

New York Alliance of Library Systems Advocacy Action Plan 2025



Intended Audience: New York State Library Systems Directors

Purpose of the plan: To develop more informed, robust, and consistent advocacy efforts for NYS libraries from users/patrons & other community members, partner organizations, educational institutions, and library staff.

This plan, intended to be a living document, provides guidance for the two-year period starting in January 2025 and running through December 2026. Its first-year focus is on planning and building systems, while its second-year focus is implementation. Changes may be made to this plan through the NYALS Advocacy Plan Subgroup. This plan is designed to coordinate with and complement NYLA's advocacy work.

Implementation: It is recommended that a separate ad-hoc committee of 3-4 members is formed to oversee and execute each Initiative of the Advocacy Plan, and that each system type is represented.

Timeline: For each initiative, Year 1 will focus on the foundational and preparatory work. Year 2 will focus on implementation and execution. Following Year 2, we will evaluate and assess our progress to determine next steps and future plans. The finer details of this timeline will need to be aligned with the NYLA legislative calendar, and in concert with other initiatives.

Goal: Increase user/patron and community member political engagement on behalf of all types of NYS libraries; strengthen our overall legislative advocacy apparatus.

Timeline

- July 2024 NYALS Summer Symposium
- Determined a working group would be formed to create the advocacy plan
- Plan was created
- Two town halls were held
- Feedback was requested
- Plan was presented at NYLA Conference in November 2024

Initiative 1: Marketing and public relations campaign

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Terry Kirchner (Chair), Westchester Library System, Executive Director
- Allie Comes, Onondaga – Cortland – Madison (OCM) BOCES School Library System (SLS), SLS Director
- Kathy Gundrum, Capital District Library Council, Executive Director
- Allison Midgley, Westchester Library System, Manager of Strategic Data Analysis and Member Library Support
- Max Prime, NYLA, Director of Government Relations and Advocacy

Charge:

1. Ad-Hoc Committee will be appointed and will develop expectations for a PR/marketing campaign such as deliverables, scope, and budget.
2. The appointed Ad-Hoc Committee will determine the potential means for NYALS to implement such a campaign, including exploration of the (estimated) cost of hiring a firm or consultants.
3. The appointed Ad-Hoc Committee will present options to the NYALS membership, to determine preliminary feedback and general agreement on strategy.
4. If there is interest in hiring a firm/consultants, the NYALS Steering Committee will solicit funding or donations from systems/libraries
 - a. Develop a budget
 - b. Develop RFP to solicit bids based on this budget
 - c. Hire a firm/consultant that best provides a public relations and marketing campaign according to our requirements and budget
5. If there is no interest in hiring a firm or consultants, the Ad-Hoc Committee will develop an alternate plan with member volunteers to create tasks, responsibilities, and a timeline.

Impact: Users/patrons actively advocate for libraries in their communities and with their elected officials

Measurables (to be finalized by committee):

- Measure engagement metrics based on a call to action. Success would be over 1,000 non-librarians participating in calls to action
- Engagement-based, e.g., XX advocates signed up to receive advocacy messaging
- Time-based, e.g., pre-engagement/post-engagement.
- Others, based on firm/consultant recommendations, research, etc.

Update – September 2025

1. Recommend not hiring an outside firm – it just doesn't seem realistic to do so in the upcoming budget years. Should funding become available - hire a firm.
2. Keep the PR/Marketing efforts focused on the public.
3. Develop a template of key points that would work for all types of libraries.
4. Based on the fundamental points to address - determine which are most appropriate for a statewide approach and when it is more effective to have coordinated regional approaches.
5. Use the NYLA Library Advocacy Day (LAD) email tool as the metric tool. Goal is to have at least 10% more people click on the LAD email tool due to the PR/Marketing efforts.
6. Note: Want to acknowledge that it is imperative to do ongoing advocacy with the Governor's office to ensure that a "good" funding level is included in the Governor's proposed Executive Budget.

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Initiative 2: Engage other organizations in a broader coalition in support of libraries & library funding

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Ryan Perry (chair), Central NY Library Resources Council
- Kerstin Cruger, Mid-Hudson Library System
- Kim Hooper, Rockland BOCES SLS
- Charlie Kelly, Orleans/Niagara BOCES SLS
- Sarah Lehman, Rochester Public Library
- Max Prime, New York Library Association

Charge:

1. Appoint an Ad-Hoc Committee to create materials and one-pagers to provide systems for outreach with local organizations and adjacent groups within larger organizations (e.g. school superintendents)
2. Systems identify and contact local organizations with shared interests (NYLA has working relationships with statewide organizations that can serve as a starting point)
3. Systems (along with their member libraries, as appropriate) meet with representatives from identified organizations to establish shared goals and strategies for advancing them. We will focus on building fully reciprocal relationships where all partners bring something to the table.
4. Leverage these relationships for our broader legislative advocacy efforts, while offering reciprocal support for the partnering organizations' important advocacy efforts. Or, for certain contexts such as schools, get involved with partnering groups/organizations programs and initiatives, e.g., for the PTO.
5. Create a database with contact information for potential partner organizations

Impact: Libraries are visible leaders within a broader coalition of public benefit organizations. Partner organizations understand their shared interests with local libraries/systems and are advocating for them and with them in varied contexts.

Measurables:

- Assess the quality and quantity of relationships that are built.
- Meet with x number of new organizations at the local level.
- Assess the number of actions taken by partner organizations on behalf of libraries and systems.

Stronger Together: The Power of Partnerships in Library Advocacy

This guide was authored by a NYALS committee, comprised of Ryan Perry (chair), Kerstin Cruger, Kim Hooper, Charlie Kelly, Sarah Lehman, and Max Prime in 2025. The primary audience is library system administrators and associated leadership.

Our libraries are essential community anchors, but we cannot advocate for our future alone. Building a broad coalition of allies will help to secure the funding, legislation, and support we need. This guide provides a framework for identifying, cultivating, and mobilizing partners to advance our shared goals.

Why Make Friends? The Case for Partnership

Building a network of allies is an effective way to amplify our message and demonstrate our value to elected officials and community leaders.

- **Amplify Our Voice:** A single library system asking for support is a request. A coalition of libraries, businesses, non-profits, and community groups asking for support is a movement.
- **Build Credibility:** When a business chamber or a literacy non-profit speaks to the value of libraries, it validates our impact from an outside perspective.
- **Expand Our Reach:** Partners have their own networks, newsletters, and social media channels, allowing our message to reach new and diverse audiences we couldn't access on our own.
- **Share the Workload:** Advocacy is demanding. Co-signing letters, sharing testimony, and organizing events with partners makes the work more manageable and sustainable.

Update

- Produced guide to building partnerships and engaging with elected officials clrc.org/nyals-partnership
- Focus on building reciprocal relationships
- Ladder of Engagement
- Potential partner types: what they want, how libraries can help, and a potential ask
- Decision to not create a contact directory: difficult to maintain, local expertise is most important

How to Make Friends: Building Reciprocal Relationships

Successful partnerships are a two-way street. Before you ask for help, you must understand what potential partners

need and offer what you can do first. This approach showcases your willingness to contribute to the relationship while demonstrating how your libraries work to build community.

1. Understand What They Want

Look for alignment between their needs and what libraries uniquely offer. Most organizations are looking for:

- **Members & Audience:** Can you help them reach new people through your library's patrons?
- **Speakers & Expertise:** Can your librarians offer a workshop on digital literacy, local history, or media literacy at their conference?
- **Money & Resources:** Can you co-apply for a grant that serves both your missions?
- **Volunteers:** Can your library help to promote volunteer opportunities on behalf of the partner?
- **Connections & Networking:** Who can you introduce them to within your network?
- **Advocacy on Shared Values:** Can you support their advocacy on issues like digital equity, lifelong learning, or civic engagement?
- **Outreach and Promoting Events:** Can your library help to spread the word about its programs and initiatives?
- **Meeting & Event Space:** Do you have a space, such as a community room that could be used by outside organizations for their events?

2. How to Engage and Influence

Go from being an outsider to being a trusted collaborator.

- **Be Present:** Attend their meetings, webinars, and public events. Listen and learn.
- **Join Their Organization:** Become an institutional or individual member to show your commitment.
- **Participate Actively:** Don't just be a name on a roster. Join a committee, volunteer for a task, and offer your expertise. This is where relationships are truly built.
- **Engage elected officials:** Invite state and local officials to events that highlight partnerships and highlight our collaborative spirit.

How to Ask for Help: The Ladder of Engagement

Once you've built trust, you can start making requests. Begin with small, low-effort asks and work your way up to deeper collaborations. By starting with minor, but achievable goals, you gain momentum to work toward a longer-term goal. It's important to be realistic and establish clear boundaries with any potential partners.

- The Small Ask (Low Lift, High Impact):
 - "Would your organization be willing to **co-sign this letter** to the Assembly supporting library aid?"
 - "Could you **share our social media post** about the importance of summer reading?"
 - "Can we include a **supportive quote from you** in our press release?"
- The Collaborative Ask (Shared Effort):
 - "Let's **co-author an op-ed** for the local paper about how libraries and schools partner to fight the 'summer slide'."
 - "Will you **co-host a community forum** with us on media literacy?"
 - "Would you be willing to **provide joint testimony** at the upcoming county budget hearing?"
 - "Would other members be willing to **read at a read-aloud event** for younger patrons or students?"
- The Major Ask (Deep Partnership):
 - "Let's launch a **joint advocacy campaign** to secure funding for a statewide digital equity initiative."
 - "Let's **co-apply for a major grant** to improve digital equity in our community."
 - "Who could **speak at your local school board meeting** to ensure continued or increased funding for our libraries?"

Developing and maintaining relationships with partner organizations can be time-consuming, so focus on a small number of connections that have the greatest potential impact. Consider beginning with organizations that are closely aligned with the mission and service population of your library.

How to Identify Potential Partners			
Potential Partner	What They Want	How Libraries Can Help	A Potential "Ask"
Local Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District	Connections & Networking, Advocacy on Shared Values, Outreach and Promoting Events, Meeting & Event Space	Support local businesses through programming and services	Joint letter of support on small business resources
Literacy Volunteers of NYS or The Reading League	Members & Audience, Money & Resources, Advocacy on Shared Values, Outreach and Promoting Events, Meeting & Event Space, Speakers & Expertise	Host and partner on events	Joint Letter of Support on literacy initiatives, Partner on Grants
League of Women Voters of NYS	Advocacy on Shared Values, Members & Audience, Volunteers, Connections & Networking, Meeting & Event Space	Promote their events, provide meeting space	Encourage participation in budget votes, Joint letter of support on libraries as agents of civic engagement
AARP New York	Members & Audience, Volunteers	Host and partner on events	Joint letter of support on services for aging populations
Youth Bureaus	Money & Resources, Volunteers, Outreach and Promoting Events	Promote their events, provide meeting space	Partner on grants relating to youth services
Civic Organizations (e.g. Lions, Rotary)	Members & Audience, Connections & Networking, Outreach and Promoting Events, Meeting & Event Space	Promote their events, provide meeting space	Joint letter of support on civic engagement
Community Centers	Members & Audience, Money & Resources, Volunteers, Connections & Networking, Outreach and Promoting Events	Promote their activities and events, build volunteer networks, and help identify local individuals with needed expertise.	Partner on grants relating to digital equity or other community resources
Food Banks	Money & Resources, Volunteers, Advocacy on Shared Values	Serve as food drop-off or access points. Set up pop-up library displays at their locations	Partner on grants to serve families in need

Service Organizations (Reentry, Veterans, etc.)	Members & Audience, Connections & Networking, Advocacy on Shared Values, Outreach and Promoting Events, Meeting & Event Space	Provide meeting spaces and resources for the people they serve	Partner on grants to support shared service population Joint letter of support expressing need for services
Museums, Historical Societies, Archives, etc.	Members & Audience, Speakers & Expertise, Money & Resources, Volunteers, Connections & Networking, Advocacy on Shared Values, Outreach and Promoting Events	Collaborate on digitizing historical collections, co-host author talks or historical programs, and cross-promote each other's events and resources.	Partner on grants to make local resources accessible and promote their use Joint letter of support on importance of cultural heritage

Initiative 3: Building a broader base of local library champions

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Jen Park, Ramapo Catskill Library System
- Susan LeBlanc, Madison-Oneida BOCES
- Angela Newman, North Country Library System
- Jessica Phillipe, South Central Regional Library Council
- Max Prime, New York Library Association

Charge:

1. An appointed Ad-hoc committee, including NYLA's Director of Government Relations & Advocacy, creates a "Developing Advocates" training framework for Systems to personalize and provide to library personnel. This committee would also create a toolkit with suggestions for how to form and grow local advocacy support groups.
2. With NYALS/NYLA support, Systems hold local advocacy professional development sessions based on the Developing Advocates framework, with a special focus on new library advocates.
3. Create or work with an existing advocacy support group for libraries (e.g. legislative committees, groups of regular participants in advocacy work) with local library leaders. This may include library workers, trustees, and Friends groups.
4. In the future, the content could be adapted for use with patrons/users, parents, and other outside advocates.

Impact: New library personnel advocates participate in legislative events with confidence

Measurables:

- X new advocates have completed the Developing Advocates program.
- Survey participants in Developing Advocates program before and after to assess the effectiveness of the framework.
- X new advocates participate in legislative events.

Update – September 2025

At this time, the Framework has been developed and provided to the NYALS Steering Committee. A LibGuide has been created to host information with regards to the Developing Advocacy Program as well as general advocacy. WNYLRC is the host of the [LibGuide](#). This Guide will also serve as the toolkit.

As the group worked together, we found that a fourth initiative or sub initiative would be best: determine the formulation and creation of the Developing Advocates Program. "...local advocacy professional development sessions" will be best suited to be in line with the DAP.

“Developing Advocates” Training Framework for Library Personnel

SESSION 1

What is Advocacy?

Abstract: This session will be an introduction to advocacy and the fundamentals of advocacy. In this session, participants will be able to describe advocacy, the importance of this work, and state the reasons why advocacy work is all year long. This session will also review the timeline of the New York State budget as well as provide rules and regulations surrounding lobbying practices.

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will be able to describe at least 3 different forms of advocacy
- B) Participants will understand/know at least 3 different examples of how advocacy has positively impacted outcomes for libraries/systems locally or at the state level.
- C) Participants will understand how “soft” or “subtle” advocacy as an essential precursor to direct advocacy and the importance of year-round engagement is

SESSION 2

Internal advocacy: engaging stakeholders within your organization

Abstract: Internal buy-in within an organization is an important component in advocacy. “Internal” is dependent upon library types. This session will explore who the stakeholders are within an organization and the best practices by which these stakeholders’ needs are met.

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will be able to identify all the stakeholders within their organization.
- B) Participants will be able to articulate the mission, vision, and values of their organization.
- C) Participants will be able to articulate best practices by which stakeholders’ needs are met

SESSION 3

External advocacy: engaging stakeholders outside your organization

Abstract: This session will review the importance of building relationships and engaging with stakeholders outside one’s organization. Road maps for engagement will be provided as appropriate regarding the library type.

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will be able to identify the stakeholders outside their organizations.
- B) Participants will learn the channels for communicating with these stakeholders.
- C) Participants will develop an “elevator speech” through shared interest depending on their interests.

SESSION 4

Exploring the different modes of advocacy: written, spoken, and social media/ conducting research for your messages

Abstract: This session will focus on the importance of timing and creation of methods of communication as related to advocacy. Inclusive will be information related to best practices regarding social media/communications policies.

****Review other organizations' best practices****; Provide attendees with the tools to create a media list

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will be able to explain which mode of communication is appropriate for specific advocacy scenarios
- B) Participants will be able to create a communications/social media policy.
- C) Participants will be able to create a media list

SESSION 5

Library finances—The funding stream

Abstract: Library finances vary from one library type to the next. This session will explore how libraries are funded. The information provided in this session will align with the type of library system that hosts the session.

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will understand funding streams for their library/system, how/if they are tied to state law, and who/the entities that hold the power to change those funding streams (e.g., legislators for systems funding; local taxpayers for public library funding, etc.)
- B) Participants will understand their library/system's budget basics, e.g., general categories of expenditures.
- C) Participants will be able to articulate how more or less funding through funding streams would impact their library/system's services.

SESSION 6

Year-round Advocacy

Abstract: Advocacy is not just a one-off event but takes place all year long. This session will provide reasoning and strategy in creating a 12-month Advocacy Plan that can be adopted for all types of libraries. (Advocacy Plan training partner pairing).

Outcomes:

- A) Participants will design a 12-month Advocacy Plan based on the information provided in this and previous sessions.
- B) Participants will identify who will implement the Advocacy Plan (self and/or others within the organization)
- C) Participants will be able to determine appropriate measurable outcomes stemming from the Advocacy Plan

Initiative 3: Sub-Initiative 3A

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jen Park, Ramapo Catskill Library System
Susan LeBlanc, Madison-Onieda BOCES
Angela Newman, North Country Library System
Jessica Phillipe, South Central Regional Library Council
Max Prime, New York Library Association
Lucy Waite, Villa Maria College
Mary-Carol Lindbloom, South Central Regional Library Council

Charge:

With NYALS/NYLA support, Systems hold local advocacy professional development sessions based on the Developing Advocates framework, with a special focus on new library advocates.

Action taken: The committee has explored viable options for professionals to develop and execute the Developing Advocates curriculum. In considering the appropriate organization or person, as well as the financial support needed to carry out the curriculum, the committee has suggested that library professionals engage with content creation.

At this time, the committee is turning over the contracting and developing of the curriculum to the NYALS Steering Committee. This committee will remain composed as an Advisory Board for the development of the curriculum to provide insight and context into the determined pieces of the Framework.