



Illinois Library Association

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of concentric, semi-circular bands in a gradient of colors: red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. The bands are separated by white spaces, creating a vibrant, multi-layered effect.

# READY SET ADVOCATE

**Library Advocacy Tool Kit**



# What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Advocacy includes activities and publications to influence public policy, laws, and budgets by using facts, relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, and commissioning and publishing research.

“Advocacy.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 28 November 2020, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advocacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advocacy)

## Advocacy IS...

- Action
- Engagement
- Supporting a cause
- Defining specific issues
- A positive message
- Leading

## Advocacy is NOT....

- Selling
- Marketing
- Begging
- Whining
- Letting someone else do it

## Putting the Advocacy Pieces Together

Advocacy can sometimes seem confusing, because when people talk about advocacy, they may be talking about different pieces of what in fact is an overall process. Some advocates will focus on local issues, others on statewide or federal issues. Whether it's community engagement, building an advocacy network, or getting the message out, all are part of a continuous, sustained process, or continuum, that involves four stages:

1. Laying the groundwork
2. Turning support into action
3. Advocating specific goals
4. Responding to opportunities and threats

Whether the goal is local support or federal legislation, the components are basically the same. Once you understand the pieces, and how they fit together, you will find it easier to be an effective advocate for your library at all levels. That's one of the reasons why involvement at the state level, for instance, can make you a more effective advocate at the local level.

## The Advocacy Continuum

### Laying the Groundwork

- Community engagement
- Building relationship
- Impact measures
- Personal stories

### Turning Support into Action

- Building support networks
- Getting the message out
- Resources for advocates
- Advocacy training

### Advocating for Specific Goals

- Local initiatives
- State funding
- Federal legislation
- International initiatives

### Responding to Opportunities and Threats

- Budget threats
- Legislative challenges
- Censorship challenges