

**advocacy**

**terminology**

***a through z***

# TERMINOLOGY

## TERM

## DEFINITION

### 501(c)(3)

A section of the Internal Revenue Code that provides exemption from federal income tax to organizations that devote their resources to educational, religious, scientific, or other charitable activities. Contributions to a 501(c)(3) may be deductible from a donor's federal income tax. A 501(c)(3) organization is strictly forbidden from engaging in any political activity on behalf of or in opposition to a candidate for public office. 501(c)(3) organizations are divided into two categories: public charities and private foundations. Public charities may engage in a limited amount of lobbying, whereas private foundations are taxed on any money spent for lobbying. Examples: Public charities include Alliance for Justice, YMCA, the Girl Scouts of America and Sierra Club Foundation; private foundations include the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### 501(c)(4)

A section of the Internal Revenue Code that provides exemption from federal income tax to social welfare organizations—organizations that engage in educational, lobbying, and some limited political activities. Contributions to 501(c)(4) organizations are not tax deductible. Examples: Sierra Club and Human Rights Campaign.

### 501(h) Expenditure Test

An alternative method by which public charities can measure their lobbying. While the name reflects a section of the tax code, organizations do not change their 501(c)(3) status by choosing this method to measure their lobbying. This test provides clear guidance, as it defines lobbying, provides an exact dollar-based lobbying limit, and measures lobbying based upon an organization's expenditures. An organization must affirmatively elect—through a one-time filing of Form 5768 — to be covered by the 501(h) expenditure test.

### Action

Rallies, picketing, and large-audience events, often with people in authority invited as guests from whom “asks” or “demands” are made. The purpose is to increase momentum, visibility, power, and “wins” (major accomplishments) for the organization. Good organizing groups use controversial tactics only when quiet diplomacy has failed to get them into relationships with authorities. If a relationship has developed, the public meeting may sometimes be “scripted” in advance. Sometimes a public meeting is used to demonstrate “people power” and at the same time build a relationship with an official.

### Activate

Engage others in advocacy or community organizing activities.

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### Administrative Advocacy and Organizing

Efforts to influence actions of the Executive Branch, such as by commenting on rulemakings and regulations, Executive Orders, and other policies.

### Administrative/ Executive Order

An action, order, decree, or directive by the president, governor or a mayor that directs the operations of executive offices. Some have the force of law when made in pursuance of certain Acts of Congress that give the President or a Governor discretionary power.

### Advocacy

While all lobbying is advocacy, not all advocacy is lobbying. Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others. It includes public education, regulatory work, litigation, and work before administrative bodies, lobbying, voter registration, voter education, and more.

### Advocacy Capacity

The organizational skills, resources, knowledge, and practices that lead to effective advocacy over time.

### Agenda

This could be a one page description of advocacy goals such as [the Nat Assoc. of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners'](#) or long and more specific like [Am. Assoc. of University Women's](#).

### Allies

A group of more than two organizations, governments, corporations or individuals that have a common advocacy or organizing goal.

### Amicus Briefs

Documents offered to the court by parties not directly related to the case, which help support one side of the argument or emphasize particular issues. Advocacy groups frequently submit amicus briefs.

*For example: The ACLU may provide an amicus brief to a court deciding a case regarding affirmative action.*

### Assets

Skills, talents, and capacities, both institutional and individual, which are identified within a community and can be mobilized to strengthen the community. For example, a senior citizen who is a master gardener, a public school, and a plot of open land near the school are all assets that could be brought together to create a youth gardening program. An asset map is an inventory of community assets, sometimes but not always, represented on an actual map.

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### Advocacy Avenues

The four paths of advocacy: administrative advocacy, litigation advocacy, legislative advocacy, and electoral advocacy.

### Ballot Measure

Ballot measures allow voters to propose and enact laws. In some cases, ballot measures are referred from the legislature. Types of ballot measures include ballot initiatives, constitutional amendments, bond measures, and referenda.

### Candidate Education

The process of disseminating issue-related information to candidates during election season. Candidate education could include sending briefing books, reports, etc. to candidates in order to let them know where you stand on a particular issue. Candidate education encourages those running to invest in your priorities.

### Capacity Building

The process of growing the ability to act effectively. Any successful social change group requires structures, resources, knowledge, skills, practices, and vision to achieve its goals, and by getting stronger in these areas over time, the group can act more effectively. The abilities to forge and strengthen relationships, create strategic alliances, manage a base, and sustain the organization are some vital capacities.

### Change Avenues

The five targets for community organizing for obtaining change are: administrative, legislative, electoral, litigation, and corporate.

### Coalition

Usually a group of two or more organizations that are working together jointly on a specific issue or cause.

### Coalition Partners

These partners share the burden of major mobilization, strategic decisions, policy advocacy, and everything else.

### Community Building

The process by which community members come together to enhance their environment and create meaningful connections to one another.

### Community Consensus-Building

The process of establishing common ground between constituents. In this process the constituents discuss the needs and problems of the community and decide on next steps of how they will address these needs and problems.

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### Community Development

The process by which community members and/or outside groups working together to improve the quality of life in a given area. This often implies economic growth.

### Community Organizing

The process by which individuals in a given community come together to promote a common interest or cause.

### Constituent Base

For community organizing, this includes, but is not limited to, the numbers of members in an organizing group. The strength of the base depends upon members' and others' attendance at organizing events, the extent to which they represent the community being organized, their engagement in issue and strategy selection and their identification with the goals of the organizing group.

### Constituents

The members served by an organization and/or those who will be impacted by a particular advocacy or other organizing outcome.

*Example: Community members served by a health clinic, or a segment of the population in need of healthcare.*

### Corporate

Usually for-profit businesses. For example: Community organizing actions to get Walmart to change its policies is work targeting the Corporate Change Avenue.

### Court Leanings

Exist when a court is swayed from one side or another on a particular issue. Court leanings can also imply that a given court has a vested political interest in an issue at hand.

### Database

A place where information is stored. Example: Names of and information on registered voters in a precinct.

### Decision-makers

Individuals in positions of power to make policy related changes. E.g.: legislators and legislative staff in legislative work, agency heads, and staff in administrative work, judges in litigation, elected officials, business leaders in work with corporations, or the voters themselves in elections and ballot measures.

### Electoral Advocacy/Election-related Work

Efforts to educate voters on the importance of an issue through educational materials directed to the electorate (such as legislative scorecards), or to register or encourage them to vote. Electoral advocacy also includes any advocacy efforts related to an election. These activities may be partisan or non-partisan but 501(c)(3) organizations may only engage in non-partisan activity.

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### **Empowerment**

The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions, which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

### **Entity**

An individual, group, organization, coalition, or company that organizers either address in their organizing efforts or partner with in order to gain more power.

### **Executive Branch**

The branch of government with administrative authority. For instance, at the federal level the executive branch consists of the president and agencies and on the state level the governor and state agencies among others.

### **Facilitate**

The process of guiding a group through conversation and problem solving. Facilitation is different from leading because it allows the group to take charge of the direction in which the conversation will go.

### **Focus Groups**

A method of qualitative research in which a small group of individuals are asked about their beliefs and opinions regarding an advocacy agenda item.

### **Funders/Donors**

Foundations, organizations, individuals, and governments that provide financial support to organizations that may engage in advocacy and/or community organizing.

### **Governing Structure**

Generally the board of directors/trustees with fiduciary responsibility for a non-profit organization. In some cases nonprofits may implement other structures for governing.

### **Indicators**

In Alliance for Justice's capacity tools, indicators are broad capacities. In the Advocacy Capacity Tool, each contain 4 basic measures and 1-3 advanced measures. In the Community Organizing Capacity Assessment Tool, each contain 4-6 basic measures and 1-3 advanced measures.

### **IRS (Internal Revenue Service)**

The administrative agency that implements and enforces the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), the federal law that governs the taxation of individuals and organizations, and regulates the activity of tax-exempt organizations.

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### Leaders

For community organizing, leaders are key people who emerge from an organization's membership, distinct from paid organizers and staff. Leaders usually get recognized by showing that others will follow them – for example, by demonstrating that they can turn out 10 people for a meeting or event. Once identified, they may get training in techniques, such as data analysis or public speaking, that build effectiveness and confidence

### Leadership

Those responsible for the primary decision-making within an organization. The leadership of an organization also plays a significant role in the direction of the organization. Leadership will look different depending on the size and scope of the organization, but may include executive directors and/or other staff, as well as board members.

### Legislative Advocacy and Organizing

Efforts to change policy through the legislative branch of government such as Congress, state Houses of Delegates or City Councils. This may include lobbying in support or opposition to a bill, the crafting of new legislative language, writing amendments to existing bills, or encouraging others to contact their legislators. Not all legislative advocacy is lobbying.

### Legislative Process

The rules, ethics and customs that constitute the decision making process. The process is the journey of a bill from introduction into the house or senate, through mark-ups, until a vote before the full legislature.

### Litigation

A lawsuit, judicial contest, or any dispute brought to court to enforce a particular right.

### Measures

In AFJ's capacity tools, there are 4-6 basic descriptors of capacity or measures for each of the indicators and 1-3 advanced descriptors. Tool users fill in the degree to which their organization possesses or engages in each of the measures.

### Media

A person, organization or corporation whose main goal is to share information with the public. This includes traditional media and social networking sites.

### Members/Membership

Individuals or organizations belonging to a group; can be informal or formal. Some groups have dues or participation requirements for membership, while others do not. Note: There is a separate and different IRS definition for membership related to lobbying rules.

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### Message/Messaging

A clear concise definition of an advocacy or community organizing goal. Audiences include segments of the public, decision makers, and constituents.

### Mobilize

To engage others in activity to obtain a solution. Community mobilizing is categorized as issue oriented, its process is driven by action, and it can be a confrontational process.

### Network

A group of organizations, and individuals including organizational members and constituents with a shared interest. Individual organizations usually have their own networks that also include allies and supporters. Networks may be formal, tightly knit groups, or they could be more loose and informal affiliations. For community organizing, there are several networks of large associations of affiliated organizations. Some networks raise dues from member organizations, such as groups based in religious congregations or neighborhoods. Others have been formed by intermediary organizations around a common interest or identity, such as human rights. Networks often hold training workshops for members and leaders, where they share information, strategies, and campaign progress.

### Non-traditional Allies

A group of two or more organizations or individuals that work together for a common advocacy goal who may not share a similar mission or service-provision agenda.

*Example: A pro-life, Catholic organization teams up with a woman's health clinic to pass a bill that will allocate more money for public assistance benefits.*

### Opponents

Organizations, corporations, governments, and individuals that work against each other's advocacy or organizing goals.

*Example: The private insurance companies who advocated against the passage of the healthcare reform bill and the physicians' networks who advocated on its behalf.*

### Organizing Staff

A paid employee of the organization who serves as a convener, listener, motivator, and coach. Organizers pull people together, urge them to question their ideas, and support them as they produce and carry out a plan of action.



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### Participatory Process

In its simplest terms, a participatory approach is one in which everyone who has a stake in the intervention has a voice, either in person or by representation. Staff of the organization that will run it, members of the target population, community officials, interested citizens, and people from involved agencies, schools, and other institutions all should be invited to the table. Everyone's participation should be welcomed and respected, and the process shouldn't be dominated by any individual or group, or by a single point of view.

### Power

The ability to act, especially the ability to act collectively to achieve purpose. Community organizers often define power in terms of organized people and organized money.

### Power Analysis

A process for creating a "map" showing who has authority in a particular area and must be converted in order to make an improvement, along with strategies on how to get to them. It also shows where the organizing group stands and where its influence and alliances can promote change.

### Public

All persons who are not members of the organization in question. The public may also be a segment of the population represented by an organization.

*Example: The elderly residents of the state of Texas.*

### Regulation

A rule or order that has the force of law that originates from the executive branch (usually from an agency), and deals with the specifics of a program. Congress, for example, may instruct EPA to reduce automotive emissions by 5%, but the EPA must develop regulations to reach this goal.

### Sections

In AFJ's capacity tools, there are 4-5 major sections or categories of capacities, under which indicators (capacities) are listed.

### Spokespeople

Individuals who speak on behalf of a group when addressing media or outside groups.

### Stakeholders

A person, group, organization, or system who affects or can be affected by an advocacy or organizing action.

### Strategic Plan

For community organizing, a campaign plan that describes the goals, organizational considerations, support and opposition, targets, and tactics to achieve one or more specific goal(s).

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### Targets/Target Audience

The person or people to whom an organization is advocating or trying to address through their organizing campaign. This may include legislators, administrative officials, the courts, voters, candidates for public office, corporations, segments of the public, etc.

### Track

The process of monitoring progress through data collection.

### Voter Education

The process of informing the public of their right to vote, and sometimes providing voters with information about candidates and issues.

### Win

A major accomplishment of the organization. An organization achieves a win when one of its demands is met by a decision-maker.

### Working Relationships

These exist when targeted decision makers, administrative officials and legislative staff accept and return the organization's calls, engage in policy-related discussions with the organization, share information with the organization about upcoming events related to the legislative, administrative, legal, and electoral processes, or is willing to take action on behalf of the organization. A politician outspoken in an area of advocacy is sometimes referred to as an issue "champion."