



INITIATIVE CREATION



"ADVOCACY IS IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE I WANT TO HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE, LIKE THOSE WHO STOOD UP FOR ME WHEN I WAS AT MY WEAKEST."

**KAREN ROY (LA)
UNITED SPINAL ADVOCATE & CHAPTER ADVOCACY
COORDINATOR**

WHAT IS AN INITIATIVE?

Is there an issue affecting your community that needs immediate action? An organized plan to address the issue is called an initiative. Initiatives create a shared goal for groups of like-minded citizens. Having a defined initiative makes it easier to rally support and ask policymakers for the change needed. Throughout our nation's history, citizens have called upon our elected officials to take action on issues as an important means of progress.



STRATEGIZING AN INITIATIVE

Several ingredients make for a successful advocacy initiative

- The rightness of the cause
- The power of the advocates (larger numbers are helpful)
- The thoroughness of your research of issues, opposition and the climate of opinion about the issue to the community
- The skill with which you use the advocacy tools available
- The selection of the right strategies and tactics

It's important that you thoroughly understand your chosen issue

- Where is the problem?
- Who is the problem affecting?
- What are the impacts of this problem?
- What needs to happen to change this problem?
- What is happening to change this issue currently?
- How can I work with others to change this issue?

The best time to start planning for an advocacy initiative campaign is when your direct experience and research shows you cannot achieve your goals in any other way and you're sure you have the capacity to carry it through due to enthusiasm and energy.



INITIATIVE SMART OBJECTIVES

Having clear goals, an action plan, and specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timed (SMART) objectives is key.

Having a well planned and well executed advocacy plan is extremely important in order to drive forward the desired policy changes. In order to have a successful advocacy plan, it must be able to respond to the identified needs, build on opportunities, and overcome barriers.



Specific. What do you want to do?

Measurable. How do you know you reached it?

Attainable. Is it in your power to achieve it?

Realistic. Can you realistically achieve it?

Timed. When do you wish to accomplish it?



INITIATIVE DEVELOPMENT STEPS



Step 1- Set the right goal. What you want to accomplish? Consider your time and energy commitment and define a goal that will impact your community with the resources you have.

Step 2- Set objectives. Determine the milestones that will help you achieve your goal. Use SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

Step 3- Determine your tactics. How do you want to get your message out? What activities will inspire the support you need to move your initiative forward. Tactics are your action steps. The icing on the cake and the part that shows. They can cover a wide range of activities, from writing letters, speaking up at City Council meetings, filing complaints, setting up negotiations, boycotts, demonstrations and carrying out surveys.

Make sure your tactics:

- Carry out your strategy and are appropriate for your goals
- Fit your style
- Are doable and cost-effective, within your resources and funds
- Make your group feel good about themselves and the action

Step 4- Create your plan. Keeping a detailed record of what needs to be accomplished, by whom, and by what date will help keep you on track. What is the scope of the action? Who will carry it out? When will it happen and for how long? Are the resources available to accomplish this? Which allies and constituents should be involved? Who might oppose the action or resist?

Step 5- Take action. Once you have an initiative plan, it is time to get out there and create the change you need.



CRAFTING AN ISSUE SUMMARY

An issue brief is a short one-page written document that explains:

Your issue

State the issue for consideration. Briefly explain its importance to you and your community in the current context and issue relevance to your intended audience.

Recommendation

State the action you seek in connection with the above-stated issue. The recommendation may indicate the continuation, elimination, or amending of the issue.

Current law

List any current law or regulatory framework that authorizes or supports the issue.

Background

Provide supporting information relevant to the issue and recommendation.

Use any additional available space to:

List organizational policy that supports this issue

List actions or activities used to demonstrate the importance of the issue to you.

List current evidence that supports your actions, activities, or suggestions.

[Click here for an example of a easily digestible issue summary brief](#)

ADVOCATES IN ACTION: RIDE ACROSS AMERICA

ADAM LANE (OK)

UNITED SPINAL ADVOCATE AND CHAPTER BOARD MEMBER



Adam Lane is a member of United Spinal's Oklahoma Chapter and a dedicated advocate for the disability community. Since Adam's spinal cord injury (SCI) in 2007, he has devoted countless hours to his advocacy work with United Spinal, and he has also served on the Board for the Oklahoma City Chapter along with the Mayor's Committee for Disability Concerns for Kansas City, Missouri and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Adam works for United Access where he helps people with disabilities with their specific vehicle modification needs and takes an active role in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee.

Adam is familiar with and knows the importance of accessible fitness for the disability community, and he started his fitness regimen involving lifting weights and pilates immediately after his (SCI), which then led to competitive triathlon racing. Adam now teaches yoga at multiple studios and virtually for senior citizens, stroke survivors, and those living with paralysis. He has a true passion for advocating for others, and his newest journey to create awareness and change is his Ride Across America.

Adam will embark on a 60-day handcycling Ride Across America from San Diego, California to New York, via Washington, DC at Roll on Capitol Hill 2022 to raise awareness about United Spinal Association's 2022 #StrongWheeled Together campaign. Throughout his ride, Adam will be making scheduled stops to not only advocate for the need for accessible exercise and fitness in order to improve the quality of life for people with mobility disabilities, but also highlight the spinal cord injury and disorder (SCI/D) community's contributions to society and continuous struggle for equality and inclusion. You can read more about Adam and his Ride Across America by visiting his website at <https://adamklane.com/> or by clicking on the social media links below.

