

ACT! Quick

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About ACT! Quick

What is ACT! Quick?

What does the tool help me do?

ACT! Quick is a short version of Alliance for Justice's Advocacy Capacity Tool (ACT!).

Completing this tool provides a snapshot of your organization, coalition, or group's current capacity—or readiness—to engage in advocacy work. It helps you document your assets, locate potential gaps, and prioritize areas to strengthen and grow.

Who should use this tool?

Organizations, coalitions, and groups interested in a quick self-assessment of their advocacy capacity. Advocacy capacity consists of the skills, resources, knowledge, and practices that lead to effective advocacy over time.

How does the tool work?

ACT! Quick consists of 18 multiple-choice questions about different indicators of organizational capacity, organized into four sections:

1. Advocacy Goals, Plans, and Strategies
2. Conducting Advocacy
3. Advocacy Avenues
4. Organizational Operations to Sustain Advocacy

Each question will ask you to review a set of statements and rank your organization's current capacity using the following scale:

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

Some questions also include a "Rely on Partners" answer option.

Once you have answered the questions, you can calculate your score for each of the 18 indicators. You will then have the opportunity to reflect on which areas you would like to prioritize to strengthen your organization's advocacy capacity.

Keep in mind:

- **Achieving a high score in every category is not the goal.** Rather, the goal should be to use this tool for honest reflection about whether you are now, so you can plan with intention as you map out where you want to go from here.
- **Remember that finding ways to rely on your partners is often the best strategy to fulfill a capacity need.** Nobody has it all – or needs to do it all by themselves.
- **Plan on repeating ACT! Quick at regular intervals to assess your progress and growth over time.** For example, many organizations have found it beneficial to repeat this tool every 12 months as part of their annual strategic planning cycle.
- **Consider using the [free online version](#) of this tool to calculate your results automatically and have a PDF copy of your results emailed to you.** All data provided are confidential and protected under the terms of [our data privacy policy](#).
- **Check out the [terminology](#) page on our website as needed to look up technical terms used in this tool.**

ACT! Quick Assessment



Section 1

Advocacy Goals, Plans, and Strategies

Please review each statement below and select the response that best fits your organization.

1. Preparation

In preparation for advocacy work, the organization scans the outside policy environment as well as its own knowledge, skills, and resources for advocacy.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

2. Agenda

The organization has a clear advocacy agenda that is informed by its constituents/community and approved by its leadership.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

3. Plans, Strategies, and Adaptability

The organization (1) identifies key decision-makers for its advocacy agenda goals, (2) determines what it will take to obtain those decision-makers' support, and (3) plans a flexible strategy in order to advance its agenda.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A



Section 2

Conducting Advocacy

Please review each statement below and select the response that best fits your organization. Choose “Rely on Partners” if the organization has decided not to build capacity in a particular indicator because that capacity primarily is delegated to other individuals or groups.

4. Research and Analysis

The organization gathers and analyzes credible information on its issues and shares its analyses as appropriate.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

5. Field Operations

The organization communicates with, educates, and engages its constituents, networks, and the public on its issues.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

6. Advocacy Partners and Coalitions

The organization identifies and collaborates with other stakeholders in the same policy environment in order to advance its goals.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

7. Messaging

The organization develops clear, compelling, and concise messages that are adapted for its target audiences (internal and external).

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

8. Media Relations

The organization plans media outreach and distributes information to media (online, broadcast, and print) as needed to communicate its messages.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

9. Influence Decision Makers

The organization builds and nurtures ongoing working relationships with elected officials and other policymakers who can influence the progress of the organization's advocacy agenda.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A



Section 3

Advocacy Avenues

Please review each statement below and select the response that best fits your organization. Choose “Rely on Partners” if the organization has decided not to build capacity in a particular indicator because that capacity primarily is delegated to other individuals or groups.

10. Administrative

The organization monitors and works to influence executive branch, regulatory, and enforcement activity in order to further the organization’s advocacy priorities.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don’t Know / Not Applicable = N/A

11. Legislative

The organization monitors and works to influence legislative activity in order to further its advocacy priorities.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don’t Know / Not Applicable = N/A

12. Ballot Measures, Referenda, and Initiatives

The organization monitors the planning and progress of, and takes public positions on, ballot measures, referenda, and initiatives related to its advocacy priorities.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don’t Know / Not Applicable = N/A

13. Electoral

The organization understands the election process and participates in voter and/or candidate education efforts.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don’t Know / Not Applicable = N/A

14. Litigation

The organization monitors litigation related to its policy priorities and pursues activities such as initiating litigation or signing on to amicus briefs.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don’t Know / Not Applicable = N/A



Section 4

Organizational Operations to Sustain Advocacy

Please review each statement below and select the response that best fits your organization.

15. Organizational Commitment

The organization's leadership understands and supports its advocacy plans and activities.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

16. Funding Advocacy

The organization informs individual donors and foundations about the value of funding advocacy and the ability of funders to do so under the law.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

17. Decision-Making Structure and Process

The organization's leadership has a clear process for making timely, informed decisions about its advocacy work.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

18. Fiscal Management and Sustainability

The organization allocates funding for advocacy work and tracks its lobbying activities and expenses as required by law.

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know / Not Applicable = N/A

Your ACT! Quick Results

You can calculate your score for each indicator using the tables below.

Review your response for each question and enter your score in the “Points Awarded” column:

- Very Strong / Always = 4
- Moderately Strong / Usually = 3
- Somewhat Strong / Sometimes = 2
- Not Strong / Rarely / Never = 1
- Rely on Partners = 0
- I Don't Know = N/A

Remember to add a checkmark in the “Rely on Partners” column, where applicable.

Section 1: Advocacy, Goals, Plans, and Strategies

Capacity Indicator	Points Awarded
1. Preparation	_____ out of 4
2. Agenda	_____ out of 4
3. Plans, Strategies, and Adaptability	_____ out of 4

Section 2: Conducting Advocacy

Capacity Indicator	Points Awarded	Rely on Partners
4. Research and Analysis	_____ out of 4	_____
5. Field Operation	_____ out of 4	_____
6. Advocacy Partners and Coalitions	_____ out of 4	N/A
7. Messaging	_____ out of 4	_____
8. Media Relations	_____ out of 4	_____
9. Influencing Decision-Makers	_____ out of 4	_____

Section 3: Advocacy Avenues

Capacity Indicator	Points Awarded	Rely on Partners
10. Administrative	_____ out of 4	_____
11. Legislative	_____ out of 4	_____
12. Ballot Measures, Referenda, and Initiatives	_____ out of 4	_____
13. Electoral	_____ out of 4	_____
14. Litigation	_____ out of 4	_____

Section 4: Organizational Operations to Sustain Advocacy

Capacity Indicator	Points Awarded
15. Organizational Commitment	_____ out of 4
16. Funding Advocacy	_____ out of 4
17. Decision-Making Structure and Process	_____ out of 4
18. Fiscal Management and Sustainability	_____ out of 4

As you review your scores, keep in mind:

The goal here is not to get the highest score in every single indicator. No organization, coalition, or group has it all.

Rather, this tool is designed to help you reflect with intention about what your assets and strengths are—and prioritize areas in which you want to build your capacity to become more resilient and sustainable.

Areas to Strengthen Checklist

Use the checklist below to document the top three to five areas where you would like to strengthen your capacity in the future. Keeping track of this list—and repeating ACT! again in three, six, or 12 months—can help you monitor your progress over time.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Advocacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agenda | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Advocacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plans, Strategies, and Adaptability | <input type="checkbox"/> Ballot Measures, Referenda, and Initiatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research and Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Electoral Advocacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Operation | <input type="checkbox"/> Litigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy Partners and Coalitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Commitment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Messaging | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding Advocacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Media Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-Making Structure and Process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing Decision-Makers | <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal Management and Sustainability |

Make a quick note for your future self: Why would you like to strengthen your organization's advocacy capacity in these areas?

ACT! Quick Reflection Questions

How can I analyze and interpret my results?

As you review your scores, keep in mind that the goal is not to get the highest score in every indicator. No organization, coalition, or group has it all. Scores reflect your organization's capacity, not the quality of your work.

Context matters when it comes to interpreting what data means. Certain indicators may be more relevant than others for your organization, coalition, or group, depending on many factors, including:

- The type of advocacy work you are engaged in—or plan to engage in
- The size of the organization or coalition (staff and budget)
- The level of advocacy experience you have (beginner versus advanced)

View your results as a way to spark strategic conversations around what the future could look like. Here are some questions to guide individual or collective reflection around how to interpret and use your results.

Start out with some general reflection on your results overall.

- Do the results resonate with your understanding of the organization?
- Did anything immediately jump out to you as important? Why?
- Did any of the results surprise you?

For the capacity indicators where you have the highest scores, consider the following:

- Why are you strong in this area?
 - Is it because of investments your organization has made?
 - Or do you have staff or board members who have significant expertise?
- How do you currently use this strength?
- Are there other ways you might take advantage of this strength?
- Is this area critical to future advocacy work? If so, what do you need to do to sustain your capacity in this area?

For the capacity indicators where you have the lowest scores, consider the following:

- Why are your scores lower in this area?
 - Is it because you are primarily relying on your partners (not a bad thing)?
 - Is it because it is less critical to the success of your advocacy work?
 - Is it because you have not had the resources to invest in this area?
- Is this area critical to your future work? If so, what should you focus on improving first?
- Should you work more closely with partners to meet any needs you have in this area?

When considering the extent to which you rely on partners, consider the following:

- Who are your partners?
 - How do you currently work together?
 - Are there other areas where you could collaborate?
 - Do your partners' priorities align well with your own?
- Are there other groups with whom your organization should partner?
- Should you consider building your organization's internal capacity in the areas where you currently rely on partners? Why or why not?

As you consider which areas where you would like to become stronger, ask yourself:

- What do we need to accomplish our goals?
- What do we need to prioritize?
- What challenges might we face in moving our goals forward—and how can we mitigate them?
- How do we maintain and/or grow resources to continue the work?
 - Are there any easy wins where a small investment in building our capacity would make a big difference?
 - What types of growth will require a more significant investment of time and resources?

Plan to reuse ACT! Quick again in the future.

These tools are most beneficial when you use them to assess changes in your organizational advocacy capacity over time.

We strongly recommend that you plan to complete ACT! Quick at regular intervals, e.g., every 12 months. You may also want to consider using the full-length ACT! tool to analyze your advocacy capacity in-depth.

Keep a copy of your initial results to use as a baseline, then compare your new results with your earlier scores to assess your progress toward your goals.

ACT! Quick

**Thank you for
completing ACT Quick!**



Alliance for Justice is a national association of over 120 organizations, representing a broad array of groups committed to progressive values and the creation of an equitable, just, and free society. Since 1979, AFJ has been the leader in advocating for a fair and independent justice system, preserving access to the courts, and empowering others to stand up and fight for their causes. The two pillars of Alliance for Justice are our Justice Program, focusing on ensuring our nation's courts protect our critical constitutional rights and legal protections, and our Bolder Advocacy Program, focusing on building advocacy capacity for nonprofits and the foundations that fund them. Learn more about us by visiting afj.org.



Bolder Advocacy is the nation's foremost advocacy resource for foundations and nonprofits who want to engage more actively and knowledgeably in the policymaking process to advance their work. Our legal experts will help you move to a bolder path as you consider key strategies like lobbying, election-related activities, ballot measures, grantmaking, or other types of advocacy to accomplish your goals. For more information, sign up for [our newsletter](#), contact our free technical assistance hotline by emailing us at advocacy@afj.org, or visit our website: www.bolderadvocacy.org.