



Arabella
Advisors

Saving the Social Safety Net: Advocacy Lessons for Funders

Key Concepts and Resources

Advocacy Strategy & Evaluation



Key Advocacy Concepts

Advocacy

Any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of a cause or group

Lobbying

An attempt to influence specific **legislation** by communicating views to legislators or asking people to contact their legislators

Political Activity

Any activity conducted to influence the **election** of any individual to public office

Advocacy Landscape

	501(c)(3) Private Foundation	501(c)(3) Public Charity	501(c)(4) Social Welfare Organization	501(c)(5) Trade Union	Political (527) Organization
Example	Ford Foundation	New Venture Fund	Sixteen Thirty Fund	Service Employees International Union (SEIU)	EMILY's List
Tax Status	Tax-Exempt	Tax-Exempt Contributions tax-deductible	Tax-Exempt Contributions NOT tax-deductible	Tax-Exempt Contributions NOT tax-deductible as charitable contributions; may be deductible as business expenses.	Tax-Exempt Contributions NOT tax-deductible NOTE: All political committees that register & file reports with the FEC are 527s, but not all 527s are federally registered.
Lobbying	PROHIBITED Tax on foundation & managers Can fund projects that include lobbying.	LIMITED "insubstantial" part or 501(h) election	UNLIMITED	UNLIMITED	LIMITED May be subject to tax if not furthering political purposes
Political Activities	PROHIBITED Can lead to loss of exempt status and tax on organization & managers	PROHIBITED Can lead to loss of exempt status and tax on organization & managers	LIMITED Subject to federal & state campaign finance laws.	LIMITED Subject to federal & state campaign finance laws.	NO LIMIT, but... Subject to federal & state campaign finance laws, including limits on contributions

Funding Advocacy

Advocacy Activity

	Private Foundations	Public Foundations	Individuals
501(c)(3) lobbying	Can fund projects and organizations that conduct lobbying, but funds cannot be earmarked for lobbying (general support or project grant rule grants).	Can make grants earmarked for lobbying, as long as public foundation complies with its own lobbying limits.	Permitted
501(c)(3) non-partisan election activities	May support 501(c)(3) permissible non-partisan voter education activities.	May support 501(c)(3) permissible non-partisan voter education activities.	Permitted
501(c)(4) lobbying	Prohibited	Can make grants earmarked for lobbying, as long as public foundation complies with its own lobbying limits.	Permitted
501(c)(4) political activity	Prohibited	Prohibited	Permitted

Affiliated 501(c)(3)-501(c)(4)s

- 501(c)(3)s can set up separately incorporated 501(c)(4)s
 - Together these are considered “affiliated organizations” or “joint projects/campaigns”
 - Set up properly, can maximize educational and lobbying activities out of the 501(c)(3), laying foundation for targeted lobbying and political activity out of the 501(c)(4)



**NATURAL
RESOURCES
DEFENSE
COUNCIL**

(c)3/(c)4 Campaign Profile

Health Care for America Now Education Fund
(New Venture Fund)

Health Care for America Now
(Sixteen Thirty Fund)

Funded 501(c)3 **capacity building and education field work** as part of Health Care for America Now Education Fund's overall coordinated campaign

Funded 501(c)4 field work in targeted states and districts that successfully pushed back regressive repeal legislation as part of HCAN's coordinated **legislative advocacy campaign**

In 2017, Health Care for America Now Education Fund groups reached over 1.8 million people through on the ground **public education efforts** in over 30 states.

Organized and led weekly grassroots coalition calls to share information, provide communication guidance, and **mobilize key constituency field operations** to push back against regressive legislation in a strategic and coordinated manner.

Executed a joint New Venture Fund and Sixteen Thirty Fund contract with Berlin Rosen, allowing the projects to provide **cohesive C3/C4 messaging**

Private Foundations and Lobbying

- Two ways a private foundation can fund a 501(c)3 organization or project that engages in lobbying:

General Support Grant

Funder cannot provide any written or oral direction about the use of funds.

The grantee can use the funds for *anything* that they want, including **lobbying activities**.

Project Grant Rule

Funder can review a bifurcated budget and make a grant up to the size of the **total non-lobbying expenses**.

Foundation can **neither earmark** funds for lobbying **nor prohibit** lobbying in the grant agreement.

Requires multiple funders to fund the project **without lobbying prohibitions**.

Project Grant Rule



Each Foundation Grant \leq
Project's non-lobbying
component

Graphic courtesy of Alliance for Justice

Rapid Response Fund Tactics

Clear governance

Delegated decision-making

Transparent process

Streamlined application using existing materials

Universal grant size

Rolling response or rapid mini-dockets

Real-time omnidirectional reporting

Leverage aligned funding where appropriate

Advocacy Resources

[Bolder Advocacy](#) – *an initiative of Alliance for Justice*

[Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy](#)– *UNICEF*

[A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy](#) – *Annie E. Casey Foundation*

[Why Strategic Philanthropy \(Almost\) Always Involves Advocacy](#)– *Arabella Advisors*

[Sample Metrics for Advocacy Evaluation](#)– *The Urban Institute*

[The Elusive Craft of Evaluating Advocacy](#)– *Stanford Social Innovation Review*

Questions?



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