

November
2022

**Supporting Families
Together Association**



Network **ADVOCACY PLAN**

PREPARED BY
SFTA'S ADVOCACY COMMITTEE



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We cultivate a system of organizations and professionals across Wisconsin to promote quality, strengths-based, early childhood services in all communities.

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This plan was authored by
**Supporting Families
Together Association's
Advocacy Committee**



**THANK YOU
for your help
creating this plan!**

The SFTA Advocacy Committee created this plan with consultation and technical assistance from The McNary Group, a nonprofit consulting firm that partnered with SFTA to develop an annual advocacy strategy.



Funding for this plan's development, the embedded policy agendas and story collection initiative was made possible by an advocacy grant awarded to SFTA by Child Care Aware of America. Through this grant, we received individualized coaching and the opportunity to network with and learn from early childhood advocates across the country. SFTA thanks Child Care Aware of America for this support; our advocacy plan has been enriched by the experience.



SFTA's Advocacy Committee created the network advocacy plan with the needs of our members at the center of our planning process. Using information gathered on our advocacy survey and at the roundtable advocacy discussion facilitated for us by McNary Group consultants, SFTA assessed member needs, goals, capacity, and priorities for this work. We learned of exciting agency projects and inquired about stumbling blocks and barriers. This plan represents the priorities and desires we heard from the network and could not have been created without your essential participation!



Supporting Families Together Association is Wisconsin's statewide member association for organizations and individuals committed to making every early childhood a great one.

Our Network Members are Wisconsin's
Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
and Family Resource Centers

A Letter from SFTA Leadership



Dear valued SFTA Network Members,

This past year has been one of big transitions; both for the network and for myself, stepping into the role of SFTA's Executive Director. One of the standout projects I had the pleasure of taking part in was the development of this ambitious plan to organize and extend our advocacy initiatives. It has been a source of inspiration, thinking on a grand scale about what we'd like to accomplish together, and how we can set up systems and supports that work to achieve those ends. I hope as you read through it, you feel just as energized by these big ideas!

This plan demonstrates SFTA's understanding of our responsibility and impact to our members, and to the early childhood stakeholders of Wisconsin. It is wide in scope, but so are the challenges faced by families and early education professionals; and we hear the call to meet this moment with a proportional response. There's no doubt that circumstances are dire right now for the child care system, and too many families are struggling in the face of systemic barriers to their success. But this is also a moment of immense and thrilling potential, as momentum continually builds for enacting equitable family-centered public policy and universal access to high quality child care. More voices are joining the call to prioritize the health, wellbeing and financial stability of families and communities and it is time for SFTA to provide the resources and leadership necessary to bring about effective change.

This plan was designed with room for us to grow into it, and I expect our advocacy wins will accumulate as we continually build our library of resources, enhance our knowledge and savviness in state government, and cultivate our networks of community supporters. I am so proud of the work our network does every day, and I'm thrilled to offer our members the advocacy strategy, supports and vision in this plan that will catalyze our impact and achievements. Together we will bring Wisconsin closer to our vision of a state where all children have the opportunity to reach their highest potential and all adults embrace their role and responsibility to children.

In partnership,

Jodi Widuch
Interim Executive Director, Supporting Families Together Association



Supporting Families Together Association

Our Mission

We cultivate a system of organizations and professionals across Wisconsin to promote quality, strengths-based, early childhood services in all communities.

Our Vision

In every Wisconsin community, all children have the opportunity to reach their highest potential and all adults embrace their role and responsibility to children.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to optimize the developmental window of opportunity that early childhood presents for building a strong foundation for life

Our Values

Our strong and responsive relationships are vital. Our work mirrors our passion. Curiosity inspires our innovation and growth. We believe true wisdom means lifelong learning.

Our Statement of Commitment to Diversity Equity and Inclusion

As part of its mission to help all children reach their full potential, SFTA commits to promoting practices of cultural humility that contribute to the advancement of a more just, equitable, and inclusive early childhood system in Wisconsin.



Advocacy Focus Statement

SFTA is committed to advancing programs and policies that align with our **mission, vision, and purpose** through an advocacy effort focused on raising awareness about the critical need for public investments in family support services and the early care and education system.

Essential Messages Points



Long-term and short-term advocacy goals are addressed



This plan centers on strengthening our collaborative partnerships with others invested in achieving shared outcomes



SFTA Advocacy efforts must spotlight the need to expand member agency funding streams



SFTA's advocacy plan addresses the need for both long-term and short-term advocacy goals.

Advocating effectively to impact policy and raise public consciousness requires us to take a balanced view of the long and short-term nature of our goals and workplans. We must make the commitment to persistently keep the early investment conversation going, both publicly and inside the offices of elected officials. Consistent messaging and presence over time is what ultimately moves public awareness and concern over an issue to organized action and catalyzes the passage of meaningful legislation. SFTA's network of Family Resource Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have always been the voice advocating for children, families, and early educators in their communities. In acknowledgment and celebration of this crucial role, this plan will build resources to aid agencies in this ongoing work.

While we stay devoted to our implicit mandate to continually advance the family support and early childhood field broadly, an effective advocacy strategy also calls for the ability to act responsively to meet the political moment and focus in on achieving narrower more immediate objectives. Every election cycle and budget cycle present new possibilities for us to seize, necessitating a focus in this plan on setting achievable short-term policy goals that nestle into our overall vision of progress. These short-term goals and workplans will take us incrementally in the right direction, while allowing us to continually assess and refine the effectiveness of our tactics and adapt to the continually shifting dynamics of state government.



This plan centers on strengthening our collaborative partnerships with others invested in achieving shared outcomes.

At every level of our advocacy work, from SFTA's efforts building partnerships with other statewide organizations and coalitions, to the local agency's carefully cultivated relationships with individual parents and educators, collaboration is seen as intrinsic to our success.

SFTA would like to acknowledge the excellent work our members already perform daily building local alliances with stakeholders and delivering relationship-based services. Our members hold the well-deserved reputation of being deeply ingrained in their communities, aware of regional needs and dynamics, and adept at responding with strength-based programming and services that empower positive change. Of the many prominent advocacy organizations fighting for the advancement of Wisconsin's children, families and early childhood professionals, our network truly stands apart in this way. Just as we know all children learn within the context of stable nurturing relationships, our network illustrates the essential nature of relationship building when supporting families and early educators at the systems level. The advocacy strategies and tactics outlined here are rooted in this relational ethic and are designed to lean into our network's natural strengths being so intimately connected to families and early educators. We aspire to continually find new and innovative ways to leverage these relationships into successful advocacy outcomes.

The theme of enhanced in-network collaboration and coordination is also embedded into the framework of this plan. Member feedback underscored a need for SFTA to provide more cohesive messaging and centralized organization, enabling more effective statewide advocacy campaigns. Regular production of advocacy materials and convenings of advocates across the network will work toward this, while providing a means to better leverage our collective knowledge and experience. Consistent opportunity for network evaluation of our advocacy efforts and contribution in the cyclical re-development of policy agendas and campaigns will also strengthen and unify our advocacy.



SFTA Advocacy efforts must spotlight the need to expand member agency funding streams.

In agreement with every leading industry and academic source on the matter, SFTA affirms that increased investments in early childhood and family support services are long overdue in Wisconsin, and on the national scale. This means any funding increase to systems and programs that support young children and their caregivers will be viewed as a victory for us, as advocates of healthy child development and family stability.

We will always champion the broad message that early investment is in the public interest, as we see this as an outcome of our purpose and vision. SFTA's advocacy efforts will also focus more specifically on how our network members function as a public good in their own right. Policymakers, funders and the general public need continual education on the value that Family Resource Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies offer communities, and how our positive impacts are demonstrated. The policy agendas and other resources outlined in this plan are designed to help our members advocate for stakeholders as well as for their own ability to serve communities.



Advocacy Activities

Policy Agenda Created for Network



SFTA will author an Early Investment Recommendations document and a State Policy Agenda. The network can use these materials to champion, advance and coalesce around unified advocacy messages and policy asks that forward our extant work, and outline our goals for the future.

Communication Materials Created for Network



SFTA will author corresponding advocacy communication materials for the current State Policy Agenda. SFTA will also compile and index data and research sources that support our policy priorities and budget requests, creating an online library of resources available to cite for advocacy, lobbying and fund development purposes.

Professional Development Supports for Network



SFTA will build institutional knowledge about non-profit advocacy and lobbying in Wisconsin, continually striving to enhance the TA we can provide our members around this topic. Professional development offerings on various advocacy topics will be developed and delivered to the network through training opportunities and communities of practice.

Desired Outcomes

This plan will support and enhance our network's direct advocacy work:

- **By increasing our network's political footprint in state government.**
 - Agencies will foster new productive legislative relationships with local representatives while strengthening and leveraging established connections.
- **By increasing our network's policy impact.**
 - Working as a coordinated network, we will be set up to successfully influence public policy, guided by the current State Policy Agenda, and set of Early Investment Recommendations.

This plan will support and enhance our network's grassroots advocacy work:

- **By increasing public awareness of early childhood and family support issues.**
- **By increasing public engagement in advocating for our issues.**

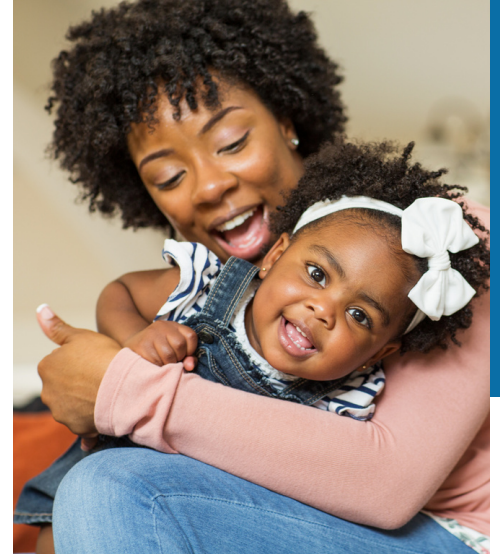
This plan will support and enhance our network's advocacy knowledge and skills:

- **By Increasing network-wide professional development opportunities**
 - Advocacy trainings will be offered on a variety of topics, both in online self-paced formats and virtually.
 - A drop-in community of practice style professional development series will be offered throughout budget period.
- **By organizing a library of informational sources and resource materials on advocacy topics for easy reference.**
 - This resource will be accessible on the SharePoint Advocacy site.

Our 3 Advocacy Priorities

Priority 1 Policy Agendas

SFTA will create a set of policy agendas that guides our advocacy work by outlining our goals and priorities. These documents will be informed by our network and other key stakeholders, aligned with our work, and continually updated.



Priority 2 Funding

SFTA will work to increase public and private funding sources for members and organizations related to family support and early care and education.

Priority 3 Issue Engagement

SFTA will work to support the network in increasing public awareness of early childhood and family support issues and engagement with us in advocacy activity.

These three priorities are the essence of SFTA's advocacy strategy, providing the blueprint for our ongoing work supporting the network's collective advocacy impact.

They reflect the major themes and areas of consensus the network conveyed through the advocacy survey and roundtable discussion used to inform this plan. Each priority area of focus is broken down into two goals that we can take actionable steps toward meeting, offering the framework to continually progress and evolve our advocacy efforts in the strategic directions for which the network has requested our leadership.



Priority 1 Policy Agendas

The need for two policy agendas

As we began thinking about the design and purposes of our policy agenda, it became clear that we needed two versions, to serve two distinct functions. First, we needed a tool our members could use during wider advocacy conversations with stakeholders and policymakers that helps clarify the kind of policies we endorse as supportive to the healthy development of children and families. This policy agenda would be broad in scope and aligned with the leading national and state early childhood advocacy organizations, facilitating our ability to build and join coalitions. It would also help frame those introductory or general ongoing advocacy discussions describing our vision for change. This big picture type of policy agenda developed into what we have named **SFTA's Early Investment Recommendations**.

We also had a need to provide the network with a narrower set of state-level policy priorities to advocate for. This policy agenda would be researched, composed, and distributed to the network on a biannual basis, aligned with our state legislature's biennium. Since the state budget is the most impactful piece of legislation they pass, this policy agenda would be centered around our primary budgetary asks and timed to be released to the network for use during the season of budget creation spanning the first half of odd-numbered years. We have named this the **State Policy Agenda** and intend to complement it with production of corresponding advocacy materials and resources for each agenda item and an online guide for putting it all to use.





Priority 1 Policy Agendas

Goal 1

Develop a systematic process through which the policy agendas will be created and updated regularly.

The process of developing our policy agendas

We felt it was important to plan out a systematic process for developing both agendas, to ensure we produce a comprehensive and useful set of documents informed by our members contributions, and the latest data, trends and recommendations from leading policy and early childhood experts. The Early Investment Recommendations may only need reassessment and refining every other year; however, the state budget asks in the State Policy Agenda may need to be entirely rewritten. Each cycle of policy agenda revision invites reflection on previous asks and outcomes, and further opportunity for the network to provide input and feedback.



Here is a quarter-by-quarter look at our approach to updating and using the two biannual policy agendas:

Quarter	Even # Year	Odd # Year
<p>Q1</p> <p>January through March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFTA starts gathering source material policy agendas and frameworks from other organizations. • SFTA updates and disperses the network advocacy survey, gather additional sources and ideas from the network. • During this time SFTA is planning and organizing Advocacy Day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As legislative budgetary advocacy season gets into full swing, the agendas are put to use, and the budgetary advocacy plan is implemented.
<p>Q2</p> <p>April through June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy Day happens during or around The Week of the Young Child in April. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ After debriefing the event, attention can turn to developing rough drafts of the new agendas. SFTA will use the network surveys and the insights gleaned from their experiences talking with the legislature on advocacy day as part of the analysis informing the new agendas. • SFTA’s Board of Directors will be asked to review and provide feedback on the new drafts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFTA and the network continue to utilize agendas and plan.
<p>Q3</p> <p>July through September</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFTA will finalize and publish the agendas on our website and disperse them to members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state budget passes at beginning of this quarter and our advocacy asks and outcomes, strengths and areas for improvement can be assessed.
<p>Q4</p> <p>October through December</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFTA will finalize and release the internal network budgetary advocacy gameplan for the upcoming year. • SFTA will focus on producing the advocacy materials and resources aligned with the current State Policy Agenda and prepare to ramp up network organizational support during budget season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFTA and network continue to use policy agendas for all general purposes: advocacy, grant writing, marketing, coalition building.



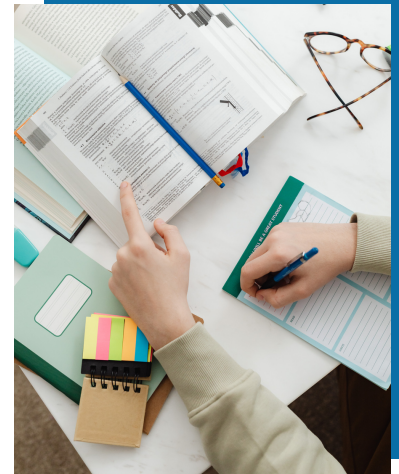
Priority 1 Policy Agendas

Goal 2

Develop a stockpile of corresponding resources, data, and original advocacy materials for each policy agenda item

The Network's Advocacy Library

To support the network's use and promotion of the policy agendas, SFTA intends to build an advocacy library all agency staff can easily access and contribute to. This online space will house research articles and other source material backing our policy recommendations, as well as advocacy materials created by SFTA such as one-pager leave behinds, policy briefs, communication templates, talking points etc. This is where information and recordings from SFTA's advocacy trainings and community of practice can be stored for network use. General advocacy resources like tool kits, tip sheets, book citations and links to websites can be collectively warehoused here too, allowing members to find and share out sources they have found helpful.



As we expand our presence in state government, this resource library can also be a central location to store information on elected officials and legislative committees as well as keep tabs on current policy developments.

SFTA is excited to launch this advocacy library and see where the network takes it. It is the kind of project that can continually expand and evolve over time, as we increase the contents of this advocacy information hub and innovate new ways to utilize it.



Priority 2 Funding

SFTA will work to increase and diversify funding for SFTA's members and the early investment policies we endorse.

Throughout the survey responses and network feedback informing this plan, funding was by far the most salient topic of consensus. Advocating for public investment in systems that support healthy children, families and early educators was of paramount concern for our members, as was maintaining the financial wellbeing of member agencies. Network leadership expressed the need to set advocacy goals aimed at increasing and diversifying funding streams and meeting the challenge of devoting ongoing funding to the advocacy work itself. These three goals delineate the major directions SFTA is looking to head in pursuit of advancing funding for SFTA's Members and the Early Investment policies we endorse.



SFTA will increase direct advocacy supports, advancing networkwide efforts to increase public funding



SFTA will invest in developing our institutional knowledge and skills pertaining to lobbying and effective budgetary advocacy



SFTA will work to increase private funding opportunities to advance our work



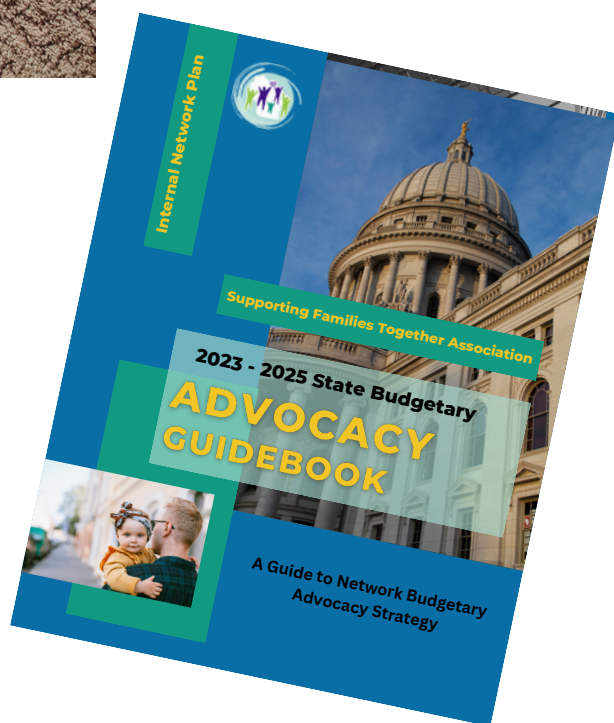
Priority 2 Funding

Goal 1

SFTA will advance networkwide efforts to increase public funding by increasing our direct advocacy supports

Creating a Campaign

By creating our Early Investment Recommendations and State Policy Agenda, we set deliberate advocacy goals for the network to champion. By building our library of related resources and advocacy materials we provide our members more tools to use in pursuit of those goals. Truly utilizing the policy agendas to maximal effect requires more than this, however; it requires networkwide campaign coordination. To augment interagency organization, communication, and sustained focus on advocacy work, SFTA has developed a budgetary advocacy guidebook tool and will facilitate a community of practice open to all FRC and CCR&R staff working on advocacy initiatives.



This is what the 2023–2025 edition of the **State Budgetary Advocacy Guidebook** looks like. It will be housed in the advocacy library and include the current policy agendas and corresponding advocacy materials. SFTA will update this guide continually as the state releases more information such as the session calendar and the public hearing schedules, when amendments are made to the budget, or when SFTA has additional budgetary materials to share.



Priority 2 Funding

Goal 1

SFTA will increase direct advocacy supports, advancing networkwide efforts to increase public funding

The Framework of Budgetary Advocacy

SFTAs budgetary guidebook will overview the budget creation process in Wisconsin, highlighting key opportunities and strategies for advocates to impact it. Our aim is to assist our members in identifying, planning for, and executing effective approaches to advocacy most suited to their specific objectives, and reflecting the needs of their community. Past networkwide budgetary advocacy intervention focused on organizing a singular day of collective action and professional development. Broadening our perspective to look at the whole cycle of state budget development will encourage the expansion of network budgetary advocacy from a single day to an entire season. This is not to say we will do away with our

signature advocacy day event, rather, it will punctuate a series of advocacy opportunities and activities agencies can employ throughout the duration of budget season. SFTA will post this guidebook in the SharePoint Advocacy Library and continually update it with important dates and information as it is released by the government or reported by news sources. Just as the creation of each State Policy Agenda is a chance to reflect on past attempts and fold in lessons learned, we aspire to enhance each corresponding edition of this guidebook.

SFTA's Advocacy Community of Practice: an organized learning community

Our COP will be the connective thread, helping to weave together the policy agendas, advocacy library resources, and state budgetary timeline into a wholistic and effective campaign to impact the budget. We envision this COP as an organized community of learners, offering members the ability to meet regularly to hear and share updates, engage in peer-learning and resource sharing, and problem-solve collectively as barriers to the work may arise. By devoting a portion of the meeting time to a topic of professional development, SFTA will strive to bolster the understanding and capacity of member agencies to implement diverse advocacy strategies involving an ever-widening pool of confident skilled staff members.



Priority 2 Funding

Goal 2

SFTA will enhance our direct advocacy efforts to increase public investment by developing our institutional knowledge and skills

Commitment to a Growth Mindset

SFTA considers the continual advancement of our advocacy knowledge to be an institutional priority, worthy of investment. We are specifically interested in advancing our budgetary advocacy strategy and building our capacity to effectively lobby on behalf of the network in Wisconsin state government. To that end, current agency budgetary and strategic planning efforts include intentional focus on investment in staff resources and development, action steps to further advocacy efforts that support our mission and align with our focus on relationship building, and expand member supports related to advocacy work. We aim to solidify our network's position as a leader in promoting and advancing investments and initiatives that bolster early care and education and family support, first at the state level and ultimately in the federal arena.

To realize this goal, SFTA will budget staff time directly toward advocacy related projects. Staff will engage in professional development opportunities as available and offer similar supports to network partners. A robust library of resources will be developed and sustained for on-demand member advocacy support. Members will have access to all SFTA contacts, materials, and supports available.



Priority 2 Funding

Goal 3

SFTA will work to increase private funding opportunities to advance our work.

Positioning Ourselves for Success

With a specific strategic plan goal to diversify funding, SFTA will work with intention to pursue funders and foster relationships that build trust and confidence in our work. This will include ongoing transparency and network promotion, including newsletters, visibility materials, and robust reports that highlight our network's collective impact on early childhood systems.

Philanthropic support for advocacy work is on the rise, as funders come to understand investing in efforts to pass stable state funding mechanisms can yield much higher payoffs than direct donations to service programs. While funding direct service operations can have a large impact on recipients, there is growing recognition that advocating to make systemic change has greater potential reach by addressing root causes of inequities. As the momentum for early investment builds, SFTA anticipates increasing opportunities to engage private funders in backing advocacy and lobbying initiatives in Wisconsin. Especially in times when federal action stalls, funders interested in advancing policy to support healthy children and families look to states to lead the way. Innovative legislation is known to be piloted, assessed, improved, and scaled at the state level.

The philanthropic conversation around advocacy has only increased in recent years, with renewed calls to address racial injustice in America. More donors are interested in giving to organizations lead by and comprised of diverse staff members who live in and are representative of the communities they serve. Because our network model is based on community embeddedness and representation, we are perfectly poised to brand ourselves as the changemakers best equipped to build equity through our work. The well-established link between promotion of high quality early childhood programming and the reduction of achievement gaps leaves us perfectly situated to approach benefactors who have their philanthropic sights set on funding antiracist systems change.



Priority 3

Issue Engagement

SFTA will work to support the network in cultivating public awareness and support for early childhood systems

Successful advocacy campaigns mobilize large grassroots coalitions of supporters who are active participants in calling for change. Being so deeply connected to their communities, our member FRCs and CCR&Rs are well positioned to do this work. This plan will leverage our community presence to engage more early childhood stakeholders into our advocacy work and cultivate more broad awareness and support for our issues. With more readymade and customizable materials on hand, members can heighten their advocacy impact online, and offer caregivers and families they work with easy ways to participate.

SFTA's Voices For WI Kids initiative will emphasize the importance of stories featuring the families, early education professionals and businesses we work with. By telling these stories strategically we can elevate our public profile and boost popular support for early investment while improving the effectiveness of our advocacy. Continued story collection and distribution efforts over time will work to cement our reputation with policymakers as integral to understanding and responding effectively to their constituents' needs. It will encourage media outlets to regard us as the go-to sources on what Wisconsin's children, families and early educators are experiencing and what they need to thrive. Best of all, this advocacy project constitutes one more type of referral service agencies can offer their communities, and one more benefit SFTA can offer members.



Priority 3 Issue Engagement

Goal 1

SFTA will launch an advocacy story collection initiative

Telling Impactful Stories

In 2022, SFTA launched Voices For WI Kids, our story collection initiative intended to amplify the voices of Wisconsin's families, early education professionals and other community members in support of early investment. Participants contribute their early childhood stories as well as optional pictures and videos, which SFTA packages into high-impact advocacy materials. Stories are powerful tools for social and political change, helping us put a human face on our policy agenda.



Collecting and distributing the stories of our network's clientele and community partners is an advocacy strategy that elevates our issue and empowers grassroots engagement, heightens the impact of our direct advocacy efforts, and bolsters our network's reputation for providing a public good.

Stories heighten the impact of our direct advocacy efforts

It is human nature to use stories to contextualize information, making the addition of advocacy stories that exemplify common problems and illustrate the need for responsive policy a great overall strategy to enhance advocacy efforts. When we engage in direct advocacy or lobbying, the addition of stories alongside the facts and figures (especially stories from their constituents) can make a huge impact on lawmakers. SFTA appreciates that those directly affected by systemic

underinvestment of early childhood systems have extremely valuable insights to offer policymakers. Both in terms of explaining existing problems and making practical policy recommendations for viable solutions. By making it easier for people to voice their support for early investment and send a message directly to their representatives, Voices For WI Kids expects to elevate the voice of lived experience in state government, encouraging more effective and equitable policy outcomes.



There are so many ways to use stories in our advocacy

Stories can be featured on SFTA's and member's websites, advertising the Voices For WI Kids initiative as one of our many direct services offered the community. Stories can be packaged into social media posts and videos, spreading awareness of the need to better support children and families, and increase access to high quality early childhood and family support programs. We can distribute them to the press and incorporate them into letters to the editor or editorials. Stories can be passed on to elected representatives helping them understand the realities of their constituents' experiences and the critical need for effective responsive policy. Some stories may be perfect for newsletter content, illustrating an agency success story.

Sharing stories is empowering, inviting more advocacy involvement

When we ask a parent, teacher, provider, or anyone else to contribute their story to our advocacy cause, we are validating their significance, and confirming their vital role in making positive change. It can be incredibly empowering to tell your personal story and call for policymakers to respond with measures that improve conditions for your family, livelihood, business, or community. When we help people understand how crucial it is for their representatives to hear about their experiences, and how impactful this can be in shaping and passing legislation, we inspire their enthusiasm to engage with us. Some participants will be inspired to continue working with us on other advocacy projects after taking this initial step. As story collection efforts carry on, and accounts from all early childhood stakeholders proliferate, participants will start to inspire each other to add their voice to the chorus and fit their story into the wider call for systemic investment.

Voices For WI Kids bolsters our network's standing as a public good

There are a wide range of experiences people may have with early childhood and family support systems that point to the need for increased public investments. A story from a provider who tells us how recent stimulus funds prevented the closure of their center showcases this just as much as stories from families struggling to find or afford child care in their area. Many stories will inherently involve the way the individual was helped by the agency, reiterating the value CCR&R and FRC services provide their communities.



Priority 3 Issue Engagement

Goal 2

Leverage our network's deep community presence to publicize our policy agenda and invite grassroots participation in our advocacy efforts.

Embedding advocacy into our day-to-day

Developing the grass roots side of our advocacy strategy entails getting strategic and intentional about utilizing our digital and in-person community presence. SFTA will create more advocacy content for the network's communications COP to make use of, so that our campaigns are shareable and engaging online. Mass communications systems can be leveraged to broaden the reach of our message and call more people to action at crucial moments in the political process. SFTA is excited to bring the expertise of our data, communications, advocacy, and community engagement specialists together with network leadership vision for growth to catalyze the momentum of our advocacy.

The strength-based, culturally responsive services families and educators receive, and the strong relationships they form with agency staff members along the way, cultivate ideal conditions for supporting citizen activism. As trusted community messengers, member agencies have created wonderful opportunities to bring the public into their advocacy campaigns through those personal connections. SFTA is interested in partnering with our members to pinpoint how we can best embed advocacy into their presence at local events, membership in community organizations and work with community leaders, and ongoing relationships with early educators and parents.



Priority 3 Issue Engagement

Goal 2

Leverage our network's deep community presence to publicize our policy agenda and invite grassroots participation in our advocacy efforts.

Grounding Ourselves in the Advocacy Perspective

One of the most powerful ways to embed advocacy into daily operations is to support all agency staff to feel comfortable partaking in advocacy conversations and activities. We can think about cultivating this much like the diversity, equity, and inclusion work companies engage in; by starting in-house and supporting growth at the individual level, knowing this will produce an organization-wide ripple effect.

When we feel confident identifying as advocates, we can model this attitude for others and inspire them to join us. Part of the general hesitancy to make an advocacy phone call, send a letter, or meet with a representative can be the perception that you must be up on all the latest legislation and hold granular knowledge about the policy topic to do it well. This is not the case; rather, simply being able to succinctly communicate your experiences and needs to those with the power to meet them is the essential skill we can inculcate in ourselves and others.

In an effort to increase the accessibility of advocacy information and skills, SFTA will produce a series of foundational advocacy trainings, which will be accessible in an online self-paced format and tailored to different audiences. We envision offering providers and early educators advocacy courses on our online training platform, available for registry credit. Shareable resources intended to make advocating quick and easy for parents and families will also be created.



Putting the Pieces Together

Growing and sustaining a well-coordinated delivery system for early childhood and family supports across the state of Wisconsin requires the direct assistance, resources, and expertise FRCs and CCR&Rs offer their communities. By deepening our relationships with policymakers so that they understand how agencies serve their constituents and strengthen the economy, we can better position ourselves to gain required funds, become the trusted experts lawmakers go to for consultation, and prevent the duplication of our services. We can also champion the needs of our stakeholders and use our influence to ensure policy is drafted equitably to effectively solve the major issues in front of us. By getting more intentional about broadcasting our advocacy priorities and enlisting community partners in the fight to make positive change, we reinforce our reputation as the local go-to source for early childhood and family support.

Putting all the pieces of this plan together will work to embed more elements of advocacy into our day-to-day work, building our capacity to bring even more value and services to our communities. This is a multi-year plan, and members will begin to see action steps rolling out as early as December 2022, beginning with publication of this plan and numerous resources in a shared library format for the upcoming budget season.

SFTA is committed to continually assessing impacts and gathering member feedback to make ongoing improvements. This will be part of our regular process of evaluating member services to ensure our network receives high quality resources and capacity building supports from SFTA.