

Budget Advocacy Tips

Tip #1:

Meet with state agency staff to encourage inclusion of budget advocacy agenda in agency budget requests to the state budget office.

Tip #2:

Meet with the Governor's staff to promote inclusion of budget advocacy agenda in the Governor's budget.

Tip #3:

Speak to State Budget Office staff to gather more information on agency requests and learn how the fiscal impact of proposals is calculated.

Tip #4:

Keep abreast of state agency program performance reports, including agency objectives and indicators.

Tip #5:

Analyze the Governor's proposed budget and disseminate the results. Documents released in conjunction with the proposed budget can be useful tools.

The following are the documents published and distributed in Rhode Island at the time the Governor submits the budget.

- ◆ **The Appropriations Bill**: Often called the budget bill, it contains all of the appropriations and statutory changes needed to put the budget plan into effect. This bill contains no explanation of what the numbers mean, nor does it provide data from prior years with which to compare.
- ◆ **The Executive Summary**: This is the least technical part of the budget presentation. It describes the Governor's proposed initiatives regarding taxes and spending programs. It also discusses the state's economic outlook and provides an overview of the budget as a whole.
- ◆ **"The Budget"**: This document describes every state agency and program. It lists program objectives, historical spending data, and a breakdown of the proposed budget by funding source (general revenue, federal funds, etc.) and by object (personnel, grants, and benefits, etc.) It provides statewide summary tables, a glossary and explanation of the budget process, and the distribution of aid to each city and town.
- ◆ **The Technical Appendix**: This appendix show how each program's budget is divided among spending accounts. For example, it may show how a program's total federal

funds are composed of different federal grants or how general revenue appropriations are broken down by activity. The appendix also contains an explanation of program performance measures.

Additionally Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) numbers can be found in the Technical Appendix. A CFDA number is assigned to every federal assistance program for state and local governments. Using the CFDA number and the federal website, <http://12.46.245.173/cfda/cfda.html>, one can obtain a description of the federal grant programs which provide funds to the state.

- ◆ **The Personnel Supplement.** This supplement gives detailed information about the personnel part of the budget.
- ◆ **The Capital Budget.** This document provides a five-year plan for the state's large capital expenditures (such as land acquisitions, building construction, and major highway projects).

Tip #6:

Review the House Fiscal Advisory Staff Budget Analysis, which provides detailed descriptions of the Governor's proposed spending plan. Meet with elected officials to advocate for the budget agenda. Testify at budget hearings.

Tip #7:

Use revenue estimates and forecasts to shape budget advocacy strategies. For example, if the state budget has significant budget shortfalls, advocates will not be credible if they offer a high cost agenda, even if it is based on research demonstrating good outcomes for children.

SOURCE:

Tips compiled from Voice's for America's Children suggested strategies for child advocates to impact the state budget. Although it may not be possible to do everything they recommend, they suggest that advocates intervene at as many points in the budget-making process as possible. For more information visit the Voice's for America's Children web site at www.voicesforamericaschildren.org.