



OUR JOURNEY TO ADVOCACY

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Ending homelessness and protecting wilderness—Campion Foundation’s keystone goals—require policy change. Public policy work can have far more significant impact than we could ever do with foundation dollars. ***We cannot buy enough housing to end homelessness, nor can we purchase the remaining public lands.*** Rather, we must use the “unique perch” of philanthropy to work through a variety of different vehicles to influence the public sector. Indeed, supporting a range of high-impact advocacy efforts is an essential component to our foundation strategy.

WHAT DOES FUNDING ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

Advocacy is about issues, not politics. Neither foundations nor public charities can participate in any political campaigns on behalf of candidates. However, through 501c3 nonprofit grants, we can support a number of advocacy efforts including:

- Project grants for organizations working to build a broad grassroots movements to support affordable housing legislation.
- Support for consultants to develop communications for a coalition of organizations working to end homelessness.
- Project grants for community leader education and mobilization.

HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS IN OUR ADVOCACY GRANTS?

Advocacy investments have a long time horizon and are embedded in a complex system but these facts make advocacy evaluation different, not impossible. Concerned that progress—short of the passage of actual legislation—would be difficult to track, we mined the field of advocacy evaluation and found these important insights:

- Establishing benchmarks and metrics for evaluation requires clear goals, an understanding of the levers for the specific policy change you seek, as well as open and trusting relationships with organization leaders.
- Instead of measuring more traditional outcomes such as clients served, we look at interim indicators like whether our issue has secured champions or how many coalition members have signed onto a particular agenda.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADVOCATE AS PHILANTHROPIC LEADERS?

In addition to funding advocacy efforts by our grantees, we can advocate in our own right, albeit within some boundaries. While it seems complex, we found that it boils down to three key points to keep in mind:

• **Private foundations can meet with elected officials and their staffs, members of agencies, and administrative officials.** We can educate them about the issues we care about. Unlike the public charities that we fund; however, we cannot lobby—that is, we cannot mention specific legislation or attempt to influence legislation. Legal counsel and the Alliance for Justice can help interpret these boundaries.

• **Board members and trustees as advocates are an untapped resource.** Through the Board Advocacy Project (<http://www.boardadvocacy.org/>), Campion Foundation is seeking to mobilize 5,000- 10,000 board members in the affordable housing and homelessness sector in Washington State to advocate for change. Indeed, our own trustees are passionate advocates who pursue advocacy initiatives in and outside of the foundation’s offices. Board members and trustees do not give up their rights as citizens when they join a non-profit board.

• **Building Capacity is essential:** For our grantees to have the capacity to advocate, they must have access to flexible funding (general operating support), as well as technical assistance and training resources. We must continue to advocate within the sector that supporting advocacy is essential to making progress on our goals.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

While private foundations cannot engage in lobbying activities themselves, they can fund organizations that lobby and they can also participate in a range of advocacy activities that fall outside the strict definition of lobbying—from funding lawsuits, to building relationships with lawmakers to working on changing regulations.

ADVOCACY RESOURCES:

We are not the first foundation to explore advocacy and we are grateful to the many excellent resources that have been made available to foundations and non profits explaining legal parameters and options for investment. Here are a few we recommend:

- **The Board Advocacy Project**
Trainings and advocacy information specifically tailored for nonprofit board members have been compiled and presented by our partner Common Ground at <http://www.boardadvocacy.org/> .
- **Alliance for Justice**
AFJ should be a first stop (after legal counsel) for foundations with questions about funding or participating in advocacy. They offer free consultation and a variety of online resources.
<http://www.afj.org/assets/resources/nap/private-foundations-may-advocate.pdf>
- **Atlantic Reports**
Investing in Change: Why Supporting Advocacy Makes Sense for Foundations. This publication explores the experiences of a growing number of funders around the world that are committed to supporting advocacy as a strategy to advance social change. <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/learning/atlantic-report/investing-change-why-supporting-advocacy-makes-sense-foundations>
- **Organizational Research Services**
ORS has spearheaded groundbreaking work in defining measurements for advocacy and policy change. Their consulting services have assisted many foundations in developing advocacy theories of change as well as defining indicators for measuring impact. <http://www.organizationalresearch.com/>
- **Innovation Network**
This is an excellent online resource for measuring advocacy. <http://www.innonet.org/>
- **Independent Sector**
A wonderful resource for both public charities and other nonprofits, learn more about lobbying, election day rules, and the legislative agenda at http://www.independentsector.org/advocacy_basics
- **Grantcraft**
Advocacy Funding: The Philanthropy of Changing Minds. A great resource every one of your trustees should read! http://www.grantcraft.org/dl_pdf/advocacy.pdf



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