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Beyond Decent Work Playbook

A National Advocacy Campaign for
Career Development in Canada

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Context

This Playbook is the culmination of the collaborative effort over the past 18 months of a passionate group of career development leaders representing a diverse cross-section of the field across Canada.

Our aim was to co-create a National Advocacy Campaign to help unlock the transformative potential of career development.

Why a National Advocacy Campaign for Career Development?

Career development can have a tremendous positive impact on individuals, labour markets and communities. Unfortunately, it is an underrecognized and underused resource in Canada, with career education in schools varying widely across the country, few adults accessing career services and a limited number of employers providing employee career development programs. Policymakers, businesses, educators and the general public continue to know very little about career development or the professionals who provide career development services.

The purpose of a National Advocacy Campaign is to increase the visibility, profile and impact of career development to improve the working lives of everyone in Canada and build a more prosperous economy and equitable society.

What is Career Development?

A career is about more than getting a job or picking a major. It's about the life you want to lead. Career development is the lifelong process of how to manage learning, work, leisure and transitions to move toward your preferred future as it continues to evolve.

With effective career development:

- **Individuals realize greater well-being and satisfaction**
- **Schools increase student success and graduation rates**
- **Organizations fill skills gaps and improve employee engagement**
- **Governments reduce unemployment and boost social mobility**

Let's Go Beyond Decent with Career Development

Our goal with this advocacy campaign is to increase the knowledge that career development is essential to getting beyond decent work in Canada. Why are we striving for just decent? We all want a safe job that pays fairly – and we need career development to move beyond this minimum standard.

Career development positions us to have work that is meaningful, enhances our mental health and fully uses our talents. It also helps to build a strong economy and a more just society, with decreased turnover, reduction in stress-related illnesses and lower social assistance costs. Career development gets us to beyond decent by contributing to labour market integration and attachment, employee recruitment and retention, and supporting a thriving economy that offers a high quality of work.

Who Contributed to the Campaign?

The project to develop a National Advocacy Campaign was guided by a volunteer Steering Committee and advanced by a Working Group, while also engaging members of the broader career development community. This initiative was supported by CERIC as a convener and Overlap Associates, who led us through a human-centred design process.

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Using This Playbook

How the Playbook is Organized

- **Context:** laying the groundwork for a shared understanding that career development is essential to getting to beyond decent work
- **Key messages for four audiences:** General Public, Business/Organizations, Government and Educators
 - **Goal 1:** Increase the number of people accessing career development services
 - **Goal 2:** Increase the public's competency in developing their careers
 - **Goal 3:** Integrate career development into current systems
 - **Goal 4:** Increase funding and investment in the career development services/sector
- **Creating a Communications Plan**
- **Toolkit for developing advocacy plans**

How Can You Use This Playbook?

This Playbook is intended for associations and organizations throughout Canada's expansive career development sector to integrate into their own communications as part of ongoing awareness and advocacy efforts.

You can share the key messages in this Playbook with the intended audiences through a variety of communications tools, whether letter writing, media releases, social media or beyond. While these calls to action are intended to provide a common voice and platform, you are also encouraged to adapt or add to them based on your goals.

These advocacy messages can be aligned with events and moments throughout the year to maximize impact, leverage existing awareness and create synergies with other movements.

This Playbook is also a tool to guide associations and organizations through the advocacy planning process so they can successfully generate support for the career development sector. It offers clear, straightforward steps that lead to advocacy action regardless of the organizational context.



Where to Start Your Advocacy

Through the development of a National Advocacy Campaign, career development leaders representing a diverse cross-section of the field worked to complete steps one, two and three of the advocacy planning process outlined below. These activities led to the development of the advocacy goals and key messages found in the next section of the Playbook. These goals and messages are meant to be used across the sector and hopefully resonate with your organization. If so, feel free to start at step four in the advocacy planning process. However, if you have different advocacy goals, it is best to start at step one as each step in the advocacy planning process builds off the previous step.

Key Messages

Every advocacy campaign needs a set of core key messages that articulate the specific changes an organization hopes to see, why those changes are necessary and how the audience can act to make those changes happen. To build these messages, the Steering Committee, in partnership with Overlap, worked to determine specific campaign goals to prioritize in our messaging:

- **Increase the number of people accessing career development services;**
- **Increase the public's competency in developing their careers;**
- **Integrate career development into current systems;**
- **Increase funding and investment in the career development services/sector.**

After identifying campaign goals, the Steering Committee and Overlap identified and prioritized entities that would act as key driving forces in accomplishing each goal. This involved making a list of interestholders and assessing how much power each interestholder had to help the career development sector meet the aforementioned goals. We identified the following entities:

- **General Public**
- **Businesses / Organizations**
- **Government**
- **Education**

Recognizing that each of these entities has different motivations and concerns, we then asked ourselves what these entities would need to hear in order to act in a way that moves us toward the change we want to see. Based on that discussion, we collaborated with the Working Group to develop key messages targeted at each entity that are specifically designed to motivate them to help us reach our goals. As a result, each goal has a message directed at the **General Public, Businesses / Organizations, Government** and **Education**.

Advocacy Goal One

Increase the number of people accessing career development services

Increasing the number of people accessing career development services is foundational to demonstrating the sector's value and relevance. When more people engage, it strengthens the sector's ability to make a significant impact and help those people thrive. As more people engage with these services, communities benefit from reduced unemployment and a more adaptable, skilled population, which contributes to economic growth and resilience.

Key Messaging Aimed at the General Public

Feeling unsure about your future job? You're not alone. With automation and AI changing the way we work, [77% of workers in Canada worry about their job security and career growth](#). Don't wait for a crisis. A career health checkup can help you identify your strengths and spot the key skills you need to stay ahead and adapt to technological advancements. Talk to a career development professional today to equip yourself to succeed in our ever-changing world.

Key Messaging Aimed at Businesses/Organizations

Career development services are key to getting beyond just decent work. These services help build a stronger and more skilled workforce that [businesses can leverage to drive innovation](#). When employers invest in career development, they keep their employees longer and increase engagement. Businesses that offer career development are also desirable to workers, making them more likely to retain skilled employees who

can grow with the organization. Connect with us to find out how career development services can improve your retention rates.

Key Messaging Aimed at Government

[Quality career services have the potential to bolster Canada's economy](#). By providing lifelong career management skills, career development programs can help build a globally competitive workforce that is agile and resilient. Make a sustained, long-term commitment to fuel economic growth by supporting the career development sector.

Key Messaging Aimed at Education

Ministries and faculties of education have a unique opportunity to help teachers equip students with the skills needed to navigate the labour market and sustain fulfilling careers. By giving teachers the tools and insights to integrate career development into their classes, we can [enhance students' educational experiences and prepare them for real-world success across multiple careers](#). Invest in our teachers today to empower students to build thriving and meaningful careers.

Advocacy Goal Two

Increase the public's competency in developing their careers

Boosting the public's ability to manage their careers will create a more informed, adaptable workforce. When people can set goals, build skills and navigate career changes confidently, they build economic resilience. This resilience is transferred to the businesses and organizations where individuals work as well as the communities in which these individuals live. The world is constantly changing and workers in Canada must develop a lifelong learner mindset so they can adapt and pivot their careers to keep up with these changes.

Key Messaging Aimed at the General Public

As Canada shifts to a green economy and jobs transform due to technological advancements, [more workers in Canada will find themselves in mid-career transitions](#). Knowing how to navigate these transitions and grow your career will open doors to new opportunities and help you stay competitive as the job market changes. Boost your career skills by connecting with a career development professional who can offer personalized guidance and resources. Why wait? Take charge of your career today and unlock your full potential.

Key Messaging Aimed at Businesses/Organizations

The global labour market is changing rapidly, and career development services can teach people across Canada how to adapt. [Career development impacts the economic and social well-being of the country](#)

[and the people who live there](#). Lobby our government to invest in services that cultivate a job-ready workforce, leading to a stronger, more dynamic economy.

Key Messaging Aimed at Government

Career development services play a crucial role in helping individuals enhance their employability, but few know that these services exist. By collaborating with career development experts, governments can help bridge the gap and ensure that these services reach those who need them most, [fostering economic resilience and reducing unemployment rates](#). Let's leverage expertise and innovation to empower people across Canada to pursue fulfilling careers through enhanced career development awareness and support.

Key Messaging Aimed at Education

Want students to take charge of their futures? [Early exposure to career development helps them proactively plan their futures, fostering personal autonomy and a commitment to lifelong learning](#). Ministries and faculties of education have a pivotal role in empowering educators to guide students through these vital stages. Help educators prepare students to navigate the complexities of the modern job market and develop the career self-management skills necessary to build prosperous futures.

Advocacy Goal Three

Integrate career development into current systems

Integrating career development into current systems would help ensure people in Canada are exposed to career development early and often so they are prepared to navigate the world of work successfully. Providing early, continuous career guidance helps people adapt to changing markets, build new skills and avoid crises. Embedding career development into education and workforce programs prepares individuals to succeed long term, reducing unemployment and creating a more competitive, resilient workforce that benefits both individuals and the broader economy.

Key Messaging Aimed at the General Public

Canada currently approaches career support with a “fail-first” approach – meaning that you often have to lose your job or suffer a workplace injury before receiving crucial career guidance. Workers in Canada deserve more than that. [Career development services help individuals navigate the labour market with flexibility, adaptability and resilience.](#) Call on governments to provide early intervention and continuous career development services before a job loss. Demand the services necessary to keep workers in Canada competitive in an ever-evolving job market.

Key Messaging Aimed at Businesses/Organizations

Many workers in Canada have been trained for jobs that are disappearing, resulting in a [gap between the skills workers have and the skills the market](#)

[demands](#). Comprehensive career management programs can fill this gap. Lobby government representatives to invest in career development services that help align skills with market demands. You will increase your access to qualified hiring pools with candidates who are equipped to innovate and help your organization succeed.

Key Messaging Aimed at Government

Investing in people pays off. [Career guidance empowers individuals to navigate the labour market with flexibility, adaptability and resilience.](#) Career development professionals provide expert advice so workers can build or upgrade their skills and become more competitive in a global economy. By offering better access to career development services, governments can empower youth and adults alike to enhance their employability and contribute to building a thriving Canadian economy.

Key Messaging Aimed at Education

The labour market is tough, and it's getting even harder for youth to prepare for their future careers. But career development can help! [Students who receive career education are more likely to pursue fulfilling careers.](#) Incorporate career development training into teacher education so educators can provide students with tools to reflect on their interests, explore various careers and build essential skills. By integrating career development into curriculum, we can help students make informed decisions and achieve success that leads to beyond decent work.

Advocacy Goal Four

Increase funding and investment in the career development services/sector

The career development sector needs additional funding and support to expand access to essential services that help individuals navigate the evolving job market. Increased funding can enhance training programs, resources and outreach efforts, allowing more people to receive guidance in building skills and finding fulfilling careers.

Key Messaging Aimed at the General Public

We spend a third of our lives working – shouldn't that time be more than just "decent"? [Research shows that career support can reduce stress, anxiety and depression by helping people find fulfilling work and build stronger coping skills.](#) Everyone deserves a chance to pursue a career that aligns with their interests, values and strengths, which not only boosts job satisfaction but also greatly improves mental health. Let's make mental health a priority. Contact your government representative today and advocate for increased funding for career development services that benefit everyone.

Key Messaging Aimed at Businesses/Organizations

Employee turnover hurts businesses. According to Pew Research Centre, [63% of employees cite no opportunities for advancement as their reason for resignation.](#) Avoid needless turnover by connecting with a career development professional who can show you how to build clear pathways for employees to grow within your organization. Even a modest investment in career development programs can lead to substantial savings by

reducing turnover costs and growing overall productivity. Develop a career development program now to invest in the future of your organization.

Key Messaging Aimed at Government

[Quality career services lead to increased labour market participation, reduced cycles of chronic underemployment and decreased unemployment.](#) This isn't just about getting people jobs; it's about equipping people with the skills they need to thrive in evolving industries. Prioritize career development services now to reduce poverty and build a robust economy.

Key Messaging Aimed at Education

Students aren't always aware of all their education and career options and greatly [benefit from career development interventions.](#) These interventions help students – in particular, those facing barriers – identify and pursue opportunities they hadn't previously considered. By integrating career development into the K-12 curriculum, we can make sure every student has the skills and support they need to get beyond decent work.



Creating a Communications Plan

Now that we've established key messaging that supports our long-term goals, we want to make sure that everyone within the career development sector is on the same page in regard to disseminating this messaging. Career development provides an opportunity to come together and help more businesses, organizations, policymakers and people understand that career development is essential to getting to beyond decent work. In order to do this, we want to make sure we are sharing thematically similar content at the same time.

Sector events like Canada Career Month can provide a ready-made opportunity to promote our key messages. We suggest the following communications schedule:

- **Week 1:** Increase the number of people accessing career development services
- **Week 2:** Increase the public's competency in developing their careers
- **Week 3:** Integrate career development into current systems
- **Week 4:** Increase funding and investment in the career development services/sector

For each week in November, fine-tune the key messaging in the previous section to suit your organizational goals. While we all want to raise the profile of the career development sector, this may look different depending on your specific context. Your messaging that supports increasing the number of people accessing career development services might look different than another organization's.

Complete the following steps to develop your organization's communications plan.

Step 1. Determine your audience

Each goal can be directed at one of four audiences. Which of these audiences makes sense for your organization? You can choose more than one, but remember that your message needs to be tailored to that audience to motivate them to act in a way that supports the goal.

Step 2. Identify key events

Look for events that might help you amplify your message. This could include events within the career development sector such as conferences, summits or awareness weeks, or external events such as legislative sessions, budget announcements or elections.

Step 3. Align key messages with events

The Key Messages section of this Playbook provides examples of messages that support the goal of increasing the knowledge that career development is essential to getting to beyond decent work. However, you might want to tweak them so they better suit your specific context and align with the themes and narratives of the identified events.

If necessary, adapt the content in the Key Messages so they connect your cause to the broader discussions happening during the key events you previously identified. Ensure that your messaging is timely, relevant and contributes meaningfully to the conversation around the event. This will ensure that you're able to build off of the event's momentum to bring more awareness to your cause.

Step 4. Pick your platform

Consider how you communicate with your audience. Are you more likely to reach them via email or social media? Do you have a website or blog? What platform should you prioritize? Remember that sharing the same message across different platforms can be an effective way of communicating your message.

Step 5. Identify hashtags

Think about the discussions that are already taking place. Adding hashtags ensures your post shows up with similar or related content. Think about what else is happening in the sector and whether it's appropriate to connect your message to that. Hashtags can be a great way to insert your message into larger conversations. You'll want to use the **#BeyondDecentWork** hashtag to build cross-sector momentum for your message, but what other discussions can you leverage?

Step 6. Build out your Communications Plan

Build out your Communications Plan using the template below. Consider the key events that you previously identified and work backward, scheduling posts around them. Remember to include the images, hashtags, messages and platforms so there is no confusion.

Step 7. Publish your content and analyze results

Publish your content according to the schedule set out in the Communications Plan. Remember to leave some room for flexibility so you can respond to unforeseen events.

Don't forget to track your results. You can use analytics tools (e.g. platform insights, Google Analytics) to measure performance, or you can do this manually by counting engagement (likes, shares, comments), signatures for any petitions you've posted or sign-ups.

Reflect upon what worked and what didn't. This could include type of language or images used, length of post, time of day posted or other characteristics that affect how your audience is consuming your content.

Week 1: Increase the number of people accessing career development services

Audience	Platform	Message and Hashtags

Week 2: Increase the public's competency in developing their careers

Audience	Platform	Message and Hashtags

Week 3: Integrate career development into current systems

Audience	Platform	Message and Hashtags

Week 4: Increase funding and investment in the career development services/sector

Audience	Platform	Message and Hashtags



Advocacy Planning

Developing key messaging is just part of advocacy work. In addition to core messaging, it is essential to have an advocacy plan to maximize impact. By systematically assessing the situation, the interestholders, their power and how change happens relative to the career development sector, you can create a map that shows you how to instigate change. There are several things you will want to identify as you build your advocacy plan:

1. Target audiences
2. The right messages to motivate target audiences to support your cause
3. Opportunities and entry points to capitalize on
4. Your team's capacity and gaps
5. Goals and interim outcomes

Effective advocacy requires strategy. A strategy helps you reach interim outcomes while still maintaining your long-term vision. It might become necessary to pivot on short-term goals to make the most of emergent opportunities, but it is essential to have a long-term plan in place.

Creating an advocacy strategy

Creating an effective advocacy strategy is about identifying the change you want to make as well as determining what you have (and what you need) to make that change happen. Increasing the profile of the career development sector could potentially be done in a number of ways and it's essential to determine a specific path. There are eight questions that can help you do this. Developed by Jim Schultz of The Democracy Center, these questions are used to plan advocacy initiatives in many different contexts around the world.

The eight questions for strategic advocacy are:

1. What do you want?

What changes do you want to see and what is your ultimate long-term goal?

2. Who can make it happen?

Who has the power to make these changes?

3. What do they need to hear?

What stories and messages will motivate decision-makers and other key interestholders to make the changes you want to see?

4. Who do they need to hear it from?

Who can most effectively share these stories and messages? Who is the right messenger?

5. How can you make sure they hear it?

What events, channels or other opportunities can you use to amplify your message?

6. What do you have and what do you need?

What skills and resources do you have that you can use to promote your message? Where do you need additional skills and resources?

7. How do you begin to take action?

How can you break down your long-term goal? What do your interim outcomes look like?

8. How can you tell if it's working?

What signs tell you that your advocacy is effective? What are the signals that point to your desired change?

Question One

What do you want?

1

The starting point of all good career development advocacy initiatives is pinpointing exactly what you want to achieve for the sector. This necessitates a sound understanding of the problems that exist within the sector and how they might be solved. There are different changes you may want to see. Some changes might be content focused (e.g. policy change), while others are process driven (e.g. building community trust.) Regardless of the focus of your advocacy, identifying goals at the outset will help you build support for your initiative and ensure that your work is sustainable over time.



Identifying goals involves analyzing different aspects of the problem you want to solve. Fill out the table below to get a better understanding of your goal.

<p>What are you trying to change about the career development sector (i.e. law, policy, service, etc.)?</p>	<p>What is the cause of the problem you want to fix? Think about it from different perspectives.</p>
<p>Who will benefit from this change? Who could be harmed by this change?</p>	<p>In what ways is this issue being worked on elsewhere?</p>



For the next part of this activity, consider the information that you listed in the above table and think about your goal as a whole.

What is the specific problem you want to solve? Write out the answer in three different ways.

What is the specific solution to the problem you want to solve? Write out the answer in three different ways.



Now that you've come up with three ways of describing the problem and the solution, determine which statement communicates your **problem** and **solution** most effectively. Afterward, write a "change statement" that includes the problem and the solution in one or two sentences. This will help guide all your messages.

Change Statement (1-2 sentences)

Question Two

Who can make it happen?

2

After you've identified the change you want to make for the career development sector, it is necessary to get an understanding of the people and institutes who can make it happen. This might include those with formal authority (e.g. policymakers, governing bodies, etc.), or those who have the capacity to influence those with informal authority (e.g. the general public, businesses, etc.). To do effective advocacy work, it is essential to identify these audiences and determine their interests, influences and motivations.

A interestholder analysis will help you systematically assess which institutions and individuals have a stake in career development. Use the following activities to identify who is involved with the issue you are trying to solve and who has the power to solve it.



Think about **decision-makers**. Who has the power to make the change you want? Is it a government official? The media? An organization? It's also useful to identify who can influence these people – an adviser, a media outlet, a well-known personality or a group.

List as many “decision-makers” as you can think of (all the people who can make the change you want happen).

List as many “influencers” as you can think of (all the people who can influence the decision-makers).



Create a Power/Interest Grid

Using the grid below, map out who has the most power to help you or prevent you from making change and who would strongly oppose or support your change.

Before you start, have a conversation about what most/least influential or powerful means in relation to your advocacy issue.

Similarly, make sure you are all on the same page when it comes to what strongly opposing or strongly supporting your issue looks like.

Most influential that strongly oppose your position:

Most influential that strongly support your position:

Least influential that strongly oppose your position:

Least influential that strongly support your position:



Reflecting on your work above, make a list of the top three people/organizations you need to help you make change happen.

Top three people/organizations you need to help you make change happen:

Question Three

3

What do they need to hear?

Once you determine your target audiences, you need to know how to motivate them to provide support for the career development sector. This is where you craft persuasive messaging that convinces them to take action to support your cause. While all of these messages should be rooted in the same basic truth, they need to be tailored to speak to each audience and their specific motivations. In most cases, advocacy messages have three basic components: an appeal to what's right, an appeal to the audience's self-interest and a specific ask. Your ask is what you are trying to get your audience to do. It should be able to be summarized quickly and succinctly so that audiences know exactly how they can take action. See the Key Messages in the previous section for examples.

Practising empathy is a great way to determine what moves target audiences. By putting yourselves in their shoes, you can imagine their daily joys and pain points and get an understanding of what they are likely to get out of the proposed change and how they might be influenced. You can

then incorporate this into your advocacy messaging. Imagine the target audience and answer the following questions, repeating for each target audience.

On an average day, what do they:

- **See and do?**
- **Feel?**
- **Say and hear?**
- **Think?**



Reflect on the responses to the above questions and consider how interestholders might be motivated.

List how interestholders might be motivated:

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for writing the list of motivations for interestholders.



Once you have an understanding of each audience's motivations, you can begin to determine which stories and examples will motivate them to make the change you are aiming for. Here, you can begin to outline some messages, stories and examples of why the change is needed. Explain why this change is in the interests of the decision-makers. Tell them what should happen and who could take action. Be ambitious but realistic. Avoid overly technical language.

What messages do you want to tell decision-makers?

Explain why this change is in their interest, what should happen and who could take action.

List some specific stories and examples you can use to demonstrate why the change is needed.

Don't forget to incorporate data and cite your sources.



Decision-makers won't always have time to read a long report. Put your message into a short, sharp summary or brief. Infographics can also help to communicate. Consider other ways to communicate your message, too, such as videos, photos, posters, podcasts, press releases, presentations and social media.

Refine your message:

Question Four

Who do they need to hear it from?

4

A message's impact is often dependent on who communicates it. Who are the most credible messengers for each audience? How can they tell the stories important to the career development sector? Identifying these folks will tell you who should be sharing the message. Once you understand who holds the power to make necessary changes and what they need to hear to make those changes, you can determine the people and institutions who influence them. These are the messengers.

Messengers are those who have power over or influence key audiences to make specific changes. Since they don't have direct power to make necessary changes, messengers can be considered secondary to the target audience. Messengers could be media, community-based organizations or the general public. Anyone who might not be able to change policies directly, but has the power to influence those who can, is a messenger.



Make a list of the people who can deliver your message to the decision-makers and the influencers.

List messengers that will deliver your message:

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for writing the list of messengers.



Question Five

5

How can you make sure they hear it?

There are three common methodologies used to deliver advocacy messages: lobbying, negotiating and media advocacy. Each of these methodologies has its pros and cons and you must choose the one that is most appropriate to your circumstance and how you'd like to advocate for the career development sector.

Lobbying focuses on gaining access to and influencing a decision-maker who has the power to make the change you're hoping to see. When lobbying, it is critical to have a clear agenda and priorities so that you can provide a precise definition of core issues and expected outcomes. Here, you'll want to prepare for the conversation by having clear, data-informed talking points that appeal to the decision-maker's morality and self-interest.

Negotiating involves participating in a give-and-take process resulting in a solution that both sides can accept. It necessitates carefully assessing where one stands in regard to the issue and what can be done to address it. While it is important to be backed by sound evidence while negotiating,

it is even more important to have leverage. This might involve forming strategic relationships and partnerships, strengthening the capacity of pressure groups and building public arguments that persuade decision-makers to make the change you're aiming for.

Media advocacy is the strategic use of media to influence public attitudes in a way that advances your advocacy issue. There are several ways to do this such as press releases, events, news conferences, podcasts, TV or radio interviews, seminars and workshops and social media. Regardless of the channel, the advocacy message needs to have solid content that is specifically framed to draw media attention. Journalists and media outlets prioritize content that is likely to capture their audiences' attention.



Think about the pros and cons of lobbying, negotiating and media advocacy in regard to your advocacy goals.

Lobbying	
Pros	Cons

Negotiating	
Pros	Cons

Media Advocacy	
Pros	Cons



At the end of the day, it's essential that you reach your audience at important moments. This requires thinking about current and upcoming events as well as the general sociopolitical climate. How can you use what's happening to help get your message out? Is there a gathering where you can reach a lot of people? Is the government having a consultation on your issue? Here, you can be flexible to react and adapt your plans to unexpected opportunities.

List dates, events and other key moments when you can get your message out and when decision-makers might listen.

Question Six

6

What do you have and what do you need?

Before starting any advocacy work, it's essential to take stock of the resources you already have and get an idea of what resources you need. This often involves looking at any past advocacy work done by you, your organization or similar organizations, cataloguing established relationships and assessing the capacity of staff and other partners in the career development sector. Ideally, you won't be starting from scratch, but rather leveraging existing resources to begin your advocacy work. Of course, odds are that there are resources that you'll need that you don't already have. There may be relationships that you need to build and capacities that you need to develop (e.g. research, media, outreach, etc). Most of the time advocacy work is done by a team, but you can also take action as an individual and recruit others to join your cause.



Advantages

These are your organization's advantages. This might include strong partnerships with other career development organizations, a great organizational reputation, high staff capacity or other resources. It might also include things like the political climate, connections, and access to government officials and public opinion.

List any advantages or capacities your organization has to help drive your advocacy work.



Disadvantages

Advocacy is not about simple hope or luck. It's about taking careful stock of where you are and determining how to move forward. Part of that is identifying challenges and disadvantages that your organization faces in relation to its advocacy goals. These could be things like lack of capacity or resources, entities who may want to block your advocacy efforts, and anything else that threatens your ability to move toward your goals. By identifying challenges, you can start to get an understanding of what you need to move your advocacy work forward.

Make a list of any disadvantages that could thwart your advocacy goals.

What do you need to address these disadvantages and where can you get it?

Question Seven



How do you begin to take action?

When we want to make change, there are often more things to do than we have time for. Advocating for the career development sector will require making careful choices about next steps so that we can prioritize actions that make the most impact. Next steps can connect with any of the advantages, challenges, threats or opportunities identified, but it often involves identifying what is critical and where capacity is available. Here, it is essential to develop smaller goals that help you move toward your overarching advocacy goal.



Let's note our goals. These goals should be **SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant** and **Time-bound**.

Restate the goals of your advocacy work.



Review your responses to the previous questions and write down specific first steps you will have to do to gather what you need to move your advocacy work forward. Identify who will be responsible for leading each step and agree upon a timeline for getting it done.

Step	Person Responsible	Timeline

Question Eight

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How do you know it's working?

As much as we'd like advocacy to be a simple set of steps, it's often more complicated. The goal of advocacy work is to influence, change or create policy, which is a complex process involving several moving parts.

Getting to beyond decent work won't be a straightforward process. Improving public access to career development services and raising awareness will take time and may involve experimenting and learning, and updating your plan as you go.



How will you know if your efforts are making a difference?

The best way to know if you've made a difference is to look around. Are there changes in people's hearts, minds and actions? Are more people aware of or accessing career development services? Are people demanding that governments increase support for the sector? Make a list of the changes you want to see and what evidence or indicator you will use to monitor each change that you identified.

Goals for the changes you want to see happen	Evidence/indicator for each change

Iterate and make changes as you go

Advocacy is a learning process. It's important to be flexible and learn from your actions and the changes they're creating. Go back to Step 5 and try new activities or do more of what's working. You may need to go back to other steps and think again about your messages and the people you are reaching. As you reflect, think about:

- How has the conversation around career development services changed since you began your advocacy work?
- Do you need to refine your key messages?
- Make sure you celebrate your successes along the way!



Getting Started

Building an effective advocacy plan requires careful planning, clear objectives and strategic action. By following the steps outlined in this document, you can create a well-structured approach that amplifies your organization's voice and builds support for the career development sector. There are some examples of advocacy activities listed below. Remember, the effectiveness of each activity is dependent on the context in which it is used. Some activities are effective in some contexts, but not others. Make sure to choose the activity that makes the most sense for your specific context.

Policy Proposal Development

Developing a policy proposal begins with identifying a pressing issue within career development that your organization wants to address. Take time to thoroughly research the problem, review existing policies and gather data to understand the full scope of the challenge. It's also important to engage with individuals closest to the issue to gain valuable insight. After doing your homework and clearly defining the problem, determine how you can best solve it. Once you've outlined a practical, evidence-based solution, you're ready to start writing the policy proposal. Make sure the proposal includes specific recommendations, goals and potential outcomes, all while aligning with your mission. Make sure to include an executive summary that provides a brief overview of the problem and solution, background information and data that supports your case, and a clear call to action.

Once drafted, review and refine your proposal to ensure it's clear, persuasive and well-structured. Finally, be prepared to present it to policymakers or relevant interestholders, explaining how it addresses the issue and why it's necessary. Remember to follow up and stay engaged during the decision-making process.

Press Release

A press release is a great way to share important news or updates about the career development sector with the media and the public. To get started, think about what makes you newsworthy – whether it's a new initiative, event or significant achievement – and craft a headline that grabs attention. Your first paragraph should answer the essential questions: who, what, when, where and why. This ensures that anyone skimming the release can quickly grasp the key points.

Next, flesh out the details. Include quotes from key spokespeople or participants to add authority and a human touch to the story. It's important to keep the tone professional but engaging, making sure your key messages are clear and easy to understand. End the release by providing contact information, so media representatives can follow up, and include a brief overview of your organization for context. Before you send it out, make sure to proofread for clarity and accuracy. Distribute it to media outlets, relevant journalists and even through your own platforms like your website or social media. This helps maximize your reach and ensures that your message lands in front of the right audience.

Public Talk

Giving a public talk is a powerful way to connect with your audience and help the public understand that career development is essential to getting

to beyond decent work. Start by figuring out what you want your main message to be – this could be anything from raising awareness about a key issue to inspiring action for a specific cause. Once you have that message in mind, structure your talk with a strong introduction, a few main points and a conclusion that reinforces your message.

When preparing, think about your audience. What do they care about? What will resonate with them? Tailoring your talk to their interests and values can make a big difference in how your message is received. Use stories, examples or data to make your points more relatable and memorable. Practise your talk out loud, focusing on delivering it clearly and with confidence. Remember to maintain eye contact and use natural body language to keep your audience engaged. Time yourself to make sure your talk isn't too long. Once you've delivered your message, invite questions or further discussion – this not only engages your audience but also deepens their connection to your cause.

Social Media Campaign

Running a social media campaign is one of the most effective ways to raise awareness, engage supporters and drive action. Start by defining clear goals: What are you hoping to achieve for the career development sector? Once you have your goals, identify your target audience and the platforms they use most. This will help you choose where to focus your efforts – whether that's LinkedIn, Facebook, X, Instagram or TikTok.

Next, create content that's engaging, shareable and aligned with your cause. This could include graphics, videos, infographics or personal stories that make your message resonate. Consistency is key, so plan out a schedule for posts and stick to it. Along the way, be sure to use clear calls to action, like asking followers to sign a petition, attend an event or donate. Hashtags can also help boost your campaign's visibility by making your posts more discoverable. Throughout the campaign, monitor engagement – respond to comments, track likes and shares and adjust your approach if

needed. After the campaign ends, review its success by looking at metrics like reach, engagement and conversions, and use those insights for future efforts.

Survey or Poll

Conducting a survey or poll can help you gather valuable insights from your supporters or the wider community. To start, think about the purpose of your survey – what do you want to learn, and how will the answers help guide your efforts? Once you have your objective in mind, draft clear, straightforward questions. Aim for a mix of multiple-choice, rating scale and open-ended questions to get a variety of responses.

Using online survey platforms like Google Forms, SurveyMonkey or Typeform makes it easy to create and distribute your survey. Promote it through your social media channels, email newsletters or even on your website. Be sure to keep the survey short and easy to complete; people are more likely to respond if it doesn't take up too much of their time. After collecting responses, take time to analyze the results. Look for patterns or trends that can inform how you will advocate for the career development sector. Once you've got the insights, consider sharing a summary of the results with your audience. This transparency can build trust and show that you value their input.

Webinar

Hosting a webinar is a great way for your organization to educate, engage and connect with people remotely. Begin by choosing a topic that is relevant to the career development sector and aligns with audience interests. Next, find speakers who are knowledgeable and engaging – whether that's experts in career development or members of your team. Once you've got your topic and speakers, pick a reliable platform like Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet.

Use your social media channels, email lists and website to promote the

event. Encourage early registration to build momentum. When planning the webinar itself, structure it with a mix of presentation and interaction. Start with a brief introduction, then move into the main content and leave time at the end for a Q&A session. Engaging with your audience – through polls, chat or live questions – makes the experience more dynamic. Make sure to rehearse the technical aspects before the event to avoid any glitches. After the webinar, share a recording with attendees and follow up with resources or a thank-you note to keep the connection going.

Grassroots Mobilization

Grassroots mobilization is all about empowering everyday people to take collective action. To get started, identify a specific issue that resonates with your community and recruit volunteers who are passionate about it. Educating your volunteers is key – make sure they understand why support for career development matters, how you're hoping to increase it and what they can do to help. Provide them with the tools they need, like talking points, flyers or social media templates, so they can easily spread the word.

Next, organize local events or actions that bring people together and create visibility. This could include anything from hosting a community meeting to organizing a rally, petition drive or door-to-door canvassing. Use social media and word-of-mouth to encourage broader participation and create momentum. Throughout the campaign, keep your volunteers motivated by staying in touch, celebrating small wins and sharing updates on the impact they're making. Grassroots movements thrive on community energy, so maintaining regular communication and fostering a sense of collective effort are key to long-term success.

Hashtag Campaign

A hashtag campaign is a simple but powerful way to spread your message online. First, come up with a catchy and relevant hashtag (e.g. **#HumansOfEmployment**; **#BeyondDecentWork**) that ties into your cause and is easy to remember. Once you have your hashtag, promote it

across your social media platforms, encouraging your followers to use it in their posts. To keep the momentum going, regularly share relevant career development content – whether it's inspiring stories, statistics or even challenges that encourage participation.

You can also collaborate with thought leaders or partner organizations to increase the campaign's visibility. As the campaign grows, keep an eye on how the hashtag is being used and engage with your audience by liking, commenting or sharing their posts. The more interactive and inclusive your campaign feels, the more people will want to join in. Finally, track the hashtag's reach and engagement to gauge the campaign's success and learn what worked best to promote the sector.

Joint Statement

A joint statement can amplify your message by showing collective support for the career development sector. To start, reach out to like-minded organizations or interestholders who share your goals. Work together to draft a clear and concise statement that reflects your shared values and offers practical solutions to the issues faced by the sector. Each organization should have a say in the wording to ensure the final version speaks to all parties involved.

Once the statement is ready, it's time to release it to the public. You can do this through a coordinated social media campaign, a press release or by posting it on each organization's website. The joint nature of the statement gives it extra weight, signalling broad support for the cause. Be sure to tag all the organizations involved and encourage them to share the statement widely, so it gains traction across different networks. This collaboration not only amplifies your message but also strengthens partnerships for future advocacy efforts.

Network Building Event

A network-building event is a fantastic way to bring together individuals and organizations within the career development sector to support a common cause. When organizing the event, choose a theme or topic that is top of mind in the sector and will appeal to most interestholders.

To create an engaging atmosphere, plan interactive sessions such as roundtable discussions, panel presentations or workshops where attendees can actively contribute. Provide opportunities for informal networking, too, like coffee breaks or meet-and-greet sessions, which allow for more personal connections

Meetings with decision-makers

Meeting with decision-makers is a powerful way to advocate for the career development sector. Face-to-face interactions allow you to engage in meaningful dialogue with people who have the power to make the change you're hoping to see. Here, you can present compelling data, share personal stories and address concerns. You can also use media and digital platforms to promote these meetings so that decision-makers know that their constituents are watching. This can build momentum and show that there's strong community support behind the career development sector and pressure the decision-maker to help you achieve your goal.

Online Petition

An online petition is a great way to rally support for the career development sector. Start by clearly identifying the issue you want to address and what you hope to achieve – whether it's policy change, raising awareness or persuading decision-makers to take action. Once your goal is set, craft a compelling petition statement that outlines the problem, why it matters and what action you're asking people to take. Keep it concise but powerful, and make sure the call to action is clear.

Next, choose an online platform where people can easily sign and share

your petition. When your petition is live, promote it through your social media channels, email lists and website. You can also ask your supporters to share it with their networks to maximize reach. As people begin to sign, regularly update them on the petition's progress and any related developments – this keeps momentum going and shows that their support is making a difference.

Once you've gathered enough signatures, deliver the petition to the relevant decision-makers, such as government officials or organizational leaders. Be sure to publicize the delivery through media outlets and your online platforms to amplify the impact and build ongoing support.

Op-ed or Article

Start by identifying a timely and relevant topic that is relevant to your goal and likely to engage your target audience. Make sure it addresses something current within the career development sector – whether it's a policy debate, community concern or emerging trend. Your goal is to offer a fresh perspective that adds value to the public conversation.

In your first paragraph, grab the reader's attention with a strong, engaging hook. This could be a surprising fact, a personal story or a provocative statement. From there, outline your argument clearly and support it with evidence, whether it's data, research or real-life examples from your work. It's important to keep your writing concise and impactful – most op-eds are around 600-800 words, so every sentence should count. Offer a clear solution or call to action toward the end to make your piece actionable, not just informative.

Before submitting, research where you'd like to publish your piece. Aim for platforms that align with your audience and make sure to post it to your website. After publication, share the article through your social media, email lists and other channels to amplify its reach and engage your community in the conversation.



Conclusion

Advocacy is a powerful tool for driving positive change within the career development sector. By strategically planning and executing advocacy efforts, you can influence policies, programs and perceptions that directly impact career services, practitioners and the individuals you support. This Playbook provides a framework to help you identify key issues, set clear objectives and develop action plans that align with your organization's mission.

Remember, advocacy is a continuous process that requires flexibility, persistence and collaboration. While challenges may arise, staying focused on your goals and leveraging partnerships will strengthen your influence. As you move forward, regularly assess the progress of your advocacy initiatives, adjust tactics where needed and celebrate your successes. Your dedication to advancing career development makes a meaningful difference, empowering individuals to achieve their full potential and get to beyond decent work.

Beyond Decent Work Playbook

A National Advocacy Campaign for Career Development in Canada

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