

A large yellow circular graphic on the right side of the page, containing a photograph of a grand, classical-style building with a prominent dome, likely a state capitol building. The image is partially obscured by a dark blue circular shape on the left.

State + Local Advocacy: What to Prioritize When Everything Feels Urgent

■ What to Prioritize When Everything Feels Urgent

Most organizations know exactly what they believe (the policy agenda). But policy positions alone don't create power. Systems do. If your advocacy efforts feel like a constant series of "fire drills" where you are reacting to bills, blasting your entire list, and hoping for the best, you likely have a path-to-action problem.

We created this checklist to help you stop the panic. It is designed to strip away the vanity metrics and busy work so you can build a "Layered System" that actually moves state and local lawmakers.

■ Who is this for?

This resource is designed for mid-sized state and local advocacy organizations (associations, coalitions, 501c4s) with limited teams (1-4 people).

■ What this helps you accomplish

- 1. Prioritizing the Essentials:** Identifying the specific "breadcrumbs" (education) and "ladders" (organizing) you need to build before you mobilize.
- 2. Structuring Your Time:** Moving from one-off blasts to an "always-on" cycle that builds readiness.
- 3. Measuring Real Power:** Tracking the metrics that actually matter to a decision-maker (like repeat action-takers) rather than just volume.





HOW TO USE THIS

This is designed for teams with limited time and budget. Start with the **Quick-Start Checklist** and complete the Week 1 essentials first. Then choose one rung of the ladder as your primary focus for the week (usually “contact” or “call”). Use the content starter ideas to fill your calendar quickly. Track repeat participation and decision-maker attention to learn what’s actually building influence.





Quick-Start Checklist (Day 1 essentials)

■ 1) Set goals that matter (not just activity)

Why this matters: You can build volume without building influence.

- Name your primary target (who can make the decision)
 - Name your secondary targets (staff, validators, media, allies)
 - Write the exact decision you want (vote yes/no, amend, fund, delay, enforce)
 - Choose 3 influence signals to track (repeat action-takers, office replies, meetings, usable stories)
 - Set a desirable outcome (realistic and specific)
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■ 2) Build your “always-on” Action Hub

Why this matters: A stable home base reduces chaos and increases follow-through.

- Create a one-page Action Hub with a “Start here” button
- Add 3 evergreen actions (always relevant)
- Add 1 rapid-response placeholder slot you can swap quickly
- Add call script + “find your official” link
- Add story forms (short + long) with permission checkbox
- Add a “what we’re tracking” line (simple transparency)

■ 3) Segment early so asks feel relevant

Why this matters: Relevance drives repeat participation and credibility

- Create 3 buckets: new, recent action-taker, high-intent
- Capture zip/districts if possible
- Draft 2 versions of each major ask: new vs repeat supporters
- Add thank-you + next-step follow-up for every action

■ 4) Create credibility content (not just awareness)

Why this matters: Decision-makers move when they have proof + cover + urgency.

- Draft a core narrative (problem → people → fix → local stakes)
- Draft 3 local proof points you can repeat
- Set up a story pipeline (collect → permission → edit → reuse)
- Draft 3 supporter assets (explainer, myth/fact, what-to-say)
- Draft 3 decision-maker assets (1-pager, email memo, FAQ)

■ 5) Match asks to commitment levels

Why this matters: Save high-value asks for high-intent supporters.

- Run 1 weekly easy ask (poll, click-to-email, comment)
- Add 1 medium ask (call, event, recruit 1 person)
- Reserve 1 high-value ask (story, meeting, testimony) for high-intent people
- Add an off-ramp: "Not ready to do X? Do Y instead."

■ 6) Measure what matters and tighten the loop

Why this matters: If you don't close the loop, you lose people

- Track repeat participation (2+ actions/month)
- Track target attention (replies, meetings, follow-ups)
- Track action completion rate (start vs finish)
- Send an impact update within 7 days ("what your action did")
- Hold a 20-minute weekly review and repeat what worked





Engagement Ladder

(lowest → highest commitment)

Rung 1: Signal support



Examples: poll, like/comment, share with prompt, watch explainer

Channels: social, email, SMS

KPIs: completion rate, CTR, video completion

Make it easier: 1-click actions

Make it stickier: share results + invite next rung

Rung 2: Stay connected



Examples: join SMS, subscribe to email, add zip/district, follow highlights

Channels: email, SMS, social

KPIs: opt-in rate, confirmation rate, % adding zip

Make it easier: 2-field signup

Make it stickier: welcome + “start here” action

Rung 3: Contact decision-maker



Examples: send email, add 1 personal line, submit public comment

Channels: email, Action Hub, social, paid (retargeting)

KPIs: completion rate, personalization rate, district match

Make it easier: pre-fill info + short script

Make it stickier: instant “next step: call” invite

Rung 4: Call



Examples: call office, voicemail, call party

Channels: SMS, email, events, relational

KPIs: calls completed, connects, voicemails

Make it easier: one-tap number + “read this” script

Make it stickier: ask callers to report “what staff said”

Rung 5: Share story



Examples: short story, long story, selfie video testimony

Channels: email, SMS, events, relational

KPIs: usable stories + permission rate

Make it easier: short and long options

Make it stickier: show exactly how stories get used

Rung 6: Show up live



Examples: attend a policymaker town hall or coffee meeting, rally, bring a friend

Channels: events, relational, email, SMS

KPIs: RSVPs, attendance, bring-a-friend

Make it easier: logistics + calendar add

Make it stickier: assign a role

Rung 7: Lead



Examples: captain, delegation meeting, testify, deliver letters

Channels: relational, events

KPIs: leaders recruited, meetings held, testimony delivered

Make it easier: prep sheet + template agenda

Make it stickier: recognition + next assignment within 7 days

off-ramp + re-entry path:

- If they won't donate or attend: recruit 1 person to do rung 3.
- If they won't call: do rung 3 now, and get a call script next week.





7-Step implementation plan (minimal staffing)

Staffing assumption: 1 comms/digital lead; 1 designer, optional for 1–2 simple graphics. Tools are whatever you already use (email + SMS optional + a basic web page)



Step 1: Decide what matters

- Pick the policy decision + primary target
- Choose 3 influence metrics you will track (not volume)
- Draft your core narrative (problem → people → solution → local stakes)



Step 2: Build the Action Hub (minimum viable)

- Create the one-page Action Hub
- Add 3 evergreen actions + 1 rapid-response slot
- Add short story form + permission checkbox



Step 3: Segment and set automations

- Create 3 buckets: new, recent action-taker, high-intent
- Add zip/district capture where possible
- Write a thank-you + next-step message for each action



Step 4: Produce the first week of content (low-lift)

- Draft 2 emails (educate + light action)
- Draft 2 SMS (one reminder + one easy action)
- Draft 3 social posts (story, myth/fact, weekly agenda)



Step 5: Launch a weekly “easy ask”

- Run one low-friction action (poll or one-click email)
- Immediately follow up with a “next rung” invitation (call, story, event)



Step 6: Recruit high-intent supporters

- Invite repeat action-takers to submit stories or join a rapid response team
- Offer “short” and “long” options
- Start a list of potential grasstops validators (trusted local voices)



Step 7: Close the loop + plan next sprint

- Send a short impact update (“what happened because you acted”)
- Review metrics for 20 minutes: what worked, what to repeat
- Queue next week’s easy ask + one medium ask (call or event)



If you only do 3 things

01

Launch the Action Hub with 3 evergreen actions + story form



02

Run one weekly easy ask (poll or click-to-email) with a clear next step



03

Track repeat participation + target attention (replies/meetings) instead of volume Feb 4th Webinar Planning



If you have a full team

- Add a weekly editorial meeting (30 minutes)
- Produce one decision-maker asset per week (1-pager/FAQ)
- Add a monthly “local validators” push (grasstops recruitment)
- Test one variable at a time (subject line OR sender OR CTA, not all at once)



Content idea bank (40+ ideas)

Format key: keep it simple, repeatable, and reusable across email, SMS, and social. Use stories + local proof points as the backbone.

1 EDUCATE

- **Hook:** "Here's what [BLANK] actually changes in your community." **Format:** 5-bullet explainer **CTA:** click to Action Hub
- **Hook:** "What does [BLANK] mean and why it matters." **Format:** carousel / thread **CTA:** subscribe for updates
- **Hook:** "Myth vs fact: what opponents are saying vs what's true." **Format:** myth/fact graphic **CTA:** share + tag a local friend
- **Hook:** "Timeline: how a bill becomes real policy (and where we can influence it)." **Format:** simple timeline **CTA:** take the rung 3 action
- **Hook:** "3 local facts that change how you see this issue." **Format:** 30-sec video **CTA:** reply YES for the script
- **Hook:** "A glossary for normal humans." **Format:** short blog post **CTA:** forward to a contact
- **Hook:** "What decision-makers care about (and why stories matter)." **Format:** email **CTA:** submit a story

2 PERSUADE/ORGANIZE

- **Hook:** "Meet [first name], a real person affected by this." **Format:** story card **CTA:** send a message to your rep
- **Hook:** "If you're on the fence, read this." **Format:** FAQ **CTA:** click to see where your rep stands
- **Hook:** "This is the most common misconception we hear." **Format:** 60-sec video **CTA:** share
- **Hook:** "What we're asking for is reasonable because..." **Format:** 3-point argument **CTA:** email decision-maker
- **Hook:** "A local leader explains why this matters." **Format:** quote graphic **CTA:** join the SMS list
- **Hook:** "Opponents want you to feel confused. Here's the simple truth." **Format:** short script **CTA:** copy/paste to send
- **Hook:** "The cost of doing nothing." **Format:** before/after scenario **CTA:** call your rep
- **Hook:** "What's at stake this month." **Format:** monthly stakes post **CTA:** take the weekly action



3 MOBILIZE

- **Hook:** "We need [BLANK] calls in [BLANK] hours." **Format:** SMS blast **CTA:** tap to call
- **Hook:** "Tonight's council agenda includes this [BLANK TIME]" **Format:** rapid alert **CTA:** show up / submit comment
- **Hook:** "Your rep is on the key committee." **Format:** segmented email **CTA:** send the email + add a personal line
- **Hook:** "One sentence you can send that matters." **Format:** single-sentence **CTA:** copy/paste email
- **Hook:** "Can you take 2 minutes right now?" **Format:** quick action page **CTA:** complete action
- **Hook:** "We're delivering letters Friday." **Format:** event invite **CTA:** write one letter
- **Hook:** "We need stories by midnight." **Format:** story push **CTA:** submit short story
- **Hook:** "Phonebank, but make it easy." **Format:** signup + script **CTA:** commit to 30 minutes
- **Hook:** "This vote moved. New deadline." **Format:** rapid response **CTA:** call now
- **Hook:** "Help us prove local support." **Format:** district-matched petition **CTA:** sign +

4 RECRUIT

- **Hook:** "Know someone in [district]?" **Format:** SMS ask **CTA:** forward this link
- **Hook:** "Bring one friend, we'll handle the rest." **Format:** event graphic **CTA:** RSVP + invite
- **Hook:** "Are you the kind of person who likes to lead?" **Format:** leadership quiz **CTA:** apply to be a captain
- **Hook:** "We need 10 local validators this month." **Format:** email **CTA:** nominate yourself or someone else
- **Hook:** "If you can send one text, you can help." **Format:** relational toolkit **CTA:** text 3 friends
- **Hook:** "Join the inside list." **Format:** segmented email **CTA:** become a core supporter
- **Hook:** "Help us test what works." **Format:** volunteer ask **CTA:** join the rapid response team



5 RAPID RESPONSE

- **Hook:** "Breaking: the opposition just introduced a bad amendment." **Format:** fast explainer + action **CTA:** call
- **Hook:** "Here's what happened today (and what's next)." **Format:** end-of-day recap **CTA:** take 1 action
- **Hook:** "We're hearing X from offices. Here's the real story." **Format:** rumor control post **CTA:** share
- **Hook:** "Decision-maker quote we need to respond to." **Format:** response graphic + script **CTA:** email your rep
- **Hook:** "Vote count update." **Format:** simple scoreboard **CTA:** recruit 1 person in a key district
- **Hook:** "Weather/emergency/city crisis: here's the policy tie-in." **Format:** contextual post **CTA:** stay connected
- **Hook:** "Urgent: public comment closes at [BLANK]." **Format:** SMS + one-tap link **CTA:** submit comment

6 "Always-on" staples (high reuse)

- **Hook:** "What we're working on this week." **Format:** weekly agenda email **CTA:** pick 1 action
 - **Hook:** "Thank you, here's what your action did." **Format:** impact update **CTA:** take the next rung
 - **Hook:** "A supporter asked... we answered." **Format:** Q&A **CTA:** submit a question
 - **Hook:** "Local spotlight: [city]" **Format:** local proof post **CTA:** forward to someone local
 - **Hook:** "One story." **Format:** behind-the-scenes post **CTA:** submit yours
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Thank You!

