

Strategic Approaches to Advocacy & Campaigning

There are four strategic approaches to advocacy & campaigning:

- Rational
- Collaboration
- Legal/Judicial
- Political/Pressure

Which approach to take depends on the context, especially what the barriers are to the decision maker taking the course of action that you want. Most advocacy is contested, with opposing views arising from vested interests, different values, alternative perspectives, diverging priorities or being under pressure from other stakeholders.

Rational: The target is influenced through the weight of rational argument.

For purely technical issues that are not contested and where the barrier to action is lack of information, then a rational approach may be the most cost-effective approach. This approach requires a clear case supported by objective evidence, where underlying values are not in dispute and there are no opposing stakeholders.

For contested issues, another approach is required (although having a clear rational argument may add value to your credibility and coherence to your arguments).

Collaboration: A target institution is influenced by collaborating with it - for example, to perform joint research or deliver a pilot programme.

It is best chosen when there is a level of trust between the two organisations and when there is agreement on objectives if not on the detail of the approach. The shared ownership that ensues can help ensure that policy changes are put into practice. One danger is that the advocacy organisation can be co-opted into the targets agenda and its external credibility damaged.

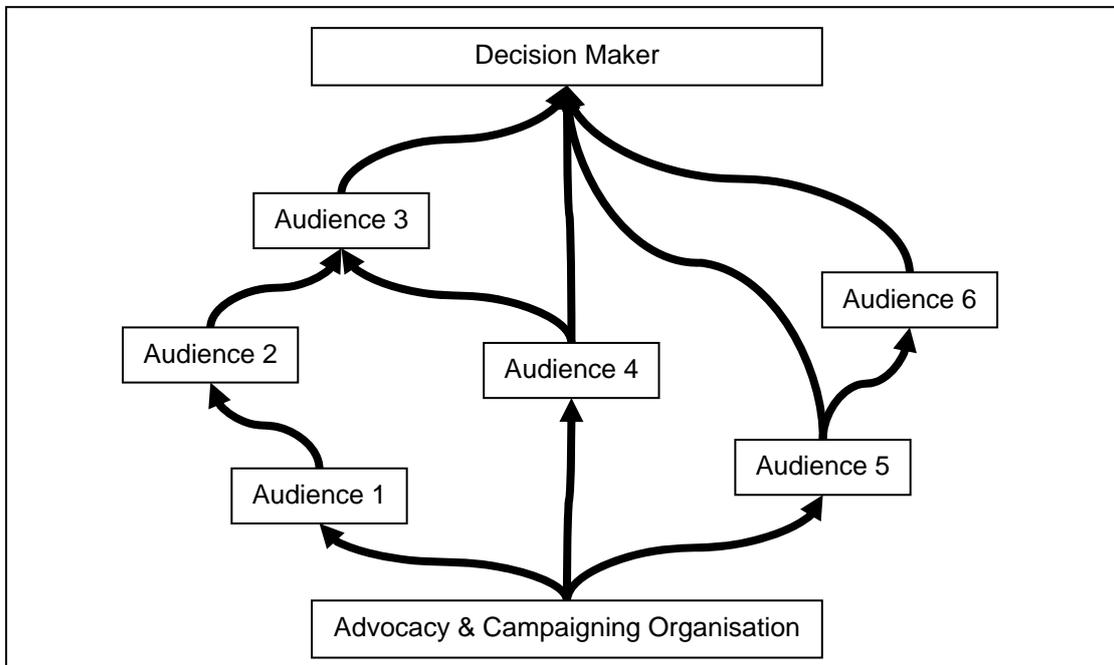
Legal/Judicial: Established legal processes are used to force a change of policy and practice.

It requires a legal framework in line with what is being advocated, a independent judiciary who is willing to make judgements in line with the law, and an judicial system that is powerful enough to impose those judgements on the target institution. It also requires the advocate to have sufficient resources and appropriate skills. However, it is highly confrontational and can take a considerable length of time.

Political/Pressure: The target is influenced by mobilising pressure from other stakeholders.

It recognises that advocacy is usually contested, with stakeholders having different perspectives and values, and opposing forces trying to wield their own influence on the decision maker. It can involve various tactics, not all of which are confrontational.

Most successful advocacy and campaigning falls under the political or pressure-based approach. By engaging with selected audiences to win their support, this will have a greater direct and indirect influence over the decision maker than we would have had by merely presenting them with our rational argument. We chose our audiences (channels of influence) according to a range of factors, including their influence over the decision maker, their interest in the issue and our accessibility to them. Channels of influence can become chains of influence, and the chosen influencing strategy should be presented in the form of an influence map.



Representing your strategy in such a diagram forces you to make clear choices concerning which audiences you are going to target and which you will not. It also helps to ensure that your choices will realistically have an impact on the decision maker, and it makes your chosen strategy much easier to communicate.