



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 2.3

**Legislative Advocacy Toolkit for
Black-Led RCOs**



Legislative Advocacy Toolkit for Black-Led RCOs

From Principle to Action:

Want to elevate your RCO's impact beyond program delivery?

This toolkit helps Black-led RCOs move from awareness to influence—supporting your engagement in policy spaces where recovery systems and funding decisions are shaped. Use this as a guide to ensure Black recovery is not only heard but prioritized.

Why Policy Engagement Matters for RCOs

Black-led Recovery Community Organizations are essential in shaping policies that impact our communities. Without intentional advocacy, Black recovery needs are sidelined in funding, legislation, and system design.

Engaging in public policy is not optional—it's a pathway to equity, resources, and long-term sustainability. This toolkit outlines how to get started and how to build policy power from within your RCO.

Core Advocacy Strategies for RCOs

- **Legislative Advocacy**
Build relationships with elected officials and provide public testimony on relevant recovery issues.
 - **Community Mobilization**
Host town halls, start petitions, launch social media campaigns, and galvanize community members to act.
 - **Strategic Partnerships**
Align with civil rights organizations, public health leaders, and funders to expand influence.
 - **Policy Monitoring**
Stay informed on policy developments that impact Black recovery and harm reduction efforts.
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Self-Assessment: Is Your RCO Policy-Ready?

Reflect on your current position by answering **Yes or No**:

- Does your organization actively engage in policy advocacy?
- Do you have relationships with policymakers and community leaders?
- Have you identified key policy issues that impact Black recovery spaces?
- Is your advocacy informed by both data and lived experience?
- Do you have funding or partnerships that support your advocacy efforts?

 **If you answered “No” to any, it’s time to build a stronger advocacy infrastructure.**

How to Build an Effective Advocacy Plan

- **Identify Your Priorities**
Focus on the most urgent policies impacting Black recovery (e.g., funding equity, harm reduction access, reentry programs).
 - **Develop Your Message**
Keep it simple, powerful, and rooted in both statistics and stories.
 - **Build Relationships**
Start with local and state officials. Invite them to events. Ask them to listen.
 - **Use the Media**
Leverage press, social media, op-eds, and storytelling to influence public opinion and gain visibility.
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Common Advocacy Challenges & Solutions

Challenge	Solution
Gatekeeping in legislative spaces	Build coalitions to amplify access
Lack of funding	Apply for grassroots advocacy grants, pursue partnerships
Political resistance	Use storytelling and direct engagement to break through opposition

Action Plan: Next Steps

- ✓ Identify 2–3 priority issues affecting Black recovery in your community
 - ✓ Develop an advocacy plan with clear goals and action steps
 - ✓ Start building relationships with policymakers and media
 - ✓ Join **CAARD's Policy & Advocacy Network** for deeper support
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Let's Take This Further — Together

Need support activating your advocacy strategy or training your team?

CAARD provides consultation, coaching, and legislative training for Black-led RCOs.

Email us at **thecaard@gmail.com** or visit www.thecaard.org to get started.