



FIFTY YEARS 1959|2009

Building the Will:

Advancing the College Readiness Agenda
through Community Engagement and Advocacy

Tennessee College Access & Success Conference

November 10, 2009

What We Have Planned

- To share principles and insights that shape successful advocacy
- To create a forum to share our collective experiences, successes and challenges
- To discuss how to plan an effective advocacy strategy

What is Advocacy?

- How do we define advocacy?

In simple terms, advocacy is the act of supporting or recommending a course of action on behalf of a person, idea, proposal, or policy

What is Advocacy?

- What are some misconceptions about advocacy?
 - Advocacy is the same thing as lobbying
 - We have to have money to have an impact
 - Advocacy isn't my job
 - I can't have an impact

What is Advocacy?

- Why is Advocacy Important to Us?
 - We often need to challenge the status quo
 - Nature of education challenges require long-term commitments and political will
 - Policies are developed in a competitive marketplace of ideas, beliefs and proposals
 - College access programs are dependent on numerous external variables

Today's Takeaways

- Advocacy is essential to the vitality of college access programs
- “Tag you’re it”: you’re already an advocate
- All things being equal, the difference between good advocates and great advocates is a matter of *planning* and *organization*

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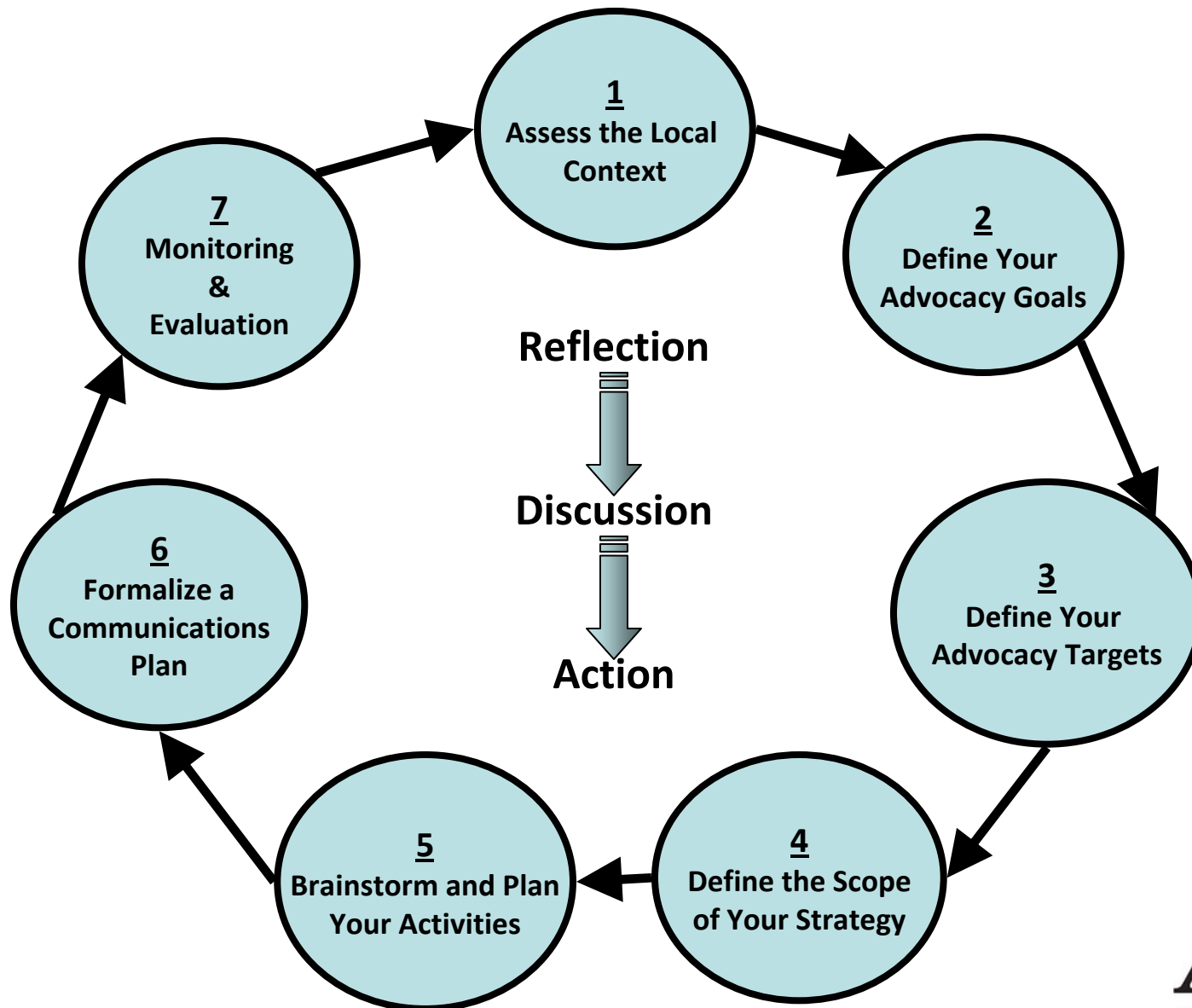
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*Getting Organized:
a Blueprint for Change*

Before We Begin . . .

- Advocacy is a long-term and proactive commitment
- Advocacy is about relationships
- Advocacy should be rooted in respect and bring about win-win situations
- Advocacy should be focused locally and then expanded as your sphere of influence grows
- Advocacy should be comprised of a blend of “grassroots” and “grasstops” strategies

Blueprint for Change: Advocacy Planning



Step 1: Assess the Local Context

- Learn the social, cultural and political landscape in your community
- Know the policy issues that help and hurt your students
- Analyze what other districts or states are doing to remedy policy gaps
- Assess your existing advocacy assets within your partnership

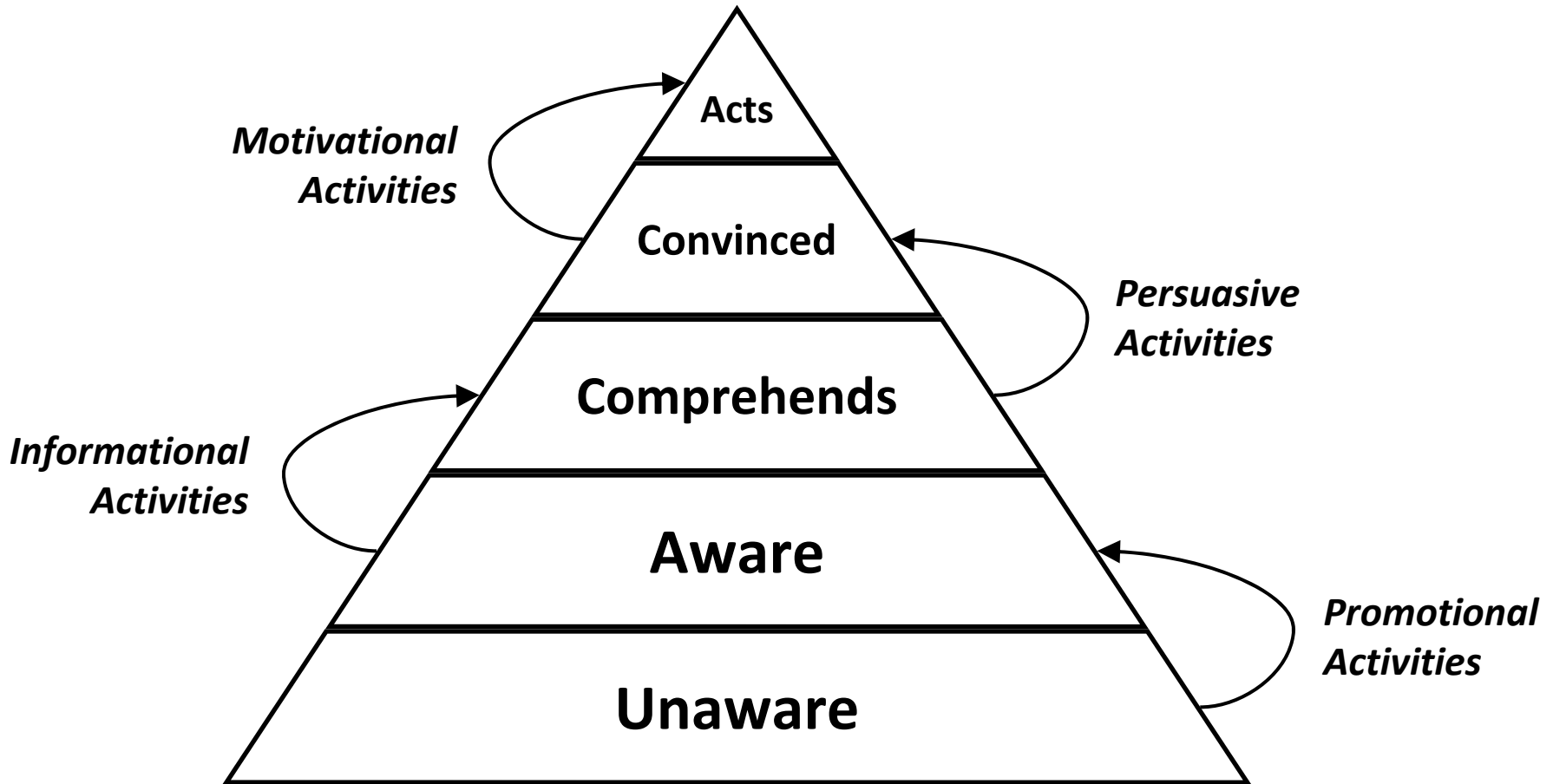
Step 1: Assess the Local Context

- Form an Advocacy/Policy Committee to help you navigate changing conditions
- Analyze your partnership's advocacy strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
- Build capacity in strategic areas where your advocacy infrastructure needs to improve

Step 2: Define Your Advocacy Goals

- Gain consensus on two key questions:
 - What do we want to promote, change, or accomplish?
 - What are we asking for--encouragement, support, or the adoption of a recommendation?

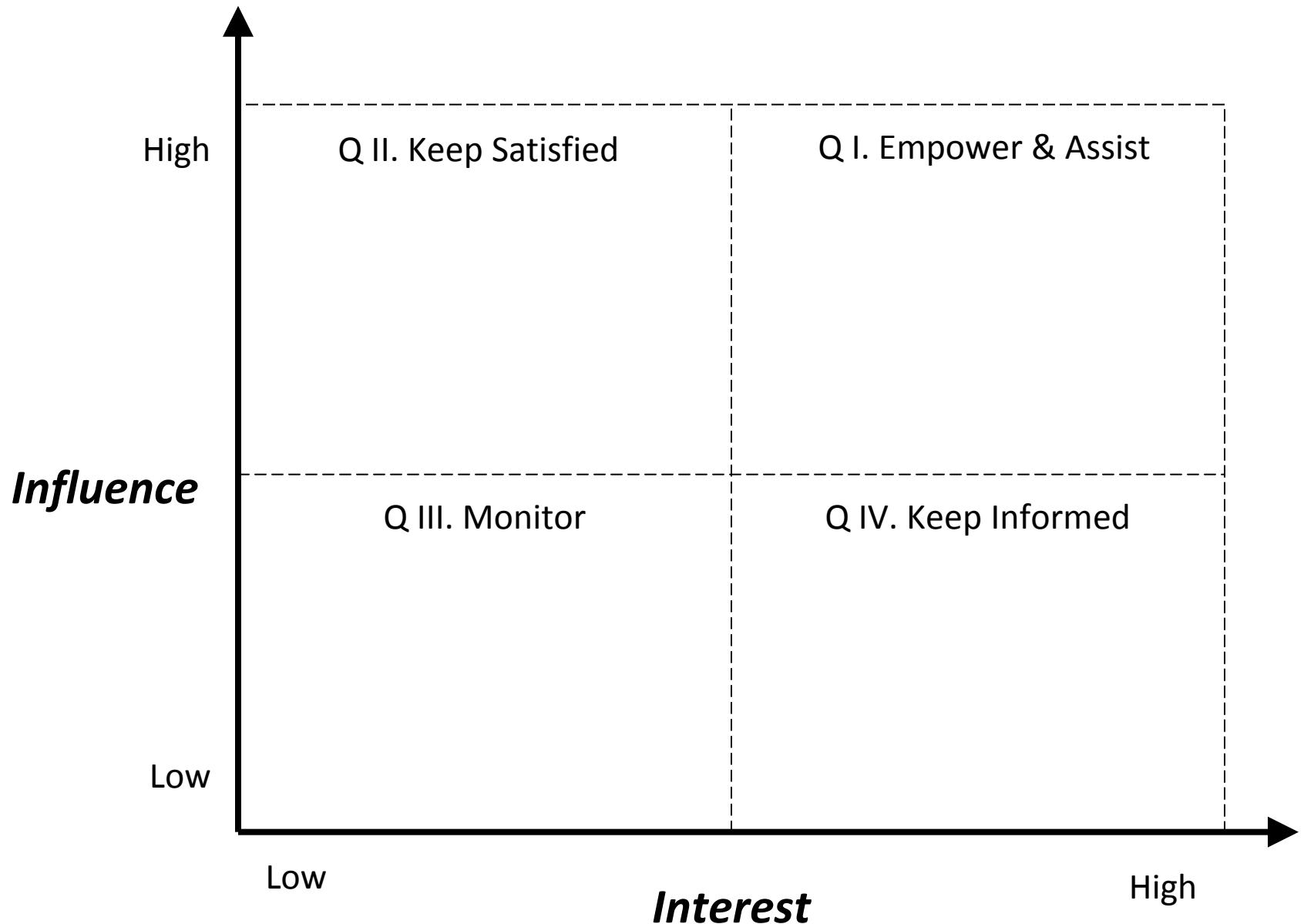
Step 2: Define Your Advocacy Goals



Step 3: Define Your Advocacy Targets

- “Advocacy targets” are the individuals or groups that you will try to influence
- Understand your target
 - What makes them unique and why?
 - What interests, motivates and concerns them the most?
- Prioritize your targets

Step 3: Define Your Advocacy Targets



Step 4: Define the Scope of your Advocacy

- Seek early victories that improve the program, your reputation and your confidence
- In advocacy, less is often more
- Develop an advocacy calendar to identify and capitalize on critical windows of opportunities
- Assume oversight responsibility for the planning process, but delegate implementation activities whenever possible

Step 5: Brainstorm Your Activities

- With goals defined and your scope determined, brainstorm activities that are aligned and integrated into your day-to-day work
- Examples may include:
 - Meeting regularly with institutional, district, state and federal policymakers to apprise them of you progress
 - Presenting your program outcomes and implementation model in community and policymaking settings

Step 5: Brainstorm Your Activities

- Publishing college access research that is community-specific
- Hosting a policy forum that bring together institutional and elected/appointed leaders
- Hosting an Education Town Hall meeting to foster community-education dialogues
- Asking students and families to document their personal histories as a program assignment; then sharing to articulate the importance of college access

Step 5: Brainstorm Your Activities

- Asking advocacy targets to serve a role in the partnership, program, or graduation/grade promotion events
- Arranging for a State Capitol Day wherein students and families meet with state legislators, learn about the political process, and participate in legislative ceremonies
- Forging new alliances between education and non-education orgs to foster mutual understanding and support
- Engaging the media to raise the visibility of your program and partnership

Step 5: Brainstorm Your Activities

- Sponsoring pro-education activities in historically underserved neighborhoods such as door-to-door visits, neighborhood rallies, and fairs
- Sponsoring student and parent/leadership institutes to educate, encourage and empower
- Coordinating with national orgs. to educate the U.S. Congress on the issues confronting your students, the progress of your program, and educational and social outcomes

Step 6: Formalize a Communication Plan

- Create infrastructure for communicating with current and potential stakeholders, partners and policymakers
- Common methods for communicating to current and potential stakeholders, policymakers and others include: brochures, posters, annual reports, newsletters, progress and issue reports, program websites, and video

Step 6: Formalize a Communication Plan

- Your most important messages should be few, unambiguous and consistent
- Create purposeful messages that matter
- Keep it simple and provide solid evidence that reinforces your position
- Build communication redundancies

Step 7: Evaluate Your Advocacy

- Create qualitative benchmarks that allow you to assess incremental progress
- Consider the process:
 - Are targets more aware of your project?
 - Convince targets that your position is the right one?
 - Are new individuals or groups now supporting your project?
 - Are your advocacy strategies gaining influence and becoming more effective?

Questions and Resources

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