



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 6.3

Black-Led Recovery Advocacy Strategy Guide



Downloadable Resource 6.3 Black-Led Recovery Advocacy Strategy Guide

Purpose

Advocacy is not a side hustle for Black-led RCOs — it is survival. Every barrier we face, from funding inequities to institutional resistance, has roots in policy and power. This guide equips RCOs with strategies to flip those barriers into opportunities, so we can push back, push forward, and claim the space our communities deserve.

Why This Matters

For too long, policies shaping recovery have been written without us and used against us. Recovery courts punish relapse instead of supporting healing. Zoning laws block recovery homes in Black neighborhoods. Funding streams bypass our organizations and flow to mainstream systems.

But our tradition is one of organizing. From freedom schools to barbershop caucuses, from the civil rights movement to today's RCO coalitions — Black communities have always turned collective struggle into collective power. This guide stands in that lineage.

Actionable Strategies

1. Flip Scarcity Into Strategy

- Launch grassroots fundraising campaigns (community concerts, recovery festivals, online giving days).
- Build faith-based giving circles — invite congregations to “adopt” recovery programs.
- Create member-based contributions: even small dues reinforce ownership and sustainability.

2. Build Coalitions That Carry Weight

- Link arms with other Black-led RCOs, civil rights groups, and faith leaders.

- Form alliances with public health advocates, HBCU partners, and youth organizations.
- Use coalition power to demand equitable representation on advisory boards and funding panels.

3. Step Into Policy Spaces

- Train peers to testify at city council or state hearings.
- Develop a short list of clear policy demands (funding equity, MAT access, peer workforce pay).
- Host community policy forums and town halls so the people most affected set the agenda.
- Write public comments during rulemaking — your voice on paper matters.

4. Control the Narrative

- Publish op-eds, blogs, or social posts that spotlight racial disparities in recovery.
- Tell stories in our own voice — spoken word, video testimonials, or art-based campaigns.
- Partner with local Black media outlets and podcasts to amplify community voices.

5. Fight for Peer Workforce Equity

- Push for certification pathways that honor lived experience, not just degrees.
- Advocate for Medicaid and state reimbursement for peer services.
- Demand fair pay — peers should be compensated as para-professionals, not volunteers.

Practical Tools

Barrier-to-Action Worksheet

- Barrier: *Limited funding* → Action: Plan a grassroots fundraising event with three local partners.
- Barrier: *Mainstream resistance* → Action: Convene a coalition of 3–5 Black-led orgs to draft a shared statement.
- Barrier: *Policy exclusion* → Action: Identify one upcoming hearing and commit to testifying.

Sample Advocacy Calendar

- **January–March:** Budget hearings & legislative sessions — submit funding equity demands.
- **April–June:** Community town halls & coalition meetings — refine advocacy goals.
- **July–September:** National Recovery Month prep — amplify media campaigns.
- **October–December:** Evaluation & strategy reset — document wins, plan next year.

Message Templates

- *For Policymakers:* “Black communities are underfunded and over-incarcerated in recovery. We demand policies that prioritize culturally rooted RCOs.”
- *For Funders:* “Your dollars can either reinforce inequity or build equity. Invest in Black-led recovery.”
- *For Community:* “Recovery is ours. Together we can break barriers and build systems that reflect us.”

Reflection Prompts

- Who are the allies we haven’t tapped yet in our city or state?
- How can we turn our community’s stories into policy demands?

- What would it look like for our RCO to lead, not just respond, in advocacy spaces?
- Where do we need the Collective's support to amplify our efforts?

Closing

Barriers are not the end of our story. They are the starting point for strategy. This guide is a playbook to help Black-led RCOs move from frustration to action, from isolation to coalition, and from survival to structural change.

Because when we advocate together, we don't just fight for recovery — we fight for justice.