



## **Tips for Successful Youth Sports Advocacy Campaigns**

As part of [State of Play 2020](#), Project Play issued a [call for leadership](#) in youth sports to take action to make youth sports more equitable and accessible for all. One recommendation: to fund community-based play. In 2021, New York became the first state to create a permanent fund for youth sports through its legalization of sports gambling - an idea Project Play [had proposed](#) in 2018. With lessons learned from New York, these tips can help you make a similar case for sports funding in your community.

### **1. Find Your Champion**

It helps to have friends in high places. Identify a figure in local or state government that can be a voice for youth sports among policymakers. The best champions may be:

- Vocal on issues related to access and equity;
- A former athlete, coach or sports parent with appreciation for value of youth sports in community development;
- Capable of driving change as a member of a relevant committee or a key undecided vote.

### **2. Align on Your Talking Points**

Develop a consistent and clear message on what you want to happen and why. Conversations around youth sports, sports gambling and local politics can be very broad — stay focused. You can hone your message by:

- Researching data from Project Play, the Youth Sports Collaborative Network (YSCN) and other national experts;
- Reviewing with local researchers;
- Consulting with government relations experts.
- An example of a clear message may be:
  - “We’re not advocating for mobile sports betting, but if it were to pass we believe there should be an allocation for youth sports nonprofits operating in underserved communities.”

### **3. Mobilize, Educate, and Expand Your Network**

Successful campaigners will tell you they would have gotten nowhere without support. You can activate your cause by:

- Creating a petition on Change.org (like youth sports advocates in [New York City](#) and [Philadelphia](#)) to raise awareness and support;
- Writing a letter to a key official that articulates your position and ask relevant organizations and elected officials to sign on (like [New York State](#));
- Pitching your campaign to local media through a press release or direct outreach;
- Reaching out to groups like Project Play, PLAY Sports Coalition and YSCN to amplify the issue and support local advocacy efforts.

### **4. Establish Bill Language and Grant Criteria To Guide Government Officials**

You can help the legislative process along by translating your goals to draft language and actionable policies. To help you get started, you can:

- Research current and pending legislation around youth sports and sports gambling;
- Adapt language from the passed New York State bill and the youth sports grant criteria developed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.