

SMART Goals for Advocates!

>>> WHAT MAKES A GOAL SMART?

Sometimes advocates have the tendency to focus on tactics (such as a protest or lobbying) more than strategy, but it does not matter how interesting or loud a tactic is if it

is not effective in helping you reach your advocacy goals. When doing any strategic planning for public interest, one of the first steps should always be developing a goal or set of SMART goals, that is to say they are:

- **Specific:** A goal should be specific enough so that you can properly focus your resources and increase the chances of your goal being reached.
- **Measurable:** Can you develop indicators or specific criteria that allow you to measure the progress made towards the goal(s)?
- **Attainable:** Can the goal(s) be attained using the resources you have or that are available to you?
- **Relevant:** Ultimately, all your goals should be in line with you or your organization's mission AND serve the public interest.
- **Time-bound:** In most forms of advocacy, goals should have specific deadlines or a target date of completion, however in Washington, some of your goals may have time frames of decades.

Other "goal setting" questions:

Does your goal have support from the public? If not, why is that?

What impact will reaching your goals have on the long-term public interest?

Can your goals be legitimated with support or research from others, including your allies and coalition partners?

>>> TIPS FOR DEVELOPING SMART GOALS

- **Remember your "client":** As a public interest advocate, the public is your client and their best interest should always be the truth that you wholeheartedly advocate for.
- **Think long term and consider the "macro environment":** Between disasters (man-made and natural), budgets, wars, and more, it can be difficult to make your point resonate with policy makers for an extended period of time. No matter how important your issue is, it is only one of many public interest issues that is of concern to the public, policymakers, and media. Take into consideration external factors that your organization may not have control over, such as the political, economic, and social climate when developing goals. Effective advocacy is often a waiting game, one of laying groundwork and then seizing opportunities when they appear. This requires thinking long-term: who will the next President likely be? Which party will dominate Congress? What industry fights are ongoing? Anticipating changes and policies is a requisite to effective advocacy, and even lobbying.
- **Do your homework:** Be sure you are well-versed in political procedures and processes and that you take the time to do your own background research on the issue you are working on. Read news articles, source materials (actual agency proceedings or court cases), blogs, commentary, Congressional hearings and statements. In addition, be sure to do research on the backgrounds of the allies, opponents, media, and policymakers.

