

Out of School Time

NEVADA

Afterschool

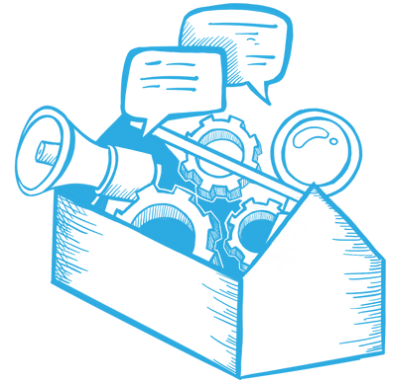
NETWORK

Nevada Institute For Children's Research & Policy

NICRP

Advocacy Guide

A toolkit to create positive change for kids and families.



THANK YOU!

This advocacy guide is for anyone who believes passionately in the power of education and that out-of-school time (OST) programs support every child to reach their full potential. Your support positively impacts the lives of kids and families across Nevada.

To make well-informed decisions at the local, state, and national levels, decision-makers need to know what's happening in their communities and the role that OST programs and opportunities can play in supporting youth and families. In this guide, you will find tools and resources to help you make a difference.

We hope you find this guide useful so you can integrate advocacy activities into your daily schedule. Please know the Nevada Afterschool Network (NAN) is always here to help. Contact us any time with questions or to update us on what you are doing.

Thank you for all you do each and every day to support Nevada's children and families.



This guide is intended to help you promote your program and the issues relating to OST and focuses on advocacy to legislators. But you can apply anything here to other audiences such as school administrators, the public, or potential funders.

In this guide



What is advocacy?



Crafting Your Message



Share Your Story



Meeting with Legislators



Nevada Legislature



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What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is:

- Education and awareness of broad issues
- Support or opposition of specific legislation or policy, also known as lobbying
- Sharing your story and experiences
- Building relationships
- Writing letters, talking with legislators, and hosting events
- Speaking up for others
- A daily activity
- Fun!

Advocacy is NOT:

- Done just one time
- Only focused on legislators and other elected officials
- Does not have to be in support or opposition of specific legislation or policy, also known as lobbying. It can just be education on an issue
- Difficult!

A Bit About Lobbying

Lobbying:

- Has the intention of **influencing decisions** made by elected officials (vote "for or against" specific legislation).
- Many workplaces will not let you lobby (e.g. government employees, federally funded positions, etc.). Check on what you are allowed to do and not do while on the clock!
- All lobbying is considered advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying.

Advocacy Activities Checklist

Promoting OST programming doesn't have to take a long time! Here are a few things you can do to become a champion for kids and OST, whether you have a lot of time or just a few minutes:

Stuff That's Easy To Do

- Pick up a copy of the NAN OST Advocacy Guide!
- Call or email a decision-maker (a member of Congress, your state legislator, or school principal, for instance) and tell them to support afterschool programs (5 minutes)
- Invite decision-makers to an event you're hosting at your afterschool program (10 minutes)
- Write a thank you letter to a decision-maker (5 minutes)
- Keep your program's social media updated – highlight activities, events, and success stories (10 minutes)

Stuff That Takes a Little More Time

- Write a letter to a decision-maker asking them to support OST programs (15-30 minutes)
- Organize a letter-writing or phone-calling campaign (30-90 minutes)
 - Ask others who are involved in OST programs to join you in writing letters or making phone calls to your legislators.
 - The more letters and phone calls a decision-maker gets on an issue, the more they pay attention!
- Attend legislative and community meetings in your area (60-90 minutes)

Stuff That Takes More Time

- Meet with decision-makers.
 - Set up a meeting with a decision-maker to speak with them about your program and the benefits of OST programming. (2 hours)
- Coordinate a site visit to your program with a legislator or other decision-makers (4 hours)



Crafting Your Message

Before you begin advocating for OST, you have to first decide what you're going to say. Because there are so many positive impacts of OST, it can be hard to focus on only one or two messages; but it will be essential to do so!

Here's a quick way to craft your message.

✓ **brainstorm**

✓ **narrow**

✓ **expand**

Brainstorm all of the benefits of OST programs. **Narrow** that list down to one or two key messages with data. **Expand** your selected key points with program success stories. You can use this process any time you're advocating, whether you're meeting with legislators, writing a letter to the editor, or posting on social media.

Step 1: Brainstorm

Begin by writing down all of the positive ways that OST programs impact students, families, and communities. Below is a list to get you started:



- Hands-on experiences
- Provides a safe place after school
- Positive youth and adult interaction
- Supports working families

- Community partnerships
- Academic support
- Provides meals

- Complements the school day
- Helps kids build skills in conflict resolution and relationship building
- Leadership opportunities for students

Step 2: Narrow

Once you've finished brainstorming, it's time to narrow your message. This next section will walk you through choosing 1 or 2 of these benefits to use for your talking points. While all of the benefits you brainstormed are true and important, your message will be the most effective if you hone in on just a couple of them.

Work through the following questions:



What is your advocacy goal?

What are you trying to accomplish in your advocacy? Choose talking points that support your goal.

Who is your audience?



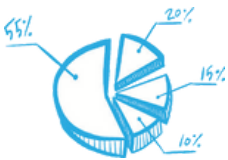
Who are you advocating to and what messages will they find most persuasive?

Example: A legislator who is a retired police officer would be interested that OST programs provide a safe place for kids, or a school administrator would be persuaded by how OST supports students' academic success.



What are your program's strengths?

Think about areas in which your program does really well and use one of your talking points to highlight those successes, including program data showing positive outcomes, a unique community partnership, or a successful STEM project.



What does your data say?

You'll want to have data and success stories from your program to support your talking points to make them more persuasive. Think about which of the benefits you brainstormed has the most impactful data or stories to back it up.



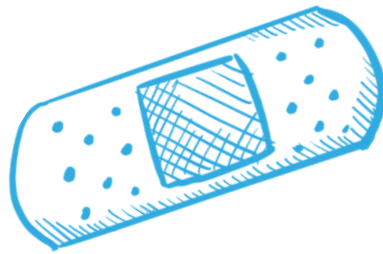
Why do you care about OST?

Oftentimes, an advocate's passion for their issue can be the most persuasive. Pick a talking a point that you especially care about to allow your enthusiasm for OST programs to come through.

Step 3: Expand

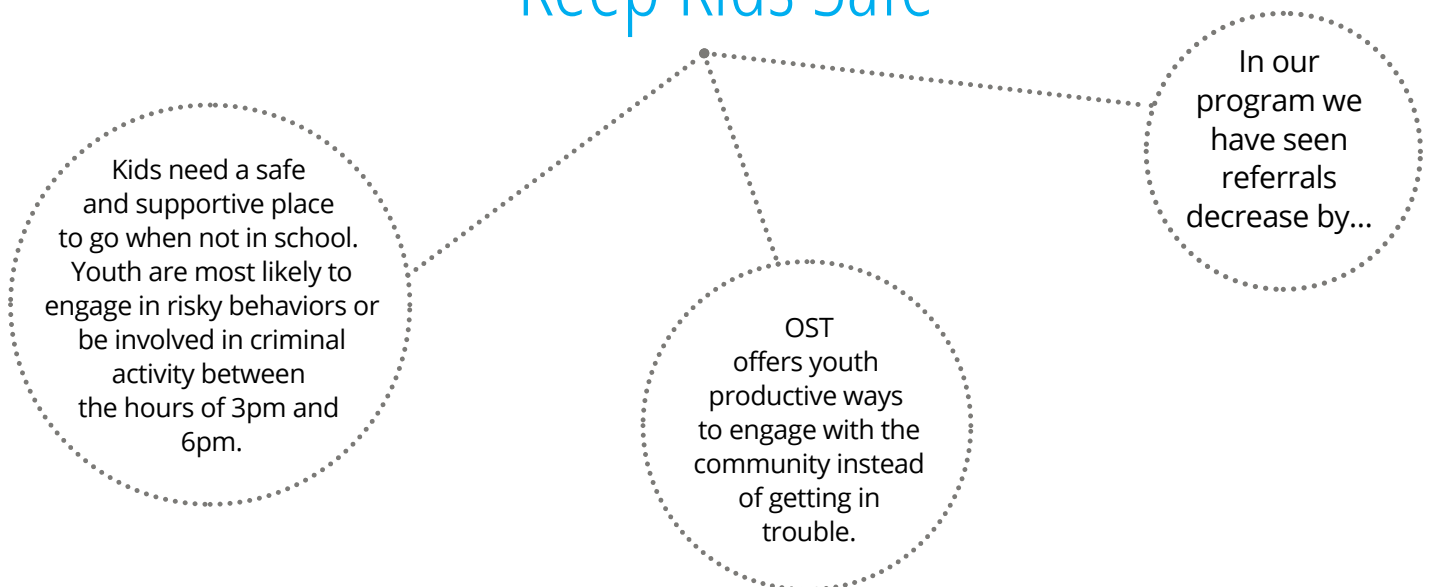
Message Map

Now it's time to expand your one or two talking points. Message maps are an easy way to visually lay out your messages. Challenge yourself to come up with three sub-points for each. These sub-points will answer the question, "How does your program address the needs of students, families, and communities?" They can be success stories and personal experiences from your program, data from either your program or the state level, or supporting statements. There are a couple of examples of message maps below to give you an idea of what yours may look like.



OST Programs

Keep Kids Safe





OST Programs Help Working Families

Families often cannot afford to take time off to supervise children left alone after school. They rely on afterschool and summer programming to fill the gap.

A parent from our program says...

41 % of Nevada parents say they lack available programs in their area. Many of them work outside of the home. This means a lot of families have gaps between work and school schedules and need afterschool and summer programming.



OST Programs Cultivate Student Success

Study after study shows that OST programs are effective in boosting achievement. Students in OST programs have better grades and test scores. They attend school more often, and have better behavior and work habits in class.

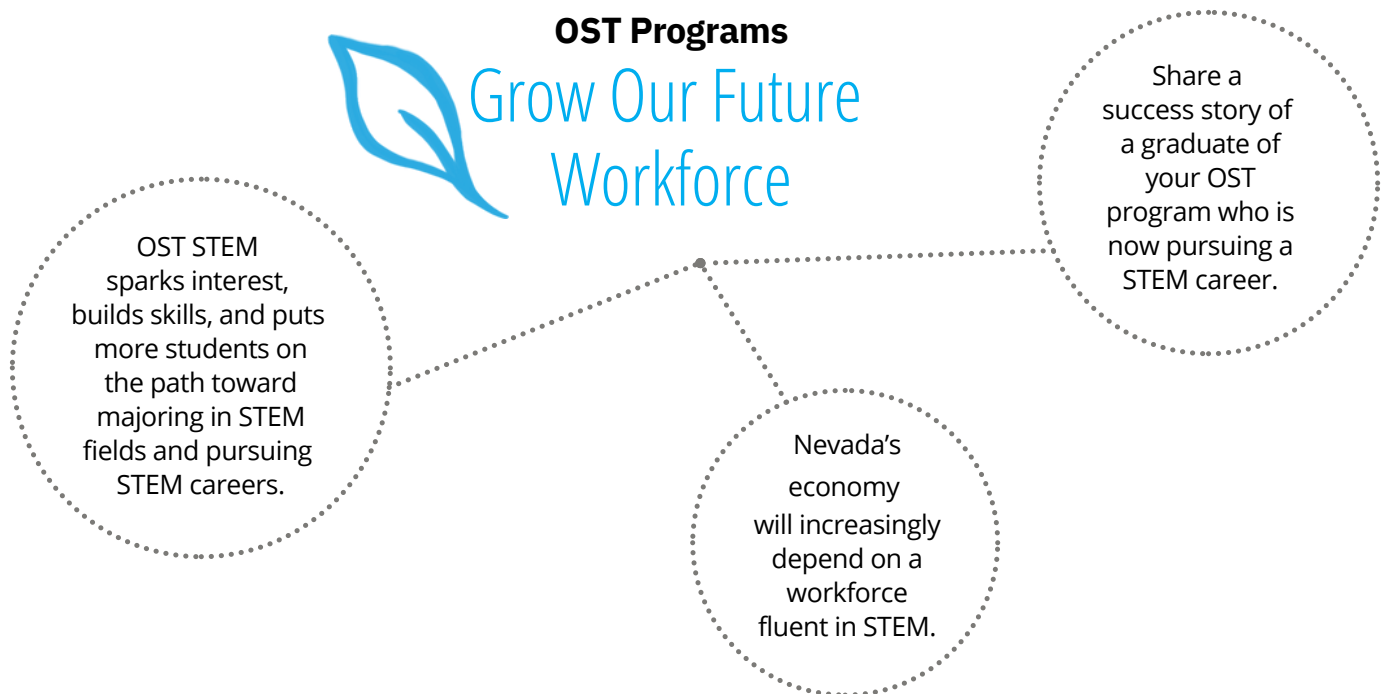
As compared to the year before, students showed an x% increase in vocabulary/fluency/grades.

STEM Messaging Spotlight

Over the last few years, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) has become an important topic in education and OST programs. It has become a buzzword among policy makers and many more programs are offering STEM than ever. It's an important topic to talk about. Because of the importance of STEM, we've included STEM-specific messaging points below for you to use any time you're advocating.

Overall message:

Given our complex and changing world, it is essential that the next generation of leaders are critical thinkers and problem-solvers to meet future challenges. Learning in STEM builds the knowledge and skills needed to sift through information, draw reasonable conclusions, make decisions based on evidence, and develop creative solutions. Experts agree that building students' skills and content knowledge in STEM fields is essential to prepare our future workforce and leaders.





OST Programs

Connect Learning to Interests

Hands-on activities ignite student interest in STEM and support students' excitement to learn.

"After participating in OST STEM activities, our kids showed a x% increase in their interest in STEM."

Helps kids connect learning with the activities that most interest them.

Step 4: Make an Ask

The only way your advocacy will have an impact is if you ask the other person to do something that will help OST programs and youth. Here are four asks you can make:

- 1 Embrace OST opportunities in educational planning and policies.**
For instance, STEM- and education- related committees and initiatives should include representation from OST and other informal learning programs.
- 2 Equip OST program leaders more effectively.**
For example, the training and resources that are available to classroom teachers should also be accessible to OST program providers.
- 3 Increase funding for OST program opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).** Building on the success of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, it makes sense to establish other funding paths to increase OST STEM programming.
- 4 Visit an OST program.**

Elevator Speech

Often the best way to start a conversation with a decision-maker is to give an elevator speech. This is a brief, persuasive pitch that introduces you and sparks interest in the issue you care about. Your elevator speech should be short, about 30-45 seconds long, or the time it takes to ride an elevator (hence the name).

This is only meant to be the beginning of a conversation; if the decision-maker you're talking to has more time, use the discussion guide on the next page to keep the conversation going.

Components of an elevator speech:

- Who you are
 - Parent, Community Member, OST Staff
- Your connection to OST programs
- Why OST is important
- Make an ask
 - Tell them what your program needs to be successful



Sample elevator speech:

Hi, my name is Jane Doe and I run an afterschool program, Program XYZ, in Little Town, Nevada. I'd like to talk to you today about the impact of summer learning on our students. During the summer months, too many children fall further behind academically and this widens the achievement gap. We have a solution for that.

Program XYZ provides hands-on learning opportunities over the summer and data from our program shows that almost all of our students either maintained or improved their literacy rates over the summer. I'd love to have you come visit our program this summer to see the work we're doing.

Sharing Your Story



Letters

OST is important to you. Tell them why. Writing letters is a great way to communicate the importance of OST. The letters to the editor sections are one of the most-read sections of any newspaper and an effective way to tell the public about the importance of your program. State and federal legislators are always looking to hear from their constituents on issues that matter to them. Writing letters is an easy way to share your story and let them know what's going on in their district. Click [HERE](#) for more tips on writing a letter and email correspondence.

Tips For Writing Letters

- **Keep it short and to the point.** Limit letters to the editor to 150 – 300 words. A letter to your legislator can be longer.
- **Use powerful language.** Make the most of your limited word count.
- **Write about your personal experiences with the issue.** – Your letter will be more relatable to the reader.
- **Make it timely if possible.** Reference a recently published article or current event.
- **Include a call to action.** Something the reader can do to make an impact.
- **Proof read your letter before submitting!**
- **Include your contact information.**

Letter Template

Use the template below to help write your letters to legislators and editors:

Dear [Legislator Title/Name or Editor Name],

[Introduce yourself and your connection to OST.][Then, add an attention-grabbing first line. Why are you writing this letter? Are you responding to a previously published article, a proposed bill about OST, or a current event?]

[Make your argument. Explain the issue in a concise manner, and pick one or two data points that are powerful and really add to your argument. *Example: For X amount of dollars, our program can provide X amount of kids with high-quality STEM activities during the school year or summer.*]

[Focus on your connection with the issue. What is your personal story? Why does this issue matter to you?]

[Make a call to action. Urge your elected officials to support OST programs or ask readers to reach out to their legislators.]

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Address]

[Contact Information]



Media

Cultivating relationships with your local newspaper and TV and radio stations will help keep your OST program in the public eye. Local media are always looking for community stories and will appreciate your input. An easy way to start doing this is to invite them to events hosted by your program. Write and distribute press releases, press conferences, press events, and OpEds. Click [HERE](#) for more tips on contacting the media.



Social Media

Posting on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter is a great way to share the positive impacts of OST programs as well as demonstrate the need for increased access. Start by friending, liking, and following your friends and other OST-related organizations. Here are some suggestions for posts:

- Links to articles about OST
- Pictures from your program(s) and with your partners
- Pictures with decision-makers and legislators (make sure to tag them!)
- Positive feedback/comments you've received from parents

Increasing Your Impact



Your OST program may have partnerships in their local communities. OST partners can include your local school district, businesses, and universities to name a few. Community partners can be great OST supports. Have them share their stories and give their testimony. Involve them in the advocacy process! Click [HERE](#) to learn how to mobilize OST program supporters.

Join other coalitions, committees, task forces, and networks that share the same message as you. Distribute jobs according to talents, and do what you're good at! Click [HERE](#) to see NICRP's list of community partners.



Meeting with Legislators

State Legislators

Find what district you are in and who your representatives are. You can search by address, city, county, or school district here:

- [Who's My Legislator/What's My District?](#)
- [Current Senate Legislators](#)
- [Current Assembly Legislators](#)

Federal Representatives

At the federal (or national) level you are represented in Congress by one representative and both of Nevada's senators. You can find your representatives here:

- [Members of Congress](#)

Meeting In Person



When meeting decision-makers in person, be brief. Bring data and personal stories, and leave them with a handout for a reminder. Utilize these Nevada Afterschool & OST Data [Fact Sheets!](#)

Dress appropriately (business dress is always safe). Introduce yourself by first and last name, along with your role (OST staff, parent, community partner, etc.). Research opposing opinions and be prepared to present both sides of an issue. Be truthful and honest, and know that it's okay to say you don't know something. Ask them how they feel about a bill or topic, and listen to their reasoning. Relate your message to that legislator, and let them know how it affects them and their district.

If you are meeting with candidates, click [HERE](#) to learn how to interact with them.

Click [HERE](#) to learn how to maintain momentum after the election.

Where to Go

The State Capitol - Carson City

The Nevada Afterschool Network hosts advocacy events at the State Capitol in Carson City during legislative sessions. These events provide easy opportunities to meet with your legislators and talk with them about the importance of OST programming. Join the NAN mailing list to receive emails about upcoming events.

Local Town Halls

At times, members of Congress or other policy makers may hold a series of meetings across the state or their district to meet and talk to their constituents. Meeting locations and times are usually advertised in newspapers beforehand and may also be distributed via email. Once there, sign in and try to ask a question about OST during the townhall. If you're unable to ask a question, introduce yourself to the elected official after the event.

Site Visits

Seeing your program firsthand is the most effective tool to advocate for your program. Site visits allow the decision-maker to see the intervention – in this case, your program – in action. The decision-maker can ask children and youth their opinions on the program and, if timed right, parents on how the program supports them. Check out page 20 for a step-by-step site visit planning guide.

Meeting with Congressional Staff

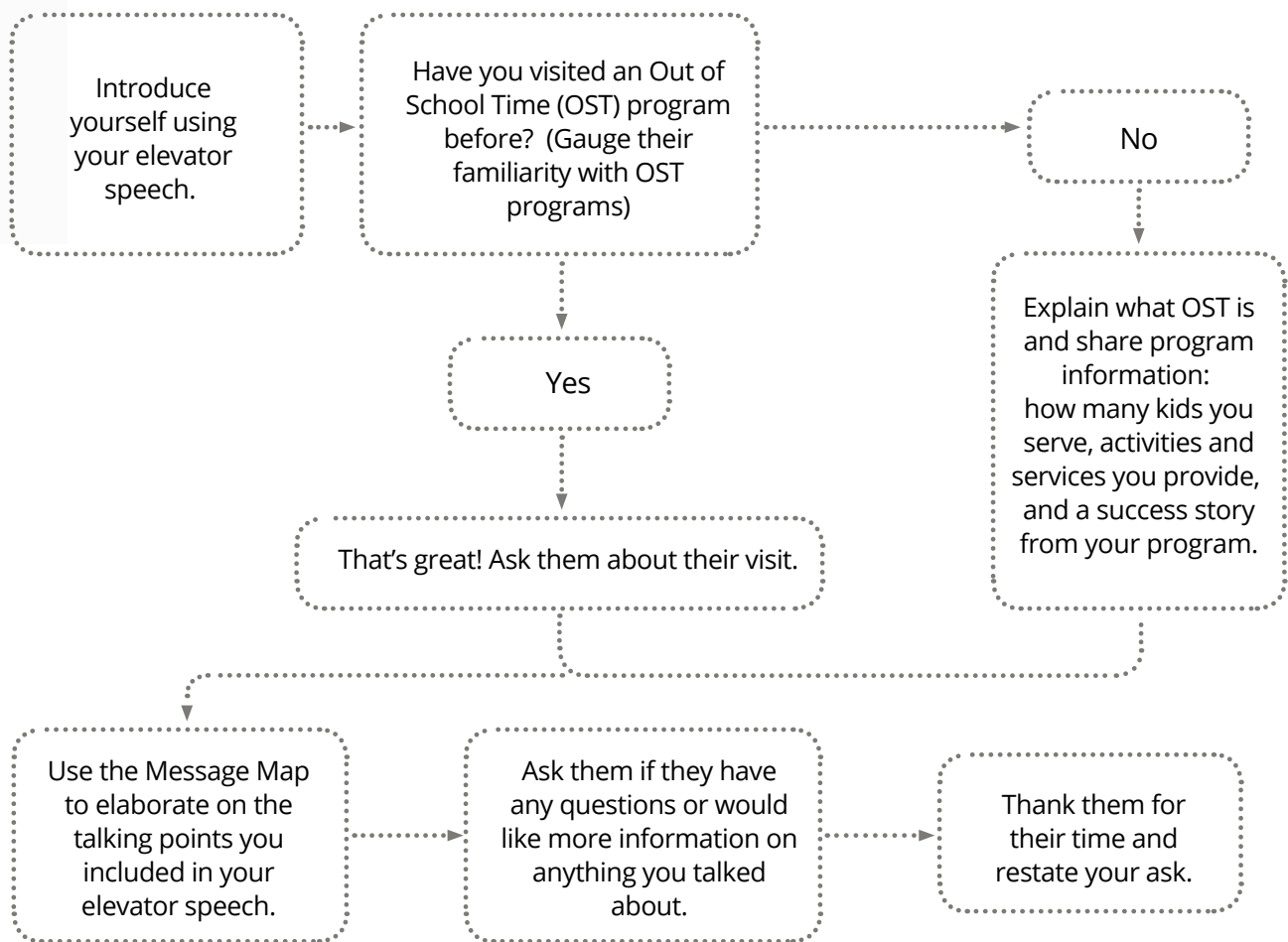
Each federal legislator has staff in Washington D.C. and regional offices throughout Nevada, with staff dedicated to meeting with, and listening to constituents. Federal legislators rely on their staff for advice on policies and for constituent feedback. Set up a meeting with a legislator's staff or invite them to visit your program to begin developing these important relationships.

Discussion Guide

This discussion guide outlines a typical conversation you might have with an elected official about OST. Use this guide to practice your conversations ahead of time so you are focused and ready to deliver your message when the time comes.

Be flexible – no two conversations will be the same. For instance, your conversation with a legislator at your site visit will be different from the one you have at a legislative town hall.

Start here!





Nevada Legislature

In Nevada, legislative sessions only last for 120 days every two years. Every odd year is a legislative session. There is very little time to go through all the potential Bill Draft Requests (BDRs) and the state budget. Because of this, a lot of work also occurs in-between sessions. Legislators still participate on interim committees where studies on some of the topics might take place in order to learn more. Agencies can also present information to help educate the legislators. They use this information to think about bills they want to introduce in the following session.

The Nevada Legislature is considered a citizen legislature. Its members work part-time as legislators and have “regular” jobs during the off-season. They are teachers, doctors, and lawyers just like us, so do not be afraid to talk with them!

Legislators are not experts on all of the issues they need to vote on so they need you to tell them what is good for our state. Plus, representatives really do love to hear from their constituents and care about what you have to say.

Bill Tracking and Monitoring

The best way to stay up-to-date on BDRs, committee meetings, and legislative sessions is to visit the Nevada Legislature's website: leg.state.nv.us/

You can attend hearings in person or virtually.

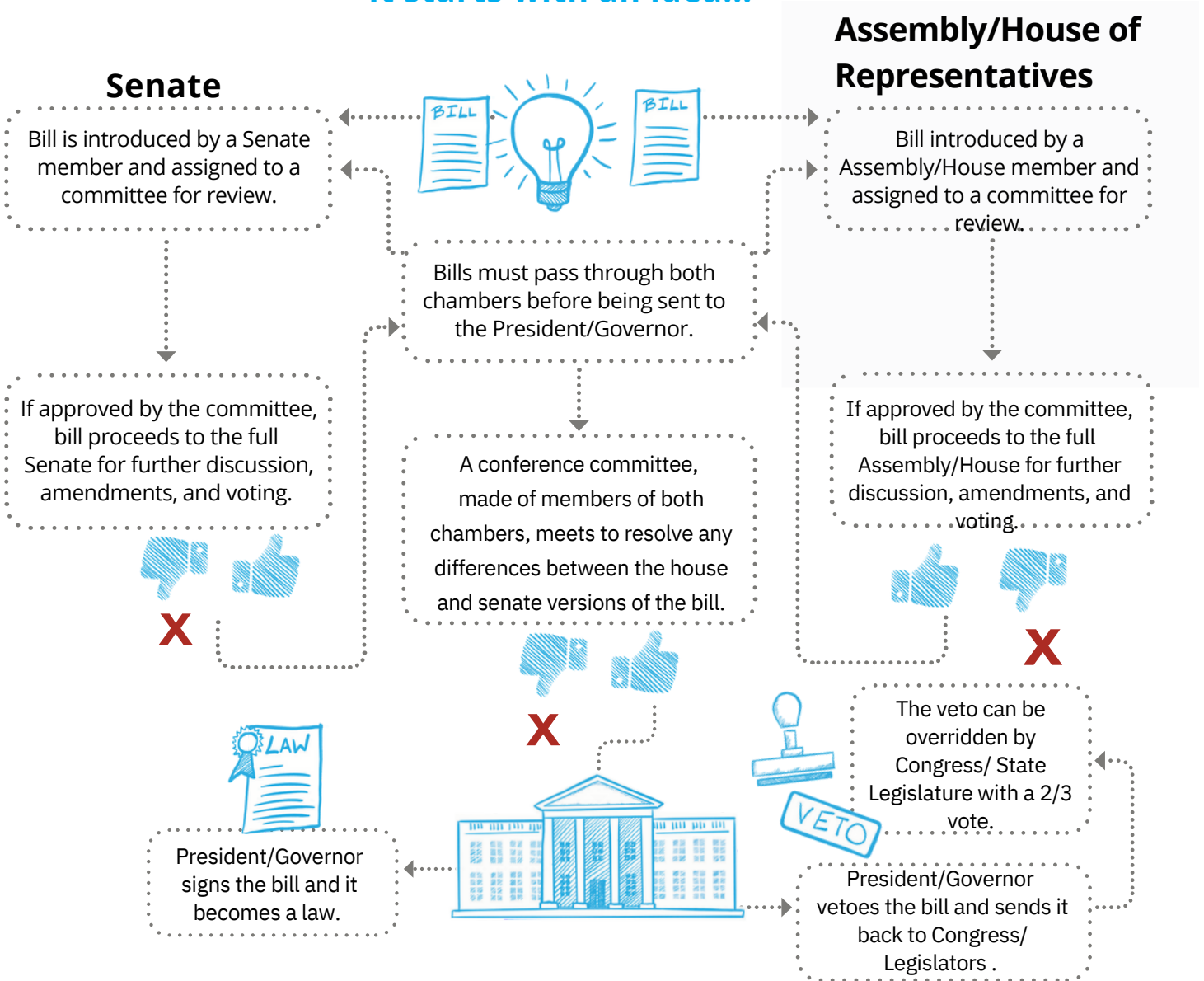
- **Attend a hearing In-Person:**
 - 401 S. Carson Street Carson City, NV 89701
- **Watch online, or via teleconference:**
 - Grant Sawyer Building (Washington & Las Vegas Blvd.) 555 E. Washington Ave. Las Vegas, NV 89101

Here are more legislative resources to help you track BDRs and stay up-to-date on laws:

- [Track up to 10 bills free!](#)
- [NELIS Bill Draft Requests \(BDR\)](#)
- [NICRP BDR List \(Related to Children\)](#)

The Legislative Process

It starts with an idea...



Get involved early in the process! If a bill does not make it out of its committee, it will end there, or "die."

- Click [HERE](#) to learn about Nevada's legislative process.
- Click [HERE](#) to watch the classic video on how bills are made!



Providing Testimony In Person

When you arrive to give in-person testimony, you'll have three options to choose from: Support, Oppose, or Neutral. If you are strictly advocating, be mindful of which option you choose, so it does not turn into lobbying. The safest option is "neutral" with the intention of educating legislators. All sessions are live-streamed so your testimony will be posted on the Nevada Legislature website.

Here are some helpful tips for advocating in person:

- First, fill out the sign-in sheet and indicate whether you wish to testify.
- At the appropriate time, go to the witness table, turn on the microphone, and introduce yourself:
 - “Mr. (or Madam) Chair, and members of the committee, my name is . . .”
 -
- Explain your position clearly and simply, and do not repeat earlier testimony.
- Be brief (most committee chairs will limit the time for testimony, usually 2-5 minutes).
- If you have written materials to present, bring enough copies for the members and the committee secretary, other staff, and other members of the public. Consider providing a written copy of your testimony as well to the committee secretary (preferably in electronic form) before the meeting.
- If you believe a change in the law is needed or some other action should be taken by the committee, be specific about your recommendation (brief written materials, for example, changes to wording in laws, are encouraged).
- Be ready to answer questions from the committee members. If you don't have an answer, it's okay to say you don't know, but can follow up with them.
- Members of the public who cannot attend an interim meeting or who choose not to give public comment during a meeting may also submit testimony and recommendations to the committee in writing to the committee secretary.
- Click [HERE](#) for an example of given testimony from the 2021 legislative session.



Keep in Touch

The Importance of Follow-Up

Advocacy is not designed to be a bunch of one-time meetings. Advocacy is most effective when you build relationships with elected officials based on your credibility, reliability, and passion for OST. In order to build these relationships, it is important that you keep in touch with your elected officials. So write, call, and visit often!

Here are a few ways to keep them in the loop:

- Send a follow-up note within a week thanking them for meeting with you and highlighting one or two topics that were discussed, especially if they referred you to another person or resource.
- Sign them up for your agency newsletters (ask them first).
- Invite them to local or state events.
- Get them to your program! Coordinate site visits with the legislator or their staff.
- Attend their events. Many legislators hold regular coffee chats and town halls where the public is welcome.
- **Send them:**
 - A thank you note
 - Copies of positive media coverage your program receives
 - Invitations to special events at your program
 - A success story of a student in your program
 - A letter offering yourself as a resource to your legislator on issues related to OST
 - Data from your program or school district that show the positive impacts of OST



Site Visits: A Step-by-Step Guide

A site visit is the most effective advocacy strategy available to OST programs. Inviting a legislator to visit your program allows them to see what goes on in a program and hear from students, parents, and community partners about the positive impact your program has made.

- Select the day
- Reach out to your legislator
- Create a schedule
- Invite families, partners, or school administrators
- Reach out to media
- Day of Checklist
- Follow Up

1 Select the Day

First, select a few potential days to host a site visit. If you are planning a site visit in January through April during a legislative session year, keep in mind that state representatives and senators will be in session in Carson City and will have limited availability. If you are asking a federal legislator to attend a site visit, pick a few dates during the next Congressional Recess when they will be back in Nevada. (Visit (www.congress.gov/days-in-session) for the congressional calendar

Check out your schedule and pick a few days with activities that you would like to highlight with legislators. Select a day a few weeks out to give legislators time to schedule the visit and give you time to organize the visit.

2 Reach Out to Your Legislator

The next step is to reach out to your legislator. If you would like to host several legislators at your program it is best to schedule a separate visit for each.

Below is an email template for reaching out to your legislator. You could reach out via a phone call or in-person first and then follow-up with an email.

Letter template:

Dear [Representative/Senator] [NAME],

[Organization Name] would like to invite you to visit our program at [school or site name if you have multiple sites] and see afterschool in action.

[1-2 sentences providing a summary or background on your program and the services/activities you offer students]. When you visit, our staff, parents, and students will be on hand to show you our program and all that we are doing to strengthen student success and support working families.

Are you available on the [morning/afternoon] of [potential date(s)]? If that time does not work for you, we would be happy to work with you to find one that does. Once we have a date and time set, I will follow up with more details and a tentative schedule for the visit.

I look forward to hearing from you!

[Name]

[Position and Organization]

[Contact Information]

3 Create a Schedule

Plan your visit for 60 minutes. You will want to include a tour of your program, highlight an activity, and provide opportunities for the legislator to meet with families, community partners, students, and other stakeholders. Be sure to take photos and share them after your visit!

Sample schedule:

3:30 p.m. Legislator arrives. Introduce yourself and your staff to your legislator and provide them with a brief overview of your program.

3:35 p.m. Begin the tour of your program. Use this time to introduce your talking points on the impact your program has made on students and the community and the overall importance of OST programming.

3:45 p.m. Visit a STEM activity or other engaging activity going on at your program. Allow the legislator to interact with students; ask youth to share their favorite part of the program or what they would do if the program did not exist.

4:00 p.m. Meet with families in a classroom. Parents will have time to share their experience with the program and ask questions of the legislator. Allow legislator time to speak if they would like.

4:15 p.m. Meet with the school principal who can explain the positive impacts of OST programming on students' school attendance, test scores, and behavior, or any other improvements linked to your program.

4:30 p.m. Speak with the legislator one-on-one to wrap up the visit. Thank them for visiting your program, reiterate talking points, hand them any materials you have prepared, and make an ask.

4 Invite families, partners, or school administrators

Two weeks before the site visit reach out to families and partners and invite them to meet your legislator and share their positive experiences with your program. Think about what messages you want to deliver to the legislator during the site visit and who the most effective messengers would be. *Example: Have the school principal talk about improvements in school attendance due to your program, or pick one student or family to share their story of how your program has positively impacted them.*

5 Reach Out to Media

A week before the visit, reach out to your local tv stations and newspapers. Send them a media advisory with the basic details of the visit as well as a short summary of your program. Let your legislator know that there may be media coverage during the visit.

6 Day of Checklist

- Provide the legislator with a brochure of your program and any other relevant materials.
- Share 1-2 brief success stories that highlight the importance of OST programming.
- Cover 1-2 talking points from the Message Map.
- Provide opportunities for your legislator to interact with students and ask questions.
- Provide opportunities for the legislator to meet with parents and community partners.
- End with an ask of your legislator!

7 Follow Up

Don't forget to follow up with your legislator after the visit. Send a thank you note within one week to your legislator and be sure to:

- Thank them for their time
- Reiterate the talking points you covered during the visit
- Include any additional information they requested during the visit
- Include photos from the visit

Follow up with any media who were at the site visit to track media coverage of the day. If there is media coverage, be sure to share it with your program's families, staff, partners, students, and the legislator.



Looking for more on advocacy?



Check out these resources:

Nevada Afterschool Network
www.nevadaafterschool.org/advocacy

Afterschool Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyTakeAction.cfm

National Summer Learning Association
www.summerlearning.org

Alliance for Justice
www.afj.org

National Council of Nonprofits
www.councilofnonprofits.org/everyday-advocacy

Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy
www.nic.unlv.edu/advocacy

America After 3pm
www.afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm/detail.html

Small Nonprofit's Guide to Advocacy
www.afterschoolalliance.org/electionkit/SmallNonprofitGuide.cfm#guidelines

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