

Foreword

Sometimes ordinary citizens who are directly affected – even hurt – by an existing law or regulation, or the absence of any law or regulation to protect them from a threatened harm, get mad enough to try to do something about it. They are angry because they or someone they know has been harmed; feel helpless because they aren't sure if they can do anything to change things; and are anxious because this business of changing a law involves 'lobbying': a new and unfamiliar game. Even the word 'lobbying' conjures up an image of a slick, high-priced lawyer lobbyist whispering in the ear of a key politician to whom he has contributed thousands of dollars.

If you are a board member, professional staff, or grassroots volunteer in a non-profit organization that aspires to change a particular public policy and have experienced any of these things, then the *Real Clout Workbook* is for you.

This workbook is based on *Real Clout*, a how-to manual published by The Access Project and The Public Policy Institute that aimed to assist community activists trying to expand healthcare access by changing public policy. The manual was based on the premise that real people should have a real impact on health care reform, starting with the expansion of access to care for those who needed it. It was based on the belief that involvement in the public policy process was good for community leaders and good for the public process.

The authors of this workbook believe that this model of engagement extends beyond the health care sphere and is effective in bringing about change for real people. You may be looking at a particular law, regulation, rule or management decision that has created a seemingly insurmountable barrier for your program's operation. You may have the policy solution to a pressing public problem – a specific suggestion that would permit a certain public program to run better, more efficiently and more effectively.

Like any smart person thinking about getting involved in an organized effort to change anything in the public policy arena around your state capital, county seat or city hall you may be asking yourself: What do we have to do? How do we do it? What do we do first? Are there any restrictions?

How to Use this Workbook

Foreword

Whether you plan to play a major role in a state or local campaign, or simply want to understand your organization's role as a member of a coalition, the *Real Clout Workbook* will take you from the initial good idea stage through a series of *strategic thinking and doing* steps.

Throughout the workbook, we will use a real life story that one of the authors experienced to illustrate some of the basic rules and tools that will help you plan and organize your lobbying campaign. Each illustrative example will be marked with an asterisk, like the one to the right.



"What are nice people like us doing in a place like this?"

The white pages of each chapter are written for grassroots volunteer leaders.

You are the affected but powerful constituents with personal stories and a direct self-interest in promoting the desired policy change. You are willing to educate your own local public officials and try to convince them to champion your cause. *The Real Clout Workbook* will explain the basic rules and tools for making positive policy change and enough about the democratic policymaking process to make you appreciate your enormous power.

You will find three sections in each chapter to help you understand the roots of your personal political power (the ability to influence your own elected and appointed public officials) and teach you specific techniques for exerting that power in the most efficient and effective way.

Each chapter also has a corresponding section on blue pages that was written to help professional campaign managers and organizers coordinate their activities with your work in the community. While reading the blue pages is not necessary for you to do

ICON KEY

* Real-Life Story

 Worksheets

 From *Real Clout*

Foreword

a good job with your local policymakers, it is always helpful to understand the entire scope of work that goes into a winning policy change campaign.

Finally, we will give you the confidence to do what you must do when it needs to be done, even when you have to make one more call to an unpleasant local official who is not convinced to do the right thing...yet.

The blue pages are written for professional advocates.

You work in and around the state capital, county seat or city hall for an underfunded, understaffed non-profit advocacy organization or provider agency. You may be an executive director, a lead advocate or organizer, a communications or governmental relations consultant. Regardless of your role, you all regularly face the three-headed

policy-change monster: a compelling public policy problem that must be solved RIGHT NOW; a confusing array of policy openings and opportunities; and of course, not nearly enough time or resources to do everything you think must be done.

And, as much as we all wish we might have the time and resources to carry out a “no stone unturned strategy,” few of us in the non-profit sector ever have that opportunity. Most of us are in the same situation as the channel swimmer standing on a bluff at the edge of a beach covered with sharp stones just trying to figure out which stones can be overturned to make the most direct path to the water.

Like the stone-covered beach, *The Real Clout Workbook* includes the standard list of tried and true strategic activities for each stage of the campaign. Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed or discouraged by the list. You got this book because your work and personal beliefs have taught you that some public policies are uninformed or wrong-headed and need to be changed. And you want to change them. So go to it. Just start reading.



Finally, we make these promises to professional staff and grassroots volunteers alike:

Keep at it. You never win everything you want the first time.

Foreword

Keep at it. You will always have just enough time or resources to do everything you think must be done.

Keep at it. At least the political dynamic inside the state capital is easier to handle than the political dynamic inside your organization, your house of worship or your extended family.

Keep at it. Sooner or later, at the end of a hard-fought campaign you will be able to say to yourself, “I was the right person in the right place at the right time and I helped bring a small measure of comfort and justice to thousands of people who don’t even know I exist.”

The rules and tools you find here were borne out of our experience and our belief that the public policy arena is a very human place populated by mostly well-meaning people who, like you, want to make the world a better place for their constituents.

Sometimes we all need a little help to do the right thing.