

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR CAUSE IN THREE HOURS A WEEK

**ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS** is not just for experts! Your organization can raise public awareness of your cause, build relationships with government, and help shape laws and policies that affect its mission by spending just three hours per week doing public policy work. The following are activities at least one staff person or volunteer can do to make a difference. The activities are listed in an order designed to help organizations and their staff persons who may be new to public policy develop the capacity to take action and gradually increase their impact. Don't get overwhelmed or worry about completing all of these activities at once or in a set amount of time. The idea is to select activities that you can do immediately.

## STEP

### 1

## PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION FOR PUBLIC POLICY

### ■ REVIEW THE LAW.

You don't have to be an attorney to learn the legal opportunities and limits of nonprofit participation in the public policy process. Lobbying is legal. Supporting candidates for office is not. Learn the basics at [www.clpi.org](http://www.clpi.org).

### ■ PREPARE YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

A dedicated committee of your board of directors can be supportive and influential in developing positive relationships with government. In three hours or less you can discuss the potential benefits of a board committee on public policy with your Chairperson and query board members to determine their interest in helping build your organization's public policy capacity.

### ■ REVIEW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT.

Meet with your executive director and board chair to develop a comprehensive list of the ways government, at all levels, affects your organization's ability to meet its mission.

### ■ CONNECT PUBLIC POLICY WITH GOVERNANCE.

Develop an agenda of items for discussion and decision at your next board meeting. Aim to inform your board how public policies affect those you serve and your organization's ability to provide services. Be sure to discuss the findings of your research on how government policies currently affect your mission.

### ■ DEVELOP A PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA.

Now that you have identified several members of your board to work with you on public policy matters, it is time to have a meeting to identify the two or three most important long-term changes in laws and/or regulations that would benefit your cause and organizational capacity. Have a clear number one priority so you will be able to maintain focus. Write them down. Next to them, describe in a few sentences, if these changes occurred, how those you serve would benefit.

