader of a group that advises or sets standards on medical or economic issues. No matter who you identified, take the time now to assess whether this is the right person to achieve your objective. Keep assessing as you go and do not hesitate to change decision-makers as you learn more about the decision-making process, the individuals in power, and their own interests and priorities. Once you learn the SMART Advocacy approach, this becomes second nature.



4.1 CONFIRM YOUR DECISION-MAKER

Review how decisions are made on your issue. Who proposes actions and who has the final authority to make the change that you have identified in your SMART objective? Do you have the connections and access to focus immediately on the highest level of decision-maker, or is there a more accessible or more appropriate entry point? Do you need more than one decision-maker to achieve your objective? **Write in your decision-maker and the person's position.** If you have more than one decision-maker, decide which of them you will approach first and why.

The next step is to explore all you can find out about this person, including how they feel about your issue. As you think about your issue from the perspective of the decision-maker, consider what they value. **You will need to adapt your advocacy strategy so that the decision-makers see *their* values reflected in and perhaps achieved through your objective.**

First, get to know your decision-maker better: Create a profile that will enable you to better understand who this person is. What do you do if you do not know much about your decision-maker? Check their social media posts, voting records, and media statements. Who can you contact who knows your decision-maker personally or professionally and can help you answer the questions below?

4.2 GET TO KNOW YOUR DECISION-MAKER

Write down what you know about the key decision-maker. Tap into the key informants to gather any information you are missing. Your group may not know all the answers to the questions below. Note the items that may require more research.

What do you know about the decision-maker?

1. What is their background/profession?
2. What is their level of authority in their organization?
3. Have they taken any actions that suggest they could act on your request?
4. Have they made any statements for or against the objective or issue you are addressing? List any relevant statements.
5. Are they willing and able to act on issues that they care about?
6. Who is in their social/political circle?
Whose opinion do they value most?

What does the decision-maker value?	Check if "Yes"	Evidence of their stance
<p><i>Socio-economic development</i> Is your decision-maker driven by advancing the country's economy or social development?</p>		
<p><i>Cost-effectiveness</i> Is your decision-maker known to be budget-conscious?</p>		
<p><i>Youth</i> Are young people central to your decision-maker's agenda?</p>		
<p><i>Health</i> Is your decision-maker concerned about public health?</p>		
<p><i>Human rights or religious beliefs</i> Has your decision-maker used human rights or faith-based arguments to justify their actions or position?</p>		
<p><i>Career advancement</i> Could policy action on your issue help advance the decision-maker's career or reputation?</p>		
<p><i>Others</i> Are there public statements, policy actions, or off-the-record intelligence that explain the decision-maker's values?</p>		

What is your decision-maker's core value?

Of all the values you assessed for your decision-maker, which value appears to be their driving force? Select their "core" value and enter it below.

How will saying yes to your ask benefit the decision-maker?

Your argument should focus on the positive and convey that a decision-maker's leadership can make a difference.

Approaching Your Decision-maker

Your decision-maker's level of knowledge will determine whether they need basic information, encouragement to act, or recognition for their leadership. To decide what they need, we must understand how familiar they are with our issue—and whether they are ready to act.

✓ Uninformed

Providing information is the best approach for a decision-maker who does not know much about your topic or is opposed to it. Start by sharing basic knowledge on your specific issue. Tell your decision-maker why the issue is important, what can be done to prioritize it, and what positive outcomes would be expected. Decision-makers can only consider taking action after they are informed.

Approach:
Provide and share information.
Why is your issue important?

✓ Knowledgeable

If your decision-maker is already knowledgeable about your issue, you should **encourage them to act**. Show them that your objective can be accomplished with relative ease and tell them what they can do to make a difference. Also consider what information or messages will be the most persuasive. How is acting on your issue beneficial to the decision-maker? How does it fit within their agenda?

Approach:
Build knowledge and encourage the will to act.
What can your decision-maker do to make a difference?

✓ Supportive and Active

If your decision-maker is already supportive and active on your issue, **recognize their leadership** and ask for their continued support. Thank the decision-maker for past work on the issue and celebrate their role once you have secured a 'win'. Expressing appreciation will encourage a decision-maker to act again in the future.

Approach:
Recognize their leadership and reinforce the action.
How can you thank the decision-maker publicly and celebrate their role in securing a win?

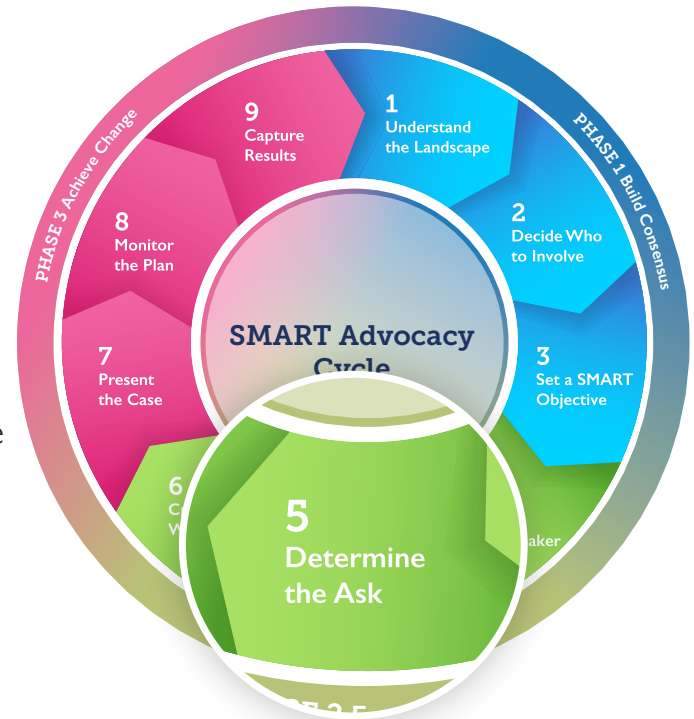
STEP 5 Determine the Ask

At the end of this step, you will have a tailored request for action: the advocacy ask.

Types of Arguments

With your decision-maker's values and interests in mind, think about how people make decisions. This will shape the way you ask your decision-maker to act and will help you craft a request for action, or advocacy ask, that speaks to your decision-maker. Like your objective, the request to your decision-maker should also be SMART. In fact, the advocacy objective and advocacy ask should mirror one another.

Before you construct your advocacy ask, you need to understand different ways you can strengthen your case—with evidence, stories, and/or rights or faith-based arguments. Considering various types of arguments will provide you with the flexibility to support your objective according to a decision-maker's interests. Experienced advocates know when and how to deploy all three approaches.



5.1 WAYS TO ARGUE YOUR CASE—THE THREE E'S

People decide to take action for a variety of reasons, and thus respond to different types of arguments—evidence-based, emotional, and ethical. Often, you will need to use a combination of these arguments to craft the best message for your decision-maker. Write down evidence-based, emotional, and ethical arguments that will support your case.

Support Your Case with the Three E's



Evidence

Use evidence to inform and guide policy change and provide a sense of the scope and impact of a decision on health and development. Evidence-based advocacy helps neutralize controversy and lead to agreement.

What facts support your objective?



Emotion

Use evocative stories and photos to add the human dimension. Stories related to your objective underscore the commonality of experience and the potential for policy to alleviate suffering and improve lives.

How can you humanize the need for the action that you seek?



Ethics

Use a rights- or faith-based approach and reflect an understanding of social and cultural norms. Ethics arguments center on justice, equity, and awareness of the implications of one's action or inaction. Leverage the decision-maker's sense of responsibility to uphold rights and be held accountable.

Which religious, cultural, or ethical arguments support your objective?

Develop Your Ask

Now, it is time to develop your ask. The Five-Point Message Box below, adapted from Spitfire Strategies Smart Chart^{®1}, helps you develop a simple request for your decision-maker to take action. An opportunity for advocacy can present itself at any time, and every member of the advocacy group should know the rationale for a policy change and be able to request action of the decision-maker if the opportunity presents itself.

5.2 THE FIVE-POINT MESSAGE BOX

The Five-Point Message Box pulls together all the groundwork you completed in Steps 3 through 5 and synthesizes the information to get to your ask. Completing the Five-Point Message Box as a working group builds consensus and prepares everyone involved to be ready to make the ask. Complete the following questions to develop your tailored advocacy message.

1 Spitfire Strategies. (2021). *Your Blueprint for Strategic Communications Success*. SMART Chart. <https://smartchart.org/>

2. Identify the decision-maker's core value

What do they care about? What public remarks or policy changes has the decision-maker made or introduced, respectively, on your issue? At this stage, you will focus on what is important to the decision-maker rather than what is important to you. Input your decision-maker's core value from 4.2.

3. Anticipate objections and prepare response

Review the rational, emotional, and ethical arguments that you identified in activity 5.1 and anticipate your decision-maker's potential objections. With the objections in hand, write out potential responses. Only provide the information that is most relevant to the values of the decision-maker and the challenges they face.

1. Identify the decision-maker

Referring to the decision-maker by name and not title alone helps to tailor the message more accurately. See 4.1. Write name and designation in the box.

4. Articulate SMART ask

Start by reviewing your SMART objective. The advocacy ask centers on what can realistically be achieved and should closely align with the SMART objective. It also is something that the decision-maker has the capacity and comfort level to do and has more benefits than risks. In the box across, write your SMART ask.

Place a check for each SMART criteria the ask meets.

Specific	Measurable	Attainable
Relevant	Time-bound	

5. Answer the question: "To what end?"

What are the benefits that match the core values? Tell a decision-maker why acting on your request benefits the decision-maker and reinforces their values, as identified in 4.2. It should focus on the positive and convey hope that progress is possible and that a decision-maker's leadership can make a difference. Also, what can the decision-makers say they achieved by making this change?

2. Identify the decision-maker's core value

3. Anticipate objections and prepare response

1. Identify the decision-maker

4. Articulate SMART ask

5. Answer the question: "To what end?"

Place a check for each SMART criteria the ask meets.

Specific	Measurable	Attainable
Relevant	Time-bound	

SMART Messenger

It is essential to identify the person(s) who is most likely to convince the decision-maker to act. A common mistake is to think that conviction is the best qualification for a messenger. But it is more important to consider who your decision-maker listens to. **Who has the authority or influence to compel your decision-maker to act?** For example, for a Ministry of Finance official who drafts the budget, an economist or peer from another ministry may be most influential as opposed to a healthcare provider or policy person. A messenger can be a best friend, a personal assistant, a classmate, or anyone else who already has a strong connection with the decision-maker.

The messenger is as critical as the message. A well-crafted message delivered by the wrong person is likely to be dismissed. Still, remember that unexpected opportunities may give you the ear of your decision-maker. For this reason it is important that every individual involved in your advocacy strategy be able to deliver the message.

When selecting an appropriate messenger, consider:

- Who has access to the decision-maker?
- Who has the necessary influence?
- Is the messenger willing to deliver your message?

5.3. SELECT A MESSENGER

List the individuals who are most likely to influence your decision-maker to act, and prioritize the one or two to whom you have access or who are most influential with the decision-maker.

Name	Title	Phone/Email

Now that you have chosen your messenger, how do you prepare them to take forward your ask? It is time to make the Five-Point Message Box actionable. If your designated messenger is not already allied with your cause, you may need to assess their interests just as you did for your decision-maker. You will then use the results of that assessment to develop a Five-Point Message Box for getting your messenger on board.

A Clear, Focused Advocacy Ask

Imagine that you are the messenger and have arranged a 30-minute meeting with your decision-maker with plenty of time to prepare. You arrive on time, but the decision-maker is 20 minutes late. You have only 10 minutes to make your case. Or imagine that your decision-maker asks for a short description of your request before the meeting, and you only have an hour to prepare something. What do you do?

Stay calm and use the message box as a guide to develop, with supporting arguments tailored to the interests of the decision-maker:

1. A short introduction to your issue;
2. A clear advocacy ask; and
3. The expected impact of taking action.

Think of this exercise as a way to role-play, not just what might go right in a meeting with your decision-maker, but also what could go wrong. Within your working group, practice delivering the message box to the decision-maker through a short role-play. Practicing your ask allows you to refine your message. It is easy to write out the case, but when you practice it out loud, you will better understand the narrative thread of your argument and how difficult it can be to make your request. You will be more adept at handling interruptions, tackling questions, and supplying counter arguments as necessary.

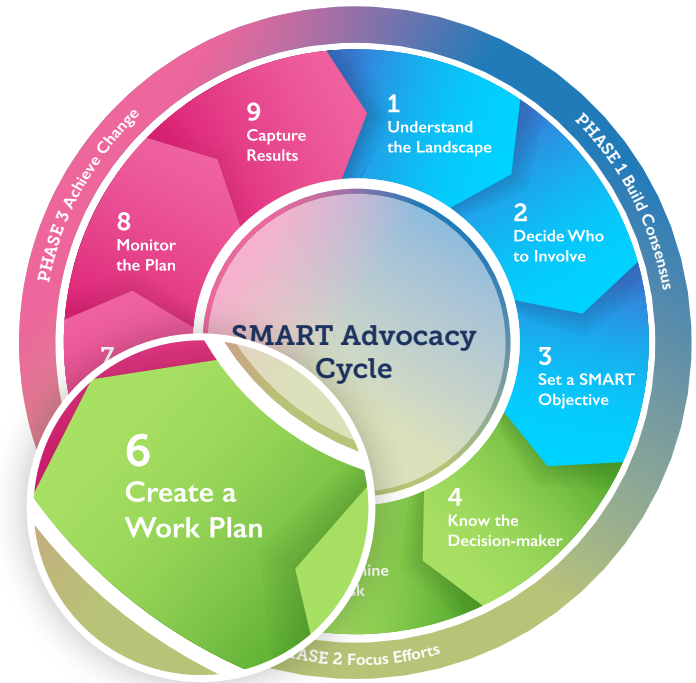
5.4 PRACTICE YOUR ADVOCACY ASK

Role-play a meeting with your decision-maker. Divide up into pairs, and select one person to serve as the decision-maker and one as the messenger. Use arguments from the Five-Point Message Box to persuade the decision-maker to act. The decision-maker should use the values from Step 4 to respond to arguments, ask questions, and raise objections. Take notes on what worked and what did not work in the role-play.

STEP 6 Create a Work Plan

At the end of this step, you will have a detailed work plan.

Before we begin developing our work plan, we will take a moment to map the resources available to your working group that can help you achieve your objective. Mapping available resources helps you to design a strategy based on your assets. It helps you understand—and prepare for—any factors that might impede your success.



6.1 MAP YOUR RESOURCES

What assets will you need to support your advocacy effort? What funding, staff, skills, etc. can your organization or working group members and their organizations contribute? Do you have the time, clout, and access needed? This internal review also covers the challenges that you may face in not having sufficient influence, funding, or time to carry out your advocacy strategy. In the form below, indicate "yes" or "no" to answer each question and describe the resource in the next column to the right. If you answer "no," brainstorm how your advocacy working group will obtain the resource.

What resources do you have in your advocacy working group? (individuals, organizations, or collectively)	Yes/No	Describe here	If no, how will you get it?
Do you have the financial resources?			
Do you have the time?			
Do you have the data to support your ask?			
Do you have the human resources to implement your advocacy strategy?			
Do you have access to your decision-maker and those who influence them?			

SMART Advocacy Work Plan

It's time to create a targeted work plan that will make your SMART objective a reality. Start by referring back to your SMART objective and your SMART ask. These are the end results that you want to achieve through your work plan. What steps need to happen to get you in front of your decision-maker to make your SMART ask? What activities are needed to motivate your decision-maker to act? Your work plan will be your blueprint for getting where you want to go.

6.2 CREATE A SMART WORK PLAN

Create a detailed timeline with assignments for specific activities. Assign one individual or organization to coordinate the strategy and see that all activities of the work plan are implemented. Estimate costs for each activity. Then, list who is responsible for implementing the activity. Set deadlines to track your progress.

6.2 SMART WORK PLAN

Strategy Coordinator:

Activity	Estimated cost	Persons responsible and their affiliation	Timeline

6.2 SMART WORK PLAN

Strategy Coordinator:

Activity	Estimated cost	Persons responsible and their affiliation	Timeline

Test each activity against your SMART objective by answering the following questions:

How will the activity further your objective?

How does it relate to what the decision-maker considers important?

Is the activity needed to achieve your advocacy win?

Is the activity SMART?

Is the activity worth the time and money it will require?

Who is responsible for communicating with your working group and keeping the strategy on track?

If possible, distribute the completed advocacy work plan to all those involved. Discuss how the group can best keep track of progress and respond to new developments that may necessitate a change in strategy. Detail is important to making progress. Revisit the work plan periodically to see if the activities are happening as scheduled or if they need to change. You may need to add another activity or drop one along the way.

You have now laid out the work plan for your advocacy working group and defined the elements of the advocacy process that are within your control. The work plan also will form the foundation for the monitoring plan, which you will develop in Step 8.

Congratulations!
You have completed Phase 2

Before moving on, review the work of the previous section:

- Do you know your decision-maker's values, interest, and what motivates them?
- Do you know the evidence-based, emotional, and ethical arguments for your ask?
- Are you able to articulate all points in your Five-Point Message Box?
- Do you have the resources you need?
- Do you have a work plan in place?
- Are the assignments clear?

PHASE 3

Achieve Change

- ▶ STEP 7
Present the Case
- ▶ STEP 8
Monitor Progress
- ▶ STEP 9
Capture the Results

In this phase you will implement your advocacy strategy, monitor the process and outcomes as you implement, and document results. The secret to successful advocacy implementation is to maintain and build on the enthusiasm that comes with achieving success, overcoming setbacks, and developing a collaborative way forward.

In this phase, you will learn to:

- Create advocacy materials to support your advocacy ask;
- Implement your strategy;
- Develop a monitoring plan; and
- Document your advocacy process to inform future action.

STEP 7 Present the Case

At the end of this step, you will have advocacy materials to support your advocacy ask.

Communicate Effectively with Decision-makers

As you practice delivering your ask, consider using communication materials. These materials have the power to highlight key messages, present research findings, outline crucial challenges, and provide concrete next steps. Once you have refined your argument, it can then be packaged to facilitate focused, succinct briefings that make a clear case for change. The material can take many forms—advocacy briefs, PowerPoint presentations (PPT), short videos, etc. The key types of argument (evidence-based, emotional, and ethical) will guide what form the materials should take.

Any advocacy brief or PPT presentation should include a concise summary of the issue, the rationale for your recommended policy options to address it, and a SMART request for action. It also should provide decision-makers with the evidence and ethical arguments that support your request and can justify their decision to act. Videos are a good choice when your decision-maker values emotional arguments—you can capture personal stories of people who are affected by your issue. Videos also can use interactive infographics and visual data storytelling to explain complex issues.



Best Practices for Developing Communications Materials

Because advocacy efforts often focus on decision-makers who might have little relevant technical background or who are busy and sometimes not aware of or interested in the topic, the following points should be kept in mind. Advocacy materials should be:

- **Short.** For briefs, one page (double-sided, usually about 700 words) is best, with key information on the front, often in bullet-point format. PPT slides should take no longer than about 10-15 minutes to present. Text should be kept as short as possible. There should be only one or two take-home messages.
- **Evidence-based** but nontechnical. Focus on meanings, not methods. Include enough background for the policymaker to understand the problem. Provide evidence to support action.
- **Relevant.** Emphasize information about the geographic location or communities you want to impact. Be as specific as possible and highlight salient points within the local context.
- **Actionable.** The decision-maker must be convinced that solving the problem is important and urgent. Use a clear, actionable ask to incite the decision-maker to make a decision.

Come prepared, but do not overwhelm the decision-maker. And above all, remember to incorporate into your materials and presentation what you know about your decision-maker's preferences (evidence-based, ethical, and emotional arguments from Step 5).

If you decide to use a video to help present your case, remember that it should be complementary to the objective of your meeting—not the main event. And, as with PPT presentations, people's attention span for videos is limited. Keep videos to about three minutes maximum. Whichever supporting materials you use, one basic principle of presenting your case remains the same: **Don't assume your decision-maker knows as much as you know about your issue.**

Communications materials can inform (research results or a state of knowledge) and/or influence (advocacy)—ideally, your materials will do both.



**MONITOR,
EVALUATE,
& LEARN:**

Draw on your landscape assessment and the three types of arguments for your communication materials. To strengthen your advocacy case, highlight where things stand now versus the potential impact of the recommended action.

Preparing to Make the Advocacy Ask

Your work plan likely includes one or more meetings to deliver your ask to your decision-maker. It is critical to prepare for those meetings. **Put yourself in the place of the decision-maker and plan accordingly.**

Protocol differs in every setting. Here are a few questions to consider during your preparation.

- What materials or data do you need to support your request?
- Will your request be part of an informal discussion or require a formal presentation?
- What is appropriate professional clothing in this context?
- How much time will you have to make your case?
- If more than one of you is involved in the meeting, who will present the issue and who will ask the decision-maker to act?
- How will you follow up after the meeting? Is another meeting needed?

Before the Meeting

Revisit the role-playing exercise on page 48 to ensure that your message is clear and concise and that you have identified the best messenger. Regardless of the materials that you decide to use, rehearse before meeting with your decision-maker and prepare for any question or challenge that may arise. If you are well prepared, your confidence will be evident to the decision-maker, and that will bring you closer to achieving your advocacy objective.

During the Meeting

Respect the time constraints of busy decision-makers. Confirm the amount of time you have for your meeting either before or during the meeting. Be sure to make a brief, straightforward case for why your issue is important. Remember that this is a dialogue and make time for the decision-maker to fully participate in the conversation. Be sure to assign one person to deliver your advocacy ask. Wait for a response. There is no need to fill the silence while a decision-maker considers your request. Finally, quickly review anything you will do to follow up on the meeting and thank the decision-maker for their time, regardless of whether or not their response was favorable to the advocacy ask.

After the Meeting

Make sure to debrief your messenger after the meeting with your decision-maker ends. Consider what went well and what could be improved next time. Supporting materials such as briefs and PPTs are living documents that can be fine-tuned for subsequent use. Do not be overly disappointed if the meeting does not go the way you had planned. Return to your coalition for a reassessment and possible retooling of your strategy. **And always make sure to send a thank-you message after your meeting, whether you were successful or not.**

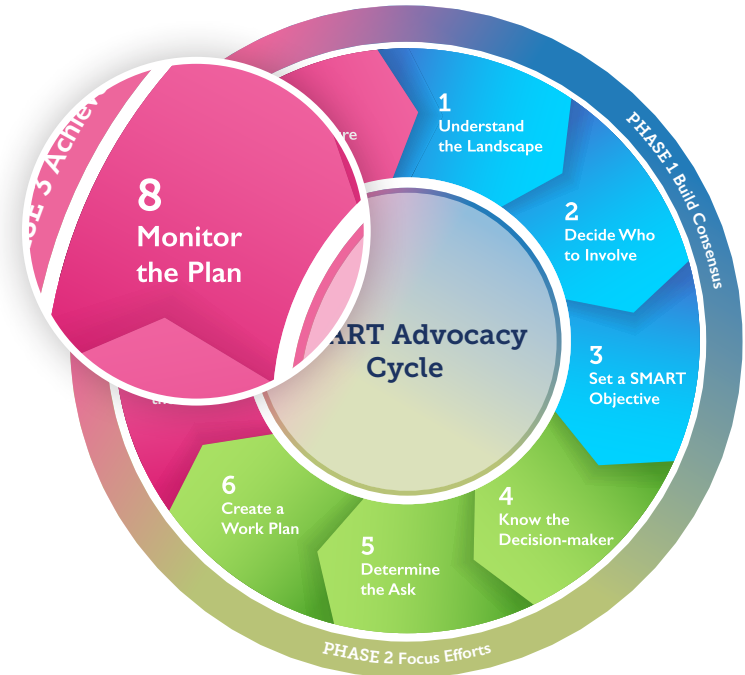
STEP 8 Monitor the Plan

At the end of this step, you will be able to monitor your work plan, refine your strategy, and document your progress.

Benchmarks for Success

Some advocacy results can be hard to measure. The advocacy process is complex, and it can be challenging to determine the role advocates had in influencing change. For this reason, it's important to have a clear idea of what you hope to achieve and a plan to track your progress.

When you defined a goal and set an objective in Step 3, your group considered how to define, measure, and verify your success. Now is the time to translate those ideas into a monitoring plan. What markers or metrics for progress will you track as you implement the activities in your work plan? What indicators of success will you look for when you achieve your advocacy win?



STEP 8 Monitor the Plan

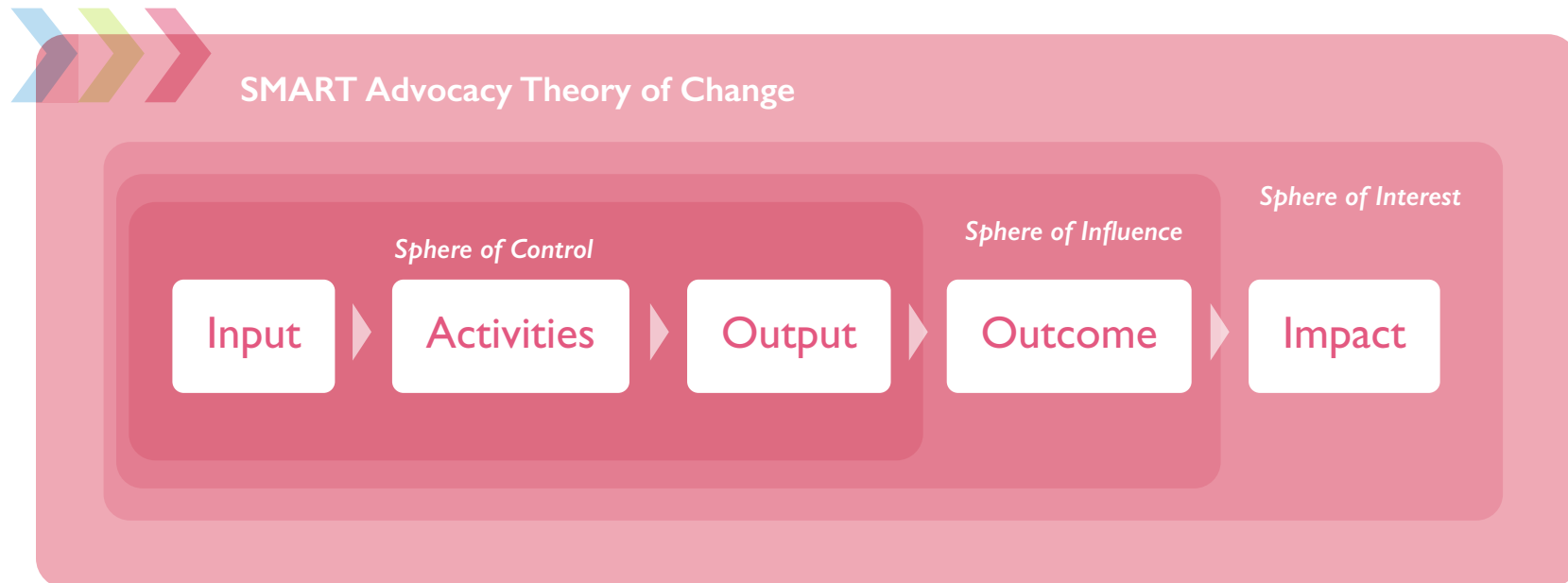
A proactive monitoring plan provides a lens through which to view the effectiveness of your advocacy process. It enables advocates to know whether, how, when, and the extent to which an advocacy win was achieved—and, if not, possible reasons why.

It is a good practice to review your progress to ensure that you are on track and that your plans reflect the current policy environment. Along the way, you might learn that you don't have the right decision-maker for the ask, message, messenger, or activities. Your advocacy working group and strategy will benefit from building in flexibility. Any development—positive or negative—is an opportunity to revisit and revise the advocacy strategy.

Continuing to assess the advocacy environment and progress will allow you to add new activities, develop new message boxes, and/or re-strategize if you are not making progress. Perhaps you have not accounted for other external factors or emerging developments. Integrating monitoring, evaluation, and learning into your advocacy strategy is one way to know when to adapt your work plan to changing circumstances. It aligns with the iterative nature of advocacy. It enables you to routinely rely on informants and evidence to re-strategize when progress is slow, and it informs next steps when an advocacy effort does succeed.

In developing a monitoring plan, you will spell out the expected results for a SMART strategy by answering questions across three spheres of engagement²:

1. Your sphere of control—How will you know when your activities are completed (i.e. outputs)?
2. Your sphere of influence—How will you know when you have achieved an advocacy win (i.e. outcome)?
3. Your sphere of interest—In the long term, what will change after multiple advocacy wins (i.e. impact)?



² Root Change, & Chemonics. (2018, December). *Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement (SACE) Program in Nigeria Volume 1: Systems Approaches in Advocacy Strategies*. Root Change. <https://www.rootchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SACE-Legacy-Volume-1-Branded.pdf>

SMART Advocacy's theory of change begins within advocates' sphere of control. Advocates have control over the resources that are contributed to the advocacy process (i.e., inputs) and how those resources are utilized (i.e., activities). As the required inputs are applied and the right activities are implemented, SMART Advocacy posits that the desired result (i.e., outcome) will likely ensue. While advocates can create positive conditions for change, the outcome will be influenced by many factors such as the current political situation or a decision-maker's mood, etc. Therefore, the outcome is within advocates' sphere of influence but ultimately will be under the decision-maker's control.

The final sphere in SMART Advocacy's theory of change is the sphere of interest. SMART Advocacy assumes that reaching impact involves achieving multiple outcomes, including advocacy wins, as well as other changes that may happen independently of advocacy. Thus, you will need to enter the SMART Cycle multiple times to apply the steps to each objective and ultimately achieve impact.



**MONITOR,
EVALUATE,
& LEARN:**

The secret to being able to quickly take informed remedial action is communication. Good communication allows you to candidly analyze the effectiveness of advocacy tactics, talk through what went well and what did not, and refine your strategy. Consider when and how often you will review the data that you have decided to monitor, touch base with key contacts, and decide if your advocacy effort is progressing as planned. Set the timing and frequency of these check-ins so that the administrative burden is minimal, yet the review is sufficient to determine the future direction for advocacy based on what you have learned.

Tracking Activities and Outputs

Advocates have the most control over outputs. Outputs are a measure of productivity—Did you hold the meetings that you said you would? Did you produce the policy brief that you planned? Outputs tell us whether we carried out the activities in the work plan.

Tracking outputs helps identify and address barriers and bottlenecks and assess the ability of working group members to meet their commitments. Ultimately, it provides insight into the effectiveness of the activities in achieving an advocacy win.

Outputs lay the necessary foundation for a SMART objective to be accomplished, but outputs alone do not guarantee achievement of the SMART objective or outcome. In a well-conceived advocacy strategy, however, the right outputs will give you the best chance at achieving your intended outcome.

Examples of outputs

- Meetings held with decision-makers
- Policy briefs or presentations
- Gap or landscape analysis report
- Memorandum of understanding for an advocacy working group

EXAMPLE OUTPUTS

Objective:

The State Minister of Finance allocates \$100,000 in the health budget to hire and train midwives by July 2021.

Activity	Output	Data source or means of verification
Determine the number of maternal health providers in the state and map gaps in coverage	Gap analysis completed by January 2021	Copy of printed/electronic gap analysis report
Estimate costs of hiring and training midwives	Costing estimates completed by February 2021	Copy of costing analysis report
Meet with the State Minister of Finance to present evidence and advocacy ask	Advocacy meeting held with the Minister of Finance by May 2021	Meeting notes

8.1. OUTPUTS

Refer back to the activities listed in your SMART work plan. Select three key activities most important for you to monitor. What product(s) will you generate as a result of activities implemented? What sources, tools, or means will you use to measure or verify your output(s)?

Objective:

Activity	Output	Data source or means of verification
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Anticipating the Advocacy Win and Outcomes

Advocates have less control over their outcomes. Outcomes tell us whether we met our SMART objective and achieved an advocacy win. They reflect the effectiveness of the overall advocacy strategy and hinge on the decision-maker's actions.

In a SMART strategy, the intended outcome is the SMART objective; hence, an advocacy win (or outcome) is simply your SMART objective restated. In addition, there could be other anticipated and unanticipated outcomes that may flow from your advocacy win. Tracking outcomes enables you to validate the achievement of an advocacy win, not just to inform future advocacy, but also to ensure that the win is followed through to implementation.

Examples of outcomes

- Increases in budget allocations, verifiable by official government budget documents
- Policy changes, including changes in administrative policy
- Programmatic changes resulting from a policy change

EXAMPLE OUTCOMES

Objective:

The State Minister of Finance allocates \$100,000 in the health budget to hire and train midwives by July 2021.

Intended outcome	Outcome indicator(s)	Data source or means of verification
Budget allocation in the approved state budget for hiring and training midwives	Amount of funds allocated	Official state budget, FY 2021-22
Disbursement of allocated funds to the Ministry of Health	Amount of funds disbursed	Approved state Ministry of Health work plan, quarterly financial reports from the state Ministry of Finance

8.2 OUTCOMES

Select at least two outcomes that you expect to observe if/when the objective is achieved. Start with the outcome directly associated with your SMART objective; then, consider subsequent outcomes that may follow as a result of the win. What sources, tools, or means would you use to measure or verify your outcome(s)?

Objective:

Intended outcome	Outcome indicator(s)	Data source or means of verification
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Monitoring Progress Over Time

To monitor and document progress over time, you can adapt the following template as a companion to your work plan:

Progress Monitoring Template

Objective

[Insert SMART objective]

Objective status

Mark with an "X" the objective status below

- Ongoing Date advocacy effort started:
- Achieved Date advocacy win achieved:
- Changed

Key Activities

Insert key activities from your work plan.

Outputs

What product(s) will you generate as a result of activities implemented?

Data source or means of verification

What sources, tools, or other means will you use to measure or verify your output(s)?

continued on the next page

Outcomes

Start with the outcome directly associated with your SMART objective; then, consider subsequent outcomes that may follow as a result of the win.

Data source or means of verification

What sources, tools, or other means would you use to measure or verify your outcome(s)?

Reflections

Periodically reflect on what you have experienced and learned during the advocacy process. Describe any expected or unexpected opportunities and challenges. Use your reflections to confirm that you are on the right track or need to reassess or refine your advocacy strategy.

Opportunities

continued on the next page

Challenges

Monitoring Plan Coordinator

Designate a focal point to coordinate and compile information to support the monitoring plan and share it with the full working group for review.

Monitoring Progress Toward Impact

Refer back to your goal from Step 3, where you articulated a broader vision for change. Impact refers to the long-term result produced by various interventions, including both a series of advocacy wins and factors outside your control. Setting indicators of impact enables you to monitor the extent to which you have contributed to achieving your goal and to assess which new advocacy objectives will make the most significant contribution. The value of impact tracking in advocacy lies mainly in its potential for learning. Monitoring indicators of impact is also important because it anchors advocacy to your end goal, reminding you that advocacy and tracking do not end with an advocacy win.

Example impact tracking

Intended impact (goal statement)	Impact indicator(s)	Data source or means of verification
Fewer women dying in childbirth	Maternal mortality ratio	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)
Increased use of antenatal services	Percent of women receiving antenatal care during pregnancy Percent of live births attended by skilled health personnel (including midwives)	Health Management Information System (HMIS)

8.3 IMPACT

To translate your goal to statements of anticipated impact, describe the most relevant realities that are measurable and observable if the goal is achieved. As multiple advocacy wins are achieved, which indicators demonstrate impact? What sources, tools, or other means will you use to measure, verify, or illustrate your impact?

Intended impact (goal statement)	Impact indicator(s)	Data source or means of verification
1.		
2.		
3.		

It is usually difficult to prove that a single advocacy effort, actor, or win directly caused an observed impact or to quantify their attribution. Impact indicators can be hard to collect, but outcomes associated with impact can be monitored, e.g., increased childhood immunization coverage is correlated with reduction in child mortality. Impact indicators will help you and others to focus on advocacy activities and objectives that you know will influence your goal. Then, as you achieve multiple advocacy objectives, you can monitor impact indicators to look for overall trends and progress towards impact. By combining quantitative impact indicators with qualitative information, you will be able to develop a narrative about how advocacy contributed to those changes and to achieving your goal.



**MONITOR,
EVALUATE,
& LEARN:**

This is an opportunity to revisit your landscape. Even when we have good evidence, the context may change rapidly, which requires refining the strategy and restarting advocacy. Has your landscape changed? In what ways does it hinder progress towards your advocacy win? Consider which obstacles are amenable to advocacy, and whether new opportunities have emerged.

Understand and Manage Setbacks

When expected progress does not occur, it is important to revisit the assumptions underlying your advocacy strategy. Making adjustments based on new evidence and information will help put an advocacy strategy back on track to achieving results.

Review your strategy and monitoring plan. Ask yourself, is now still the right time for this advocacy objective? Should you drop it and develop a different objective? Should you reformulate your advocacy message or work plan? Do you have the correct decision-maker or messenger? Is the evidence and information that you have collected sufficient, or do you need to know more?

Remember, an advocacy setback is often temporary. Reconvene your advocacy working group. Adjust your strategy. Soon you will be executing your amended strategy and on your way towards an advocacy win.

Revisiting family planning advocacy in the COVID-19 era

Since March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has created massive changes in the global health and political landscape. Seasoned family planning advocates revisited their SMART objectives and work plans to change their focus from expanding method choice and access to ensuring that family planning remained an essential service, taking advantage of World Health Organization guidance. Their quick thinking has preserved access to family planning during a time of crisis.

Celebrate and Capitalize on Success

Congratulations! You achieved an advocacy win. You implemented your work plan, monitored your progress, and adapted your strategy when needed. Now it is time to celebrate. Pausing to celebrate is an important part of advocacy. Advocacy is a continuous process, and so stopping to recognize the advocacy working group's hard work and dedication helps maintain energy and commitment to pursuing your advocacy goal. Thanking your decision-maker both privately and publicly encourages them to follow through and act again.



Do not stop here. As you capture results in Step 9, consider what needs to happen next to achieve your goal. Perhaps it is a new policy change or implementation of the policy change your advocacy has achieved. Determine the best time to revisit your goal and set a new objective.

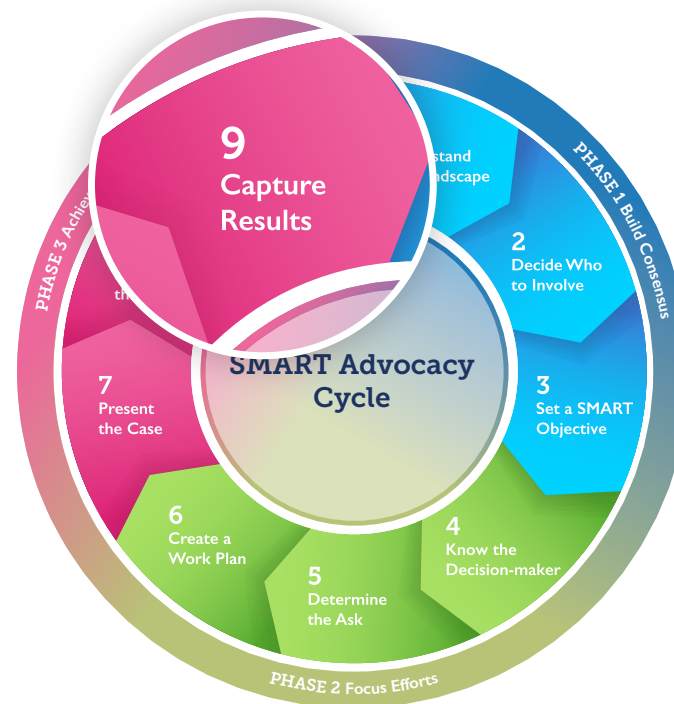
STEP 9 Capture Results

At the end of this step, you will know how to tell your advocacy story, set your next SMART objective, and measure your impact.

Tell Your Advocacy Story

Telling your story helps you document advocacy progress, keeps your network and donors updated, inspires peers about what is possible, shares lessons learned with other advocates, and enables collaboration and problem-solving.

Apply SMART principles when framing the narrative and tailor the messages in your story to serve different audiences.



What is newsworthy about your advocacy effort?

- a recent change in the policy environment (positive or negative);
- current or future advocacy wins;
- awards or recognition; and/or
- program progress or setbacks.

9.1 DRAFT YOUR STORY

Use the worksheet below to outline the advocacy story.

Key audience

Who do you want to reach with your story (e.g., donors, advocacy working group members, policymakers, other organizations) and why?

Format

What is the best way to tell your story (e.g., case study, blog, video, news article)?

Dissemination plan

How do you plan to share your story with the key audiences (e.g., presentation, website, email, social media)?

Headline

In 10 words or fewer **summarize the advocacy outcome** and why it is important. Make it as specific and measurable as possible.

Summary and key message

What is the significant change you are reporting? The summary should be one to two paragraphs and expand on the information in the headline. It should be simple, direct, and answer basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Who made what decision on what date in which jurisdiction? Include details about the population potentially or actually affected by the change (if available).

Context

What context is necessary to understand the significance of the advocacy win? What was the situation prior to the advocacy win? Provide relevant baseline data, if available. Provide comparative data or background information, as appropriate, to help contextualize the data and story being presented.

Strategy and recognition

Briefly explain key aspects of your advocacy strategy. What did your working group do to achieve the win? What was your organization's role (if any)? How did you apply the SMART Advocacy approach? What was the role of other partners and policymakers? Include the names of all relevant partners and policymakers who should receive credit.

Implications and next steps

How will this affect your future activities or ability to reach your goal? What is expected to happen next? Are there any immediate next steps to ensure that the win is followed through or implemented? (e.g., if midwives are now allowed to provide postpartum family planning, will their training curriculum need to change? Is funding needed to train them?)

Quotes and photos [optional]

Quotes can be a dynamic addition to a news summary. They can provide insight on impact (answering the question, "Why should we care?") or lend color to the content. Examples of those who might be quoted include a local champion or government representative. Be sure to get the quote approved by the person to whom it is attributed. Photos can draw the reader in and amplify recognition of the decision-maker or issue being addressed. Do not use photos of private citizens without their permission.

Consider researching how other organizations have told their advocacy stories. You can find AFP's on [advancefamilyplanning.org](https://www.advancefamilyplanning.org).

Telling your story starts the process of reflecting on what did and did not go well in the course of your advocacy strategy. It also connects the documentation of impact data that you have already gathered through monitoring with advocacy activities and outputs that contributed to your win.

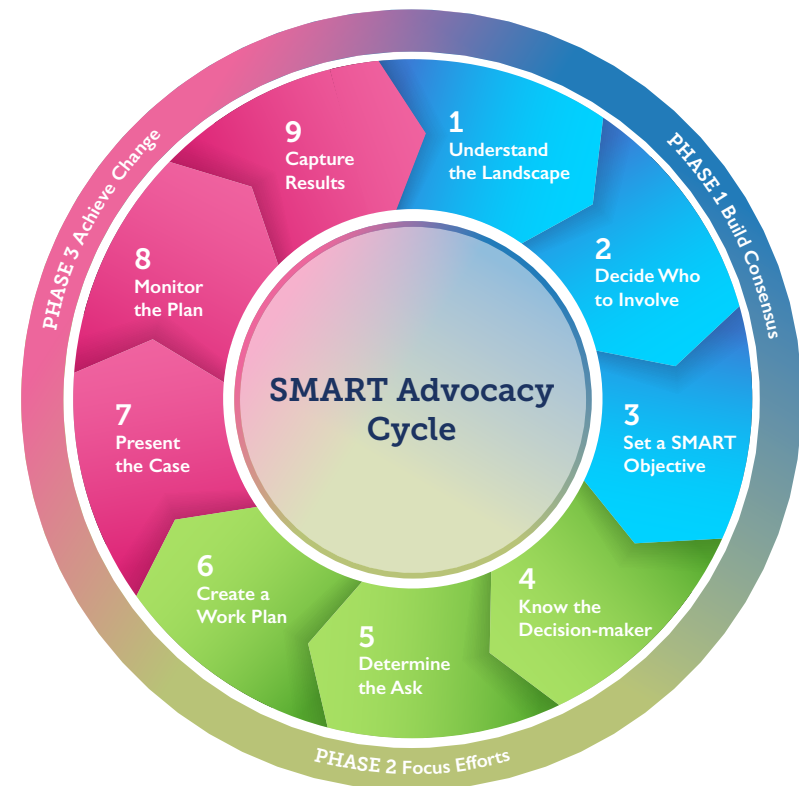
As you present your results, remember to recognize all those involved in the advocacy effort. First and foremost, recognize the role of the decision-maker. They have used their position to help you and your working group achieve your objectives and possibly your goal. Any working group member or organization actively engaged in achieving the advocacy win should be able to share credit for the success and report on impact and their role in achieving it.


Sharing your story will help you explain the advocacy initiative to external audiences and guide others who want to replicate your approach. It also supports the implementation of the policy or program achieved through your win by creating external accountability for your decision-maker.

Re-starting the Advocacy Cycle

After celebrating and communicating your win, re-convene the members of the advocacy working group (or bring in new members) to select another SMART objective to be your next advocacy win. Next time, the group will likely be able to move through the steps more quickly or begin at a later stage.

In addition to updating your landscape assessment to identify new advocacy opportunities and challenges, you will want to enter the win into your monitoring plan and check whether more advocacy is needed to ensure its implementation.





Think back to our SMART Advocacy principles. First, we know that locally driven advocacy is often more successful at sustaining outcomes. Building that local ownership and leadership is paramount for maintaining advocacy gains. Local champions and advocacy working groups sustain long-term advocacy capacity by integrating advocacy activities and priorities with local government and nongovernmental institutions so that they will persist beyond the life of any project.

In decentralized settings advocacy at all levels of government is also critical to lasting and meaningful change. Complementary advocacy efforts that align priorities with the different levels of government will strengthen and reinforce advocacy outcomes. Continued monitoring and proactive advocacy to hold decision-makers accountable for all commitments will sustain your progress.

Ultimately, advocacy never stops.

Visit smartadvocacy.org for more information on SMART Advocacy, new tools, and resources.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development and implementation of this user guide, including partners and collaborators of the Advance Family Planning initiative at the Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health within the Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Advance Family Planning is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Special thanks to Duff Gillespie, Beth Fredrick, Sabrina Karklins, Sarah Whitmarsh, Linh Nguyen, Amanda Burgess, and Virajita David-Rivera. Thank you to Arzum Ciloglu, Lou Compernelle, Dini Haryati, Celia Karp, Alice Payne Merritt, Richard Mugenyi, Angeline Mutunga, Amos Mwale, Eva Nakimuli, Salome Njiri, Habeeb Salami, Halima Shariff, Mahesh Srinivas, and Riya Thakur for reviewing the user guide.

Suggested citation

David-Rivera, V., Whitmarsh, S., Gillespie, D., and Fredrick, B. (2021). SMART Advocacy User's Guide. April 2021. Available from smartadvocacy.org.

© 2021 by Advance Family Planning. All rights reserved. Text may be quoted without explicit permission provided that full credit, including copyright notice, is given to the source.

AFP encourages organizations working to improve public health to use these materials and share them with others. For permission to translate, reprint, or electronically distribute any part of these materials, please contact jhsph.afp@jhu.edu.



Glossary

Throughout this guide, you may come across these common terms. We define the terms here to serve as a reference during the whole advocacy process.

Advocacy

Advocacy is “a combination of individual and social actions designed to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance, and systems support for a particular health goal or programme.”⁴

Advocacy win

A discrete decision that must be made in the near-term to achieve a broader goal and that is the result of a targeted advocacy strategy. There are three types of advocacy wins:

- Funding—New or sustained budget allocation, expenditure, or grant
- Policy—New, amended, or revoked law or regulation
- Visibility—Raises the profile of a long-term goal.

Advocacy working group

An alliance for combined action, comprising two or more stakeholders who are willing and able to act strategically to advocate for a SMART policy or funding objective.

Decision-makers

Those who have direct power to make funding, policy, and programmatic decisions.

⁴ World Health Organization. Health Promotion Glossary. January 1998. <https://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary%201998.pdf>



Goal

The overall, long-term intended impact of the advocacy effort, usually the result of achieving several interrelated objectives.

Impact

The long-term result(s) achieved by cumulative interventions. The impact is the difference made in your target population's health, rights, access, etc.

Input

Human, technical, and financial resources needed to carry out activities.

Landscape assessment

Information and evidence collected to help understand entry points for advocacy and assess the likelihood of influencing policy development.

Objective

A strategic result you want to achieve within a foreseeable timeframe and with available resources. Achieving a goal usually requires meeting a series of interrelated objectives.

Outcome

Intermediate results that contribute to impact.



Output

Products generated from inputs, resulting from or contributing to activities implemented.
Outputs contribute to outcomes.

SMART

A mnemonic for the desired characteristics of an advocacy strategy:

S pecific	indicates what will be achieved and by what means
M easurable	framed by quantitative or qualitative descriptors
A ttainable	is realistic to achieve in the current context
R elevant	contributes to the overall goal of the advocacy efforts
T ime-bound	sets a specific date for achievement

