Becoming An Advocate: What Practitioners Need to Know about Influencing Policy

Part 2

January 29, 2014
2-3 pm Eastern Standard Time
Logistics

- Today’s webinar is in **listen-only mode via internet audio or dial-in**. If you have audio issues during the webinar, try closing browser windows if using internet audio, or hang up and then dial back in using the telephone.

- To **submit your questions/comments** throughout the webinar, use the **Q&A** box in the lower-right part of your screen.

- For technical assistance or to get a **copy of today’s slides**: email **contact@imprintproject.org** at any time.
What is IMPRINT?

IMPRINT is a national coalition of nonprofits helping underemployed skilled immigrants to start their American careers.

IMPRINT:

• Creates and disseminates resources
• Advocates for effective policies
• Broadcasts best practices

www.imprintproject.org
Today’s Presenters

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Communications & Policy Director
IMPRINT

Nicole Burda
Deputy Director, Government Relations
American Public Health Association
Today’s Agenda

I. Results of our pre-survey:
   • Who’s in the room?
   • What do you most want to learn?

II. Recap: Part I covered the “why” and “what” of advocacy; today we’ll cover how to do it

III. Advocating with policymakers

IV. Other types of advocacy

V. Q&A
Who’s In The Room Today?

Organizational Affiliation
- Community college or university: 55%
- Immigrant service organization: 18%
- State or local government: 18%
- Other: 9%
- Other: 3%

Experience with Advocacy
- None - I am new to this: 27%
- Very little - less than a year, or a handful of activities: 18%
- A medium amount - 2-3 years, or periodic activities: 18%
- A great deal - 4 or more years, or regular activities: 37%
What You Most Want to Learn

• Ideas for putting together advocacy materials 64%
• How to conduct a legislative visit 37%
• How to host events that advances your mission 36%
• Talking points for skilled immigrant issues 27%
• How to publish an op-ed 27%
Advocacy is engaging with the broader public in a way that advances your mission.

Your audience may include:
- Legislators
- Members of the media
- Funders
- General public
Recap: Understanding Where to Target Your Advocacy

The ecological model (pictured at right) is often used to help identify where advocacy efforts should be directed.
There Are Many Ways to Conduct Advocacy...

• Today we’ll begin by talking about advocacy in relation to policymakers

• Our first focus will be federal elected officials

• Next, we’ll discuss how the skills you use in legislative visits or testimony can be applied in other contexts
IMPRINT’s Advocacy Role

- For the last year, IMPRINT has worked to educate policymakers about skilled immigrant issues.

- Steering Committee members have made several visits to Washington to present information about the contributions made by immigrant professionals.

- IMPRINT’s federal policy recommendations and related 1-page state snapshots have helped illustrate the importance of immigrant professional integration as part of federal immigration reform.

See IMPRINT’s recommendations at: www.imprintproject.org/downloads/our-publications
Why Advocacy Matters

• Your issue needs a face
• Advocates can shape national debate
• Members of Congress listen to their constituents
• Advocates educate members of Congress
  • Demonstrate importance of programs in your state/district
  • Seen as a credible source
  • Become a resource for staff

Slide courtesy of: APHA
Why Advocacy Matters

• The budget climate requires members of Congress to prioritize programs

• Create a unified voice of support for critical programs

• Support the ‘champions’ of your issue

• Unsupportive members of Congress need to hear from their constituents

Slide courtesy of: APHA
Why Advocacy Matters

• “They need to hear ‘Thank you’ and know that their vote was not for nothing – standing up to the pressure is very difficult.” – Congressional staffer

• “We’re being hammered by constituents... Messages of opposition are at a ratio of 100:1 for those supporting our decision. It’s been really nasty, and staff are completely demoralized. Positive reinforcement right now will really help bolster courage as we enter into the next critical phase of negotiations.” – Member of Congress
How to Get Involved

1. Correspondence: phone calls, letters, emails

2. Public event: town halls, public meetings, local events

3. Media: letter to the editor, op-ed, radio show, social media

4. Meetings: DC and district office, invite them to visit your program
As a constituent you have the right and responsibility to engage with your representatives.

You can bring:
- Expertise
- Passion
- Access

Advocates often become a resource for Congressional staff.

Slide courtesy of: APHA
Keys to a Successful Meeting

Before your meeting with a Congressperson:

– Research the member’s positions and committee assignments
– Understand your issue
– Have a speaking agenda

Slide courtesy of: APHA
Keys to a Successful Meeting

During the meeting:

- Be pleasant, flexible, **succinct**, strategic
  - Frame the issue
- **Have and make your ask**
- Use a personal story/ **district-specific** information
- Include data to support your story
- Leave-behinds
- Offer yourself as a resource
After the meeting:

- Answer any lingering questions
- Send materials in electronic form if asked
- **Follow-up** on your ask and theirs!
- Say “Thank you”
Don’t Forget! Additional Advocacy Activities

- Letters to Congress, White House, Federal Agencies
- Regulatory comments
- Testimony for congressional hearing

Slide courtesy of: APHA
Resources and Tools

- APHA advocacy tips online: www.apha.org/advocacy
  - Tips and resources
    - Rules of advocacy
    - Sample letters to Members of Congress
    - Infographics
  - Scheduling a Hill visit
    - Sample request for a meeting
    - Tips on the do’s and don’ts
  - Support for other advocacy activities
    - Sample phone script
    - Town hall: tips and questions to ask
  - Other guidance: lobbying restrictions

Slide courtesy of:
Skilled Immigrants 101 provides a quick overview of essential facts and talking points to help you discuss skilled immigrant issues with policymakers, funders, employers, and more.

www.imprintproject.org/downloads/our-publications
Beyond Legislative Visits: Other Advocacy Options

Submitting written testimony to Congressional or state hearings can help to build awareness of your issue among legislators.

Use www.govtrack.us to keep track of pending legislation relevant to skilled immigrants.

Or check the relevant Congressional committee webpage to see scheduled hearings.

Think broadly, and consider how your issue may be relevant to a larger topic.
The Nuts and Bolts of Testifying

A reminder: While time is limited for in-person testimony, and your organization may not be invited to speak, there is typically no limit on how many groups or individuals may submit written testimony.

Keep your submission to 2-3 pages, double-spaced. Add footnotes or citations as appropriate.

Meet the deadline for submitting testimony (submit early if you can).
Sharing Your Testimony

Consider issuing a press release and/or e-mail bulletin with a copy of your testimony.

Make sure to let your press contacts know you are available for comment on the issues raised in your testimony.

If the hearing will be live-streamed or was recorded, include a link to the hearing in your bulletin.
Why Publish an Op-Ed?

An op-ed is a short essay of 500-700 words that illustrates your issue.

Publishing an op-ed can help the public learn about your issue.

More importantly, a published op-ed is a useful handout or “leave-behind” for speaking with funders, policymakers, or others.
How to Publish Your Op-Ed

1. **Draft your essay.** Have a co-worker review it for accuracy and readability. Get organizational sign-off if needed.

2. **Find an outlet for publication.** Consider your local newspaper, city or regional newspaper, or an online-only publication such as the National Journal’s The Next America, New America Media, or Latina Lista.

3. **Make sure there is a relevant “news hook”** connecting your essay to a current event.

4. **Follow the instructions to submit.** Make sure to read them carefully!

*Be Aware: www.theopedproject.org* has good writing & submission tips on its Resources page.
Creating Briefing Materials

Sometimes a **chart or graph** can tell your story better than words alone.

A simple **1-page overview** can be used as a handout or briefing material for policymakers, the media, or other audiences.

Don’t overwhelm your audience! Less is more – but do **include your phone number and website** for follow-up.
A Final Reminder: The Personal Touch

Op-eds, letters to the editor, and written testimony are useful tools.

But the **human stories of skilled immigrants themselves** can be a powerful force for advocacy.

**Think creatively** about how to ensure that your own, your colleagues’ and other skilled immigrant voices are heard in the policy and advocacy arena.

*Share your ideas in today’s chat or by e-mailing contact@imprintproject.org!*
Q&A

Submit via Q&A box on screen

OR

Submit via email: contact@imprintproject.org
Contact Us

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
Communications & Policy Director
IMPRINT
amanda@imprintproject.org

Nicole Burda
Deputy Director, Government Relations
American Public Health Association
nicole.burda@apha.org