

Effective Tactics by Strategy

There are various ways to move an issue or cause in your local community. Choosing a strategy (a plan to create an environment conducive to make the ask of your target) helps narrow your focus. Examples of tactics—the specific activities or actions that foster that conducive environment—are listed below by strategy. Highly successful tactics are creative, achievable, and engaging. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but rather to serve as a springboard for brainstorming ideas:

Putting a spotlight on the issue in the local media

- Publish letters to the editor (LTEs)
- Submit op-eds
- Pitch story ideas to reporters
- Connect with reporters to offer yourself as an informational resource
- Meet with editorial boards

Keeping the topic at top of mind in public conversations

- Speak out at town hall meetings
- Participate in “tele-town halls” (virtual conversations)
- Attend public meetings or forum with policymakers
- Coordinate field visits to your lab (consider inviting media)

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Getting influencers to speak out

- Schedule office visits with legislators and influential members of the community
- Host conference calls or roundtable discussions with legislator/staff and key influential members representing differing perspectives on the issue
- Host joint public education events
- Make joint public statements or sign-on letters (sharing with legislators and the media)
- Organize with partners to reach out to policymakers in public avenues

Demonstrating public desire for policy change

- Call-in campaigns
- Group lobbying visits
- Show up at venues during key votes, policymakers’ press events, or public forums
- Professional sign-on letters or petitions
- Participate in rallies or demonstrations
- Letter writing parties

Building a strong personal relationship with the target (legislator, elected official, etc.) office

- Phone calls (making one, or organizing others to call in)
- Local office meetings
- “Thank you” messages (directly to office, in media, on social media)
- Offer technical assistance on other projects related to your skills and knowledge
- Recognitions/awards for elected officials that take action on your issue

Serving as a resource in the policymaking process

- Offer testimony and public comment during hearings (or supporting community members in participating) or in written submissions
- Apply to formally serve on an advisory committee
- Offer advising, presentations, resources as an expert in committees and commissions
- Informally offer useful research/ expert connections for legislative committee or agency staff

We also recommend reading through recent case studies from other local leaders and from Science Rising, such as the ones below. You can find more information on these and other events at www.sciencerising.org.

- Strategies: Getting influencers to speak out; keeping the topic at top of mind in public conversations
 - o Gun Violence Prevention Challenge Summit & Hackathon. In Boston in April 2018, public health advocates, local government officials, and neighborhood residents gathered to discuss evidence-based gun violence prevention solutions. The following day, they held a “hackathon” to collaborate on innovative local solutions to

gun violence. This event, supported by the Consortium for Affordable Medical Technologies, demonstrated a creative way to bring together community members and harness their collective power to explore new ways to address the issue. Learn more at www.globalhealthmgh.org/camtech/gun-violence-prevention-challenge-summit-hack-thon.

- Strategy: Demonstrating public desire for policy change
 - o Environmental Lobby Day. The Illinois Environmental Council, Illinois Sierra Club, and Faith in Place supporters gathered in Springfield, IL, for an environmental lobby day in April 2018. Building relationships with legislators at the state level is an important way to make sure that science and environmental issues are being taken seriously. Learn more at www.sciencerising.org/2018/07/09/advocating-at-the-state-level.
- Strategy: Keeping the topic at top of mind in public conversations
 - Black Panther Lives: Wakanda STEM Equity Outreach. This Oakland, CA, event began with the idea that science is relevant to all people—but science still struggles with a history of racism, exclusion, and inequity. By engaging pop culture references like Black Panther, as well as scientists of color to speak at the event, these organizers were able to reach and resonate with a broader audience and help break down some of the barriers traditionally placed around science talks. Learn more at www.sciencerising.org/2018/06/25/wakanda-stem. For more information on planning events, visit www.ucsusa.org/eventschecklist.

- Strategy: Putting a spotlight on the issue in the local media
 - o In 2018 the US federal government had its longest shutdown to date. The 500 Women Scientists Pod in Southeast Utah experienced firsthand the negative impacts of this closure on jobs security, public health and safety, and the environment. Two members of the pod wrote op-eds to shine a light on the specifics of the issue that might otherwise go unnoticed such as gaps in scientific research critical for ecosystem integrity and land use management. Learn more at www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/01/11/commentary-government.
- Strategies: Building a strong personal relationship with the target; serving as a resource in the policymaking process
 - o The UCS New Jersey Local Team was started by UCS members that wanted to leverage their role as scientists to advance science-based solutions in their state. They set up a meeting with their District 3 representative to position themselves as a resource as constituents with technical understandings of climate change policy impacts. Group members also focused on attending the New Jersey Energy Master Plan stakeholder meetings, and prepared follow up activities such as writing op-eds and meeting with other elected officials to continue to bring attention to specific clean energy and clean transportation opportunities. Learn more at www.burlingtoncountytimes.com/opinion/20190211/letters-to-editor-for-feb-10.

For more resources to execute these tactics, see the Scientist Advocacy Toolkit (www.ucsusa.org/take-action/science-network/scientist-advocacy-toolkit).

10 Question “Litmus Test” for Selecting an Action

Pick an action or a tactic that you hope to take on, and talk through the following prompts with other group members. If you can’t satisfactorily answer all 10 of these questions for the capacity you can offer, the activity may not be the most impactful use of your time. We encourage you to be creative and have fun with your tactics, but also keep your strategy, message, and targets firmly in mind.

1. Which specific goal do we hope to achieve through this activity?
2. Who is our target for this tactic, among the identified decision-makers, audience, and/or media outlets?
3. How will this activity communicate and amplify our message?
4. Will this activity alienate any of our strategic targets, hurt our overall credibility, or cause adverse consequences to marginalized populations?
5. Do we have the time, money, and people necessary to execute this activity, and is it worth the investment of these limited resources?
6. If we plan to secure press attention with this action, is it really “newsworthy”?
7. If appropriate, how will our partners be contributing to this effort (in terms of developing strategy, people, connections, and money)?
8. Will this be fun? Will it sufficiently engage and inspire folks involved?
9. Is this action clear, achievable, and effective?
10. How will this activity set us up for our next one, in terms of strengthening our influence and relationships, creating demand and/or accountability, and building momentum?